



National College for  
Teaching & Leadership

# **Leadership of great pedagogy in teaching school alliances: research case studies**

**Teaching schools R&D network national  
themes project 2012-14**

**Research Case Study**

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# Academies Enterprise Trust National Teaching School Alliance

## Teaching school alliance and context

The Academies Enterprise Trust National Teaching School Alliance (AET NTSA) includes over 70 academies across the primary, special and secondary phases. 50 per cent of the academies are graded 'requires improvement' or are in special measures thus the strategic role is to rigorously support school to school improvement through every avenue to improve student attainment and quality of learning.

AET executive board leads the TSA and the AET strategic plan encompasses the 'big 6' and all teaching school key performance indicators. Key priorities are focused on school improvement, initial teacher training (ITT), leadership development and research and development (R&D) – an area that all our academies are encouraged to engage in.

There is a wide range of bespoke training programmes offered to academies. Core teams deliver support specifically for English, literacy and numeracy across all phases ensuring there is a consistency in delivery. Resources are shared and quality assurance ensures supported academies make progress.

There are 130 specialist leaders of education (SLEs) with a wide range of specialisms located across the country whose remit is to further support the school improvement needs of our academies.

To support rigour and maintain an ever-improving provision of high quality teachers, the AET NTSA initiated a major recruitment drive through School Direct. We now work with 21 strategic accrediting ITT providers across England graded at Ofsted good or outstanding.

The impact of such interventions has resulted in 7 academies improving by 2 Ofsted go Outstanding and Columbus School and College, our lead school, remaining outstanding.

## What did the action research project set out to achieve? What did the project do?

If students aren't taught the language of sound and images, shouldn't they be considered as illiterate as if they left college without being able to read or write?

George Lucas, filmmaker

School improvement and professional development are of course pivotal features in our development towards developing our self-improving school system. Joint practice

development (JPD) is the foundation of these features and as such is the basis of our research project.

The focus of our research surrounds our drive to secure sustainable improvements in writing across our academies and close the gap in attainment. Improvements in writing at key stage (KS) 2 have been variable and remain a key priority for the alliance; the collective writing results across the alliance were 93 per cent of pupils achieving two levels of progress in 2013, with 92 per cent achieving two levels of progress in 2014. While progress results in KS4 English Language demonstrate a faster rise than national averages of three percentage points in 2014, pupils will have the increased challenge within the new GCSE specifications and must hone their ability to write independently and at length.

Therefore our project needed to promote JPD and secure a foundation for sustainable improvement in writing that involved the development of a new approach to writing: 'people do not learn better when tasks are made easier: they learn better when they are encouraged to push back the boundaries of what they already know, and step on to new ground' (Bazalgette 2009: 22)<sup>1</sup>.

We explored research from the British Film Institute (BFI) that demonstrated that authentic and challenging literacy strategies enable teachers and community members to build connections with students' real world experiences through reading and writing moving images. This research also shows that film engages young people in learning, stretches the most gifted and engages the hardest to reach. As film communicates through verbal, written and physical means and therefore caters to different abilities as a medium to close the gap in achievement. Moreover the BFI have documented experiences that film education activities motivate both students and teachers with the result of improved attainment, Film and television already play a central role in our pupils' lives and through the project we wanted to demonstrate how the pupils' critical understanding of the moving image could be developed through the processes of reading and writing on the screen. These processes build on the cultural knowledge of students to improve traditional literacy and critical literacy skills. The intention of the project was "not necessarily about producing more Tarantinos but allowing kids to understand the grammar of the moving image"<sup>2</sup>.

With the focus of the research project determined, we engaged partners to establish collaborative curriculum development project between AET NTSA, BFI and the Royal Opera House (ROH) to deliver and evaluate a film and literacy project model that has measureable impact on raising literacy standards and closing the gap in writing for year 5 and 7 children with potential for the model to scale up across the academy chain. All

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<sup>1</sup> BFI 21<sup>ST</sup> Century Advocacy 2012

<sup>2</sup> A Minghella, Chair of the British Film Institute, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Advocacy

partners were committed to raising achievement in literacy and embedding good practice over the medium to long term by investing in teachers' professional development.

This approach is based on programmes of activity that have taken place in both England and Scotland that have demonstrated raised levels of attainment in literacy and follows Head et al's findings in his *Evaluation of Scottish Screen's Moving Image Education Project* (2008) that outcomes for literacy standards are more positive when time is spent on watching, analysing and understanding rather than on practical filmmaking tasks.

Subsequently, nine academies that were within the area of the ROH Bridge involved were approached to participate in the project: Aylward Secondary Academy, Enfield; Newlands Academy, Lewisham; Nightingale Secondary Academy, Edmonton; Noel Park Academy, Wood Green; Trinity Academy, Wood Green; Clacton Coastal Academy, Clacton; Tendring Technology College, Frinton; Hamford Academy, Clacton and Langer Academy, Felixstowe. The academies approached to participate were deliberately chosen as cross phase to include: four primary, four secondary and one behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) academy.

These academies also have an extremely varied context, for example ranging from 77 per cent to 1.9 per cent English as an additional language (EAL) pupils, from 15 per cent to 100 per cent of pupils identified with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) including statements (100 per cent represents Newlands BESD Academy) and from 17 per cent to 33 per cent of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding.

Each academy was asked to nominate a project leader and invited to send up to four delegates to the continuous professional development (CPD) training offered during the project. The initial CPD began in the summer term of 2014 and comprised a three-day residential teacher CPD and support event at the University of Essex. Facilitated by the AET English and literacy team, BFI and ROH, the sessions explored the most effective pedagogic approaches to using film in the teaching of literacy.

During this residential, teachers collaborated on preparing to deliver a six-week film into writing project incorporating intensive classroom-based literacy intervention in the first half of the autumn term 2013. ROH and BFI provided specialist consultant support for individual academies during this period with at least two visits per academy to sustain momentum during the pilot phase.

Following CPD requests by the academies involved, colleagues were also offered the opportunity to participate in animation training with Into Film (as requested through their analysis of CPD needs) and in some cases this has widened to include their own primary feeder schools.

Each academy experienced different challenges and / or strengths and these reflections are written by the project leaders and detailed within the appendices that are available on the TSA website and available through the link at the end of this case study. Having co-constructed the project, the leaders have generated very positive feedback and now want to

move their pedagogy forwards. For the academic year 2014/15, the project is now entering an advocacy and support phase, extending its work nationally across the chain.

## Impact on capability of teachers and learning of pupils

The link below provides film evidence, pupils' work and teachers' planning. The films demonstrate pupils' engagement and enjoyment in the project and the written examples of pupils' work clearly illustrate increasing sophistication in their writing. The teachers' planning will be shared with colleagues in all of our academies as online resources<sup>3</sup>:

A range of qualitative and quantitative data has been utilised to measure the impact of the project both in terms of changes to pedagogy and pupils' progress.

Project leaders were asked to distribute an attitude to writing questionnaire to pupils at the start of the project and again at the end of the trial period. Teachers involved in the project were asked to take a baseline assessment of pupils' starting points for writing at the beginning of the trial period and again at the end and to also provide examples of pupils' before and after written work and schemes of work.

The project leader in each academy was asked to complete their own evaluation of the impact on their pedagogy and their pupils' literacy skills and these are available on our alliance website.

## Qualitative data

In terms of qualitative data, the responses to pupil questionnaires received and collated demonstrate significant improvements in attitudes to writing. The responses to the questions below showed the most dramatic changes.

At the end of the pilot, 98 per cent of the males that had previously stated that they did not enjoy writing now responded that they 'liked it quite a lot'. 52 per cent of the male respondents showing an improvement here were English as an additional language (EAL) learners and this accounted for all of the male EAL respondents. All but 18 per cent were pupil premium pupils. Although a much smaller number of females had originally stated that they did not enjoy writing, 99 per cent of them, now 'liked it quite a lot'.

Similar patterns are evident in pupils' responses to the question, 'How good do you think you are at writing?' and demonstrates an increase in confidence in their ability to complete effective writing. Thus, of the pupils believing they were 'not very good' writing

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<sup>3</sup> <https://sites.google.com/a/aetinet.org/academies-enterprise-trust-learning-platform/key-stage-1/english/film-into-literacy>

at the start of the project, 47 per cent of these pupils now believed their writing was 'good' and 53 per cent believed their writing had moved to 'could be better'. Within the group moving to 'good', 26 per cent were pupil premium pupils, 15 per cent were EAL learners, 19 per cent were male. In the group of pupils moving to 'could be better', 29 per cent were EAL learners, 27 per cent were male and 11 per cent SEND.

Two primary academies formulated additional questions to evaluate their pupils' attitudes to writing and to identify specific aspects of improvement. All responses from pupils were extremely positive. For example, when asked 'Do you think your writing has got better as a result of this project?' 100 per cent of pupils confirmed in the affirmative, giving clear reasons for this belief.

Using a writing self-assessment grid, year 5 pupils were able to confidently explain the aspects of their own writing that had improved the most. The most notable areas of improvement identified included: 'I can use paragraphs so my meaning and purpose is clear' (80 per cent), 'I can use conjunctions to link ideas between paragraphs (79 per cent), 'I can use detail to engage my reader' (82 per cent) and 'I can identify vocabulary that could be changed to increase the impact on my reader' (76 per cent).

## Quantitative data

Highlights from the impact data are included below. Please also see the individual academy evaluations on our website.

In terms of assessing pupils' progress, we are in transition to the new framework for English and therefore have suggested that pupils should be assessed against level descriptors but that colleagues should also identify which aspects of the new framework for writing were impacted during the project.

In Clacton Coastal Academy, the project ran for two weeks, but the impact is clearly visible on learners' writing skills. The majority of year 7 pupils in the pilot group were middle prior attainers at KS2. Over the course of the two-week project period two assessments of writing were conducted which demonstrated that all but four of the 29 pupils involved had exceeded the end of autumn 1 milestone at that point.

Of the 29 year 7 pupils participating, 17 demonstrated at least one sub level of progress in writing within the two-week project period. Three pupils demonstrated an increase of two sub levels of progress and one made three sub levels of progress. Six pupils out of the 13 in the class eligible for pupil premium funding made at least one sub level in progress over the two weeks with one pupil demonstrating two sub levels of progress. This shows that their progress is in line with their peers. Four pupils in the group are identified as SEND, one of whom has a statement. Of the SEND pupils, three made at least one sub level of progress, the pupil with a statement remaining static. Out of the 17 pupils demonstrating at least one sub level of progress over the two-week period, 11 were male highlighting the fact that boys are responding extremely well to the teaching and learning strategies

Within Langer Primary Academy, 31 pupils were involved in the project. Of these 31, 22 pupils (71 per cent) have made one sub level of progress from the beginning of the autumn term and one pupil has made two sub levels of progress. Within this group two out of the three EAL pupils made one sub level of progress. Out of the four pupil premium pupils, three made one sub level of progress with one pupil with SEND working on P-levels, increasing from P7 to P8. The two other pupils with SEND made one sub level of progress and the documentary evidence from supporting Teaching Assistants (TAs) charts the engagement and achievement of the pupils with SEND.

At Hamford Primary Academy the project ran for six weeks for year 5 and 6 pupils and included a range of cross-curricular writing activities. With regard to writing, the average progress across the trial period for year 5 pupils was 1.5 points of progress, just under one sub level and for year 6 the average progress was 2.2 points of progress, just over one sub-level.

Across the trial period at Hamford Primary Academy, the average points progress for pupil premium pupils was 1.4 for year 5 and 2.0 for year 6, which is close to the progress of all pupils. For pupils with SEND, the average points progress was 1.4 for year 5 and 2.9 for year 6, which is almost equivalent to three sub levels or one whole level of progress. This demonstrates for year 6 pupils with SEND, that they have made faster progress than non-SEND pupils.

Table 1 below summarises the overall reported increases in progress for groups of pupils participating in the film project whose progress was recorded in sub levels. The findings demonstrate that the progress of vulnerable groupings is at least equal to or faster than that of their peers. A wider research base, ie across the entire trust would be valuable to triangulate these findings.

**Table 1: Overall increases in progress for groups of participating pupils**

<b>Groups of pupils</b>	<b>Average sub level increase</b>
All pupils	1.5
Male	1
Female	1.
EAL	1.75
Pupil premium	1.5
SEND	1

## Impact on the alliance and alliance partners

Our intention in terms of the development of the leadership within this project was to identify one enthusiastic ‘champion’ within each academy to trial the film based literacy activities and to lead the project within their own academy. This ‘champion’ would then become a system leader, cascading their best practice to colleagues across the academy, with feeder and neighbouring academies and then disseminating their findings across the whole academy chain. In this way our project leaders would be sharing the best resources and inspiring colleagues to adopt new practices and influencing individual academy policy-making. As a result of this process, academies across our chain from all phases are very keen to participate in a similar project and adopt this new practice. As the quantitative data has demonstrated, this system leadership has had a very positive impact on the progress of our pupils and their subsequent life chances.

However, relying on one leader to drive the project across an academy meant that if a particular colleague became unable to participate due to circumstances beyond their control such as illness, then the project would not be able to reach its potential. This was the case in one of our academies and has demonstrated to us that for any future project, we need to secure the participation of at least two colleagues from each academy who can build ideas together and share the dissemination of best practice.

To initiate the project, our ‘champions’ or project leaders across the alliance were given complete ownership of the project within their own academies. While particular year groups were suggested, it was at the project leaders’ discretion to choose the year group(s) to be involved and the number of pupils to be involved in the trial. Thus, the numbers of pupils involved ranged from 2 in a BESD academy to 74 within a large primary academy and 90 pupils in a secondary academy.

Similarly, while a range of training and CPD was provided, the execution and content of the project was determined and co-constructed by the project leaders to ensure that the project was adapted to suit the needs of their particular pupils and academy priorities. For example, the trial was suggested to last for a six-week period but in one secondary academy the trial was run over a two-week period with similarly impressive results as can be seen from the evaluation on the TSA website.

The nature of the project has enabled us as an alliance to move towards our prioritised target of embedding JPD at the heart of our academy improvement process. In turn, this development has positively impacted on the maturity of our partnership, professional development and collaborative capital competences, most notably our creative entrepreneurship.

To illustrate our progression, the project has enabled colleagues to work in JPD groups across the alliance, across phases and settings at an in depth practical level that targets their own academy improvement priorities with a particular focus on closing the achievement gap. Project leaders are now outlining the further professional development

desired and JPD working sessions to embed this dimension and the ways in which to extend their work to support other schools. Moreover, feedback from pupil questionnaires and pupils' own reflections on their learning have enabled them to become more involved as co-constructors of practice. Increasingly, collaborative ventures arising from the project such as participation in the international Cinematique Project and the Arts Award scheme will facilitate pupil JPD to become embedded practice.

The project has demonstrated that distributed leadership of one aspect of academy improvement will have a significant impact on closing the gap in pupils' achievements within their individual academies and across the trust as a whole. The colleagues within the academies involved no longer see partnership working as new but as a clear route to self-improvement or the 'soil in which collaborative capital grows' (Hargreaves, 2012).

## **Teaching school alliance learning**

Within feedback from our project leaders, it was clear that effective communication of the intended outcomes of the project to academy colleagues underpinned its success. While there were initial concerns within some primary academies about the way that the proposed project may conflict with existing an 'talk for writing' project, these were soon overcome and this is a testament to the clear vision and communication of the project leaders which inspired and developed trust for other colleagues to adopt a new approach and to follow the project.

The project leaders also demonstrated their ability to be flexible in approach, adapting resources and strategies to suit the individual needs of their pupils and their colleagues as well as adapting the project to secure the best outcomes.

The project was most effective where a group of colleagues from an individual academy were able to attend a CPD event facilitated by the ROH and BFI and were therefore able to reflect together on the training and thus co-construct learning approaches within that academy. Understandably however, it was not always realistic and feasible to release more than one delegate from an academy at one time to attend the CPD events. While this appeared to present a challenge, it in fact encouraged colleagues to develop the pedagogy together and to cascade the new learning effectively. Therefore for the extension of the project, a key focus will be the ways in which training can be facilitated with a minimum of teacher time away from the classroom.

This will include the use of training videos online completed by our existing project leaders and our trainers that can be accessed by all of our alliance partners at any time.

It also became clear that where one colleague has received the training and is unable to complete the feedback activity to academy colleagues, that the planned project activity is unable to proceed, as was the case with one secondary academy.

During our recent celebration event in December 2014, the impact of the project in terms of the professional development and leadership skills for the staff involved was clearly evident. As a result, and with the support and advocacy of our regional directors of education, the project will be extended to all 76 academies within the alliance with the existing project leaders becoming the lead facilitators of the JPD for using film to deliver literacy teaching. SLEs will also be engaged to embed best practice. The next stage of the project will be launched within regional clusters, with the structure for the delivery and evaluation to be co-constructed with the existing project leaders in partnership with ROH Bridges.

Similarly, all academies are now invited to nominate a cultural champion: a committed advocate who understands the positive contribution that arts and cultural provision can make to raising standards and closing the gap in schools. At the same time, the ROH will work with the cultural champions to audit arts and cultural provision across the chain and offer a support programme and better links with local arts and cultural organisations and their local Bridge.

Our academy staff will also have the opportunity to train as arts award advisers to mentor their children to achieve the arts award, a unique qualification enabling children to grow as artists and arts leaders. Accredited by Trinity College London, the arts award is available at discover, explore, bronze or silver levels and provides a solid structure by which our pupils can further develop as leaders of their own learning and in JPD with other pupils across the trust.

Moreover, meetings have already taken place with the Arts Council to discuss our participation as an alliance in the pilot for the newly reformulated Arts Mark in April 2015. Through our continued commitment to JPD and in building that high social capital that will enable us to develop into a self-improving organisation, we are leading the development of great pedagogy.

## References

Hargreaves, D H, (2012) *A self-improving school system: towards maturity*, Nottingham, National College for School Leadership (NCSL)

Head, G, Wilkinson, J E and Cove, M, (2008), *Evaluation of Scottish Screen's Moving Image Education Project*, Glasgow, University of Glasgow

## Appendices

All appendices and materials listed below are available on the alliance website<sup>4</sup>

- Appendix one: Case study by Stephen Pearce, Noel Park Primary Academy
- Appendix two: Case study by Fargana Begum, Trinity Primary Academy
- Appendix three: Case study by Caroline Barlow, Langer Primary Academy
- Appendix four: Case study by David Hitchin, Hamford Primary Academy
- Appendix five: Case study by Dominic Fyles, Nightingale Academy
- Appendix six: Case study by Amanda Hill, Tendring Technology College
- Appendix seven: Case study by Jae Sherlock, Clacton Coastal Academy
- Appendix eight: Case study by Zeid Babooney, Newlands Academy

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<sup>4</sup> <https://sites.google.com/a/aetinet.org/academies-enterprise-trust-learning-platform/key-stage-1/english/film-into-literacy>

# Camden Primary Partnership

## Context and background of the alliance

Eleanor Palmer Primary School is the lead school in the Camden Primary Partnership, a cohort 3 alliance in the London Borough of Camden. Historically Camden has been a strong local authority (LA) and remains so with no academy converters, a small but effective core LA, good partnerships between schools and above average Ofsted outcomes and results.

The core partnership is six schools and the alliance now stands at 28 schools, the majority in Camden.

Our strengths from the outset were: ITT - non-salaried School Direct in partnership with the Institute of Education and CPD, particularly in primary mathematics, and JPD across schools in early years (lesson study project). Something we needed to invest time in was establishing our SLEs, hence the focus of the project.

## Focus for the project

We are committed to the principle that our alliance should 'connect classrooms'; give teachers opportunities to work together; to observe each other and to create a forum for discussing pedagogy; and for strengthening a common understanding of great pedagogy. From the outset relationships between heads have been strong but we wanted to strengthen links between teachers.

Our LA still maintains a small core of advisory staff and this remains the 'go to' place for curriculum support. However, this has also led to a culture of dependency, a fragmented model (many schools miss out simply due to a lack of capacity) and a reliance on those who, arguably, are out of touch with current practice.

We wanted to:

- build a model of classroom-based CPD and coaching that would then build social capital between teachers
- find a model to focus emphatically on great pedagogy and find a way to embed it in other classrooms and to empower teachers
- help our SLEs develop a profile to support their future deployment in schools

## Links to Hargreaves

As our first joint practice project as a fledging alliance, our Hargreaves priorities (2012) were building social capital and JPD.

## Phase 1 – the CPD

We developed a course, in partnership with NRich (Cambridge University Maths<sup>5</sup>). The course was advertised across the alliance and filled within three days. We recruited pairs of teachers from eight schools across the alliance. Working through pairs was key for dissemination and support back in school. Our theme was ‘developing mathematical fluency and reasoning through problem solving’. The course was jointly led by NRich and the head of Eleanor Palmer Primary School, supported by two newly appointed SLEs. Working alongside a well-established trainer gave the course status. Equally, NRich was delighted to be able to construct a course around real classroom work.

The course ran in the autumn term 2013 over a series of three full days and three half days. Central to the course was time in classrooms, progressing from observations (day 1) to paired teaching (day 3) to teaching the class (day 5).

The course was a mix of delivery; discussion and trialling tasks; debate and enquiry. Participants spent much time actually doing mathematics, talking mathematics, solving problems. There was great enthusiasm for this. Critically, on each full day at least 90 minutes was spent in classrooms where course leaders were able to coach participants. Throughout we returned to key pedagogical issues such as the *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes* (Vygotsky, 2012), *Growth Mindsets* (Dweck, 2012) and *Assessment for Learning* (Black et al, 2003).

Momentum built as between each session there were tasks for participants to do back in school. Collective working was part of the course model from problem solving activities to working in pairs with children. It built up to an ‘apprentice style’ day when the participants, in groups, had 90 minutes to plan a lesson in Eleanor Palmer Primary School.

## Phase 2 – the follow up

Having built relationships and connections beyond the headteachers in the alliance, the lead SLEs and the head of Eleanor Palmer Primary School then assigned themselves to each of the eight participating schools, with the intention of spending two follow up days in the spring / summer term supporting participants in embedding the principles into their own school / classroom. Activities undertaken during these two days were:

- joint leadership (with course participant) of Inset for school staff
- time with a participant who was maths coordinator to plan next steps
- paired teaching with participants in their classes
- learning walks

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<sup>5</sup> <http://nrich.maths.org>

- ‘parrot on the shoulder’ coaching

## Impact

We trialled an online survey accessed through a QR code so the results were available immediately (see appendix 1) – the ‘before and after’ surveys. The post-course feedback highlights a marked increase in teacher confidence and enthusiasm and critically more confidence to influence others back in their school. For example:

- The number of teachers saying they felt ‘confident’ or ‘very confident’ about teaching mathematical problem solving rose from just 1 to 16 – 100 per cent of all the participants.

All 16 participants were class teachers: so 480 children benefited from their renewed enthusiasm. The data shows, for example, that:

- Teacher enthusiasm rated as 1 (very enthusiastic) rose from 35 per cent to 81 per cent.
- Confidence in subject knowledge rated 1 rose from 6 per cent to 37 per cent.
- The percentage saying pupil enjoyment in their class for maths was a ‘1’ rose from 11 per cent to 62 per cent. Our assumption is that this was directly linked to the rise in teacher confidence and enthusiasm.

We also have qualitative evidence of impact on standards. Headteacher comments in the end-of-year on-line alliance survey included:

- Mathematics scores have improved.
- More 2b! But generally more confidence around the school with mental mathematics.
- Improved teaching in mathematics across the school
- Improved attainment in mathematics. End of KS1
- 4.9 points progress in year 5 mathematics. Exceptional

The survey also shows a raised awareness of SLEs and a greater willingness to work alongside them back in school:

- The percentage who were ‘aware’ or ‘very aware’ of the role of SLEs rose from 28 per cent to 94 per cent.

- There was also a significant rise in respondents who said they would “feel ‘comfortable’ or ‘very comfortable’ having an SLE work in my own classroom”: from 65 per cent to 94 per cent.

We know from feedback, from the school visits and from continued contact, that the course had a great impact on pedagogy and approach to teaching mathematics. For example, in our end-of-year alliance headteacher survey our course is specifically cited as a highlight, with heads providing evidence of the impact on staff and pupils.

Comments included:

- NRich maths course 2012-13 has supported the mathematics lead and class teacher in developing approaches to including less able and stretching more able in mathematics.
- New curriculum, NRich, securing 2B in mathematics, grammar - all brilliant courses which have had impact across the school.
- [NRich has] improved teaching in mathematics across the school.
- [NRich has] improved attainment in mathematics [at] end of KS1.

The aspect of impact that was greatest, as intended, was on our own SLEs. This model offered fantastic CPD for the SLEs: learning how to promote discussion, manage adult learning and deal with a variety of starting points. The school-based SLEs also led the ‘open classrooms’ part of the day. This was key to developing trust and building their confidence.

Both SLEs are now well established across the alliance, have led other JPD groups and been booked to work in schools. In their performance management both cite this course as key in developing their confidence and skill set.

## **Which strategies and interventions were most successful?**

In terms of meeting our goal, developing great pedagogy, the most successful aspects were:

- Bringing teachers together on a repeated basis to build social capital and enable repeated messages about pedagogy, evidenced in our classrooms.
- Being clear that the course should involve direct input (teaching) from course leads as well as practical work and discussion. Teachers relish new ideas.
- Insisting on a pair of delegates per school. This promoted link tasks, on-going discussions, support back in school and a starting point for team teaching and coaching.

- Asking that one delegate had some senior leadership 'clout' to set up high impact follow up work for the SLE.

## Impact on the alliance and alliance partners

Looking back on our work this year, this was our first extended CPD and having to reflect through this project has really informed future work. It has impacted on our work as an alliance as it has:

- Connected classrooms and class teachers. It led to the start of other joint work involving some of the participants – for example, the SLEs led joint practice groups with mathematical starting points, culminating in simple summary documents that have been shared across the local authority and beyond (see appendices 2 and 3 for resulting JPD thinkpieces). A further JPD project and thinkpiece is planned. The role of SLEs is now much more understood and developed across the alliance.
- Defined our mathematical pedagogy
- Deepened our commitment to deep learning, across a number of days, building relationships in the group, rather than a 'hit and run' day's Inset
- Identified talent. We now have an identified pool of mathematics enthusiasts whom we are drawing on to do model lessons for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and to join in further JPD groups. One delegate has become an SLE; two others successfully applied to become mathematics co-ordinators.

There is work still to be done on alliance architecture and distributed system leadership in particular – it still feels like Eleanor Palmer Primary School, as the lead school, do everything. This is a shared goal for year 2 and our new SLE 'connecting classrooms' project (see appendix 4 for brochure) which focuses on using SLEs from a range of schools to develop and improve pedagogy in classrooms across Camden will go some way towards addressing this.

'Creative entrepreneurship' – ie learning how to manage time and money. Whilst this project has had a great impact and has been incredibly fulfilling to lead, as a general lesson for us as a teaching school, we find we are not realistic about costing our time and energy in planning and evaluating projects. This is of course true of the teaching profession.

We also advertised a repeat core mathematics course. All 16 places were fully booked in 48 hours and started in September 2014. This time around there is a greater understanding of the need to take account of each school's context in putting the learning from the course into practice.

## What have we learnt about leadership attributes

These are the things that mattered, that drove the project:

- **Communication skills:** on the course, setting up, following up and understanding how to manage adults within a training environment.
- **Personal resilience and tenacity:** setting up school visits. One headteacher, of a partner school asked the head of Eleanor Palmer not to lead the follow-up as he did not want another headteacher in his classrooms. This provoked much reflection but through honest conversations it was possible to resolve the issue.
- **Building trust and high social capital:** building networks and relationships at a class teacher level. This matters to us.
- **Motivation:** this was key and we were able to support each other.

A further learning point was a reinforcement of the importance of empowering middle leaders, such as SLEs, in order to maximise the impact on classroom pedagogy. The two lead SLEs described how following the course they had the confidence to lead the JPD projects referred to above. Leading the JPD projects was like “leading a conversation without standing at the front” ensuring that the objective was delivered:

I was the drummer providing the beat and rhythm and keeping things together while other colleagues [involved in developing thinkpieces] provided the melody.

The confidence of the SLEs is also reflected in them leading a ‘Teach Meet Primary’ involving teachers from a host of other schools in Camden and beyond in February 2015.

## What we learnt as an alliance about leading teaching and learning

### Teachers need time and space to develop pedagogy

One lesson for us has been about the importance of bringing teachers together over an extended period. An hour’s staff meeting at the end of a day isn’t conducive to deep learning.

### Practicalities can overwhelm pedagogical developments

An SLE needs to have planned communication with a school’s headteacher. For example, plan to meet them on their first visit and before they leave on the last. It has emerged as a strength to have direct teacher-teacher links but there has been more impact in the schools where the headteacher has taken a clear lead.

There is also a need to be more explicit that follow up visits must be focussed on the course learning.

### **Workload: school-based and outreach balance**

In terms of our alliance structure we need to look at how to structure our time so we can do immediate response as well as this planned work: the simple answer seems to be to over-staff which takes a high degree of confidence.

### **Other things can seem 'more important' to schools**

The new curriculum and 'life after levels' are, understandably, the current number one priority for schools. But it has created an unhelpful conflation of assessment and tracking and we need to assert this opportunity to really focus on pedagogy: effective assessment is all about classroom practice: questioning, probing, observing. We need to find a way to retain this focus on pedagogy with pressures for this structural change.

### **Perseverance**

It took a lot of time sorting visits and we needed to be resilient and endlessly upbeat in the face of frustrations. The lead headteacher had to be supportive to less experienced SLE colleagues who could have otherwise had their confidence crushed.

### **Having an outcome matters for all JPD work (the carrot and stick of school improvement)**

Delegates told us they were worried about the 'teach a lesson yourself' finale but that it was key learning and gave them a real focus for the 6 days.

## **Appendices**

All appendices referenced in this case study are available on the alliance website<sup>6</sup>:

- Appendix one: NRIC course autumn term 2013 – anonymous on-line survey results from the 16 participants
- Appendix two: Developing reasoning – September 2014
- Appendix three: Securing 2B in mathematics by the end of year 2
- Appendix four: Connecting classrooms brochure

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# Central Bedfordshire Teaching School Partnership

## Teaching school alliance and context

Robert Bloomfield Academy leads the Central Bedfordshire Teaching School Partnership (TSP), established in April 2012. Strategic partners include five upper schools (years 9–13), three middle schools (years 5–8) and five lower schools (years 1–4), the local university, two teacher training institutions and Central Bedfordshire Council. Together these institutions cover the age range of 0–19. The leadership group consists of lead professionals responsible for ITT, R&D, school-to-school support, CPD, leadership and management and SLEs, with a representative of Central Bedfordshire Council leading on NQTs. Lead professionals are accountable to a strategic board, consisting of local headteachers, a representative of the local Diocese as well as a representative from Central Bedfordshire Council.

Central Bedfordshire TSP works alongside Central Bedfordshire to deliver educational services to 138 schools. Notable successes over the past two years have been the setting up of the CPD on-line system; this is already supporting the CPD of 2,000 colleagues. Also, the implementation of schemes such as the improving teacher programme (ITP), the outstanding teacher programme (OTP) from 2015 and achievement for all (AfA) have provided practical support to schools. Our 'leadership ladder' provides a full leadership programme for all levels of our profession progressing from those aspiring to their first promoted post up to new headteacher induction. To support schools, Central Bedfordshire TSP has 13 SLEs. We have expanded our school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) provision by offering a primary teacher training course from September 2014. All areas of work and support are based on key issues identified by Ofsted, the leadership group and the strategic board.

This case study is written from the perspective of the senior leader co-ordinating the project.

## What did the research project set out to achieve? What did the project do?

The area of focus selected for the first year of the project (2012–13) was the JPD strand of the professional development dimension of the Hargreaves maturity model (2011, 2012). This was selected as the key issue, following first an audit of nine alliance schools across all three phases, and second, discussion of the completed audit at a teaching school leadership board meeting.

The research question was formed: 'to what extent do teachers from different phases agree on what makes effective learning in a lesson, what makes effective CPD, and what makes effective leadership of CPD?'

To investigate this question, joint observations as well as staff and student interviews took place in six of our alliance schools (two lowers, two middles and two uppers) moderated by an external consultant. There was almost complete agreement on the Ofsted grade awarded to the six lessons observed, regardless of the teaching phase of the observers. Teacher interviews showed that teachers were agreed on the features of effective lessons, identifying the most effective CPD as “most effective when it related to one’s own practice”.

The summary of the outcomes from the first stage of the research project were:

- The enquiry phase of the research project in 2013-14 must include an enquiry group in a school in each phase.
- The research should be structured around a project that links the CPD sessions to challenging teacher thinking and practice in their normal classrooms in ‘real time’.
- The research project must be linked to measuring impact on real students in lessons as the vehicle to focus teacher thinking and practice.
- The recommendation was three schools should be invited to undertake a lesson study approach to CPD in 2013-14.

### **First steps**

A letter was sent out to all headteachers in Central Bedfordshire inviting them to take part in the project. A lower, middle and upper school was chosen and a school rated by Ofsted as outstanding, good and satisfactory.<sup>7</sup>

### **Choosing project schools**

I wanted to work with schools that had not as yet engaged with Central Bedfordshire TSP, particularly those over to the west of the county. However, only six schools responded to my letter, despite sending this out twice. Also, I had to find a balance of Ofsted categories and one distant school withdrew at the last minute, so I was not able to do this as I wished. One school was 30 miles away from my place of work, one was the school that I work in and where I have held a senior team position for many years, although I was not the SLT link for this project and I know the SLT link well in the third school.

### **Setting up the project**

I recognised the need to have a senior leadership team (SLT) link in each school to drive the project as I would not be available to make sure that the teachers involved adhered to

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<sup>7</sup>Ofsted categories as of July 2012.

the schedule for maximum impact within their schools and for my project deadline. There was a named member of SLT at each school who was not necessarily involved in the actual lesson study work, who became the link with the project leader. In my own school each triad had a named person who would be responsible for driving the project forward according to the cycle. I did this to see if triads became more effective this way as I had read about this as a technique for lesson study.

I visited each school, met with the SLT link to explain the project, talked about choosing triad teachers and possible project areas for their schools and to ensure that each school was committed to the project and could meet the deadlines for completion. Each SLT link was issued with a partnership agreement, detailing the project leader's role as well as that of the school (appendix one). I also issued a timeline to the SLT link so that they would know what they needed to be doing and when in order for the project to succeed. I envisaged reminding the SLT link at key times via e-mail.

I then went back to the schools to train the lesson study triads. I created paperwork to help schools with the processes, particularly when I was not there to ask if they were not sure. This paperwork was for those teachers involved in the triads only, not for me (appendix two and three).

### **Selected projects**

The lower school triads both focussed on science enquiry. Each triad consisted of a year 2, 3 and 4 teacher. They planned the same investigation together with differentiation and challenge according to the year group.

In the middle school, writing was identified from data as an issue in year 5, so one triad working with year 5, focussed on providing a reference resource for pupils to use for written work. The second middle school triad worked on independent learning in mathematics, focussing on a 'big picture' activity.

One triad in the upper school focussed on providing a framework for students to improve their A-level English written grades in the particular area of discourse. In this triad the same teacher delivered the lesson every time. The other triad focussed on vectors in GCSE mathematics, a topic that teachers found difficult to teach and where students did not historically perform well.

### **Maintaining momentum**

The timeline was adjusted as project completion became October rather than June. This was a great help as the training was delayed in all three schools due to meeting clashes and illness.

In the distant lower school I had very little to do in the way of email reminders. At the mid-way point the SLT link contacted me before I reminded her to say that that they had completed their first cycle and were ready for me to interview them.

The upper school completed both cycles according to the timeline as this is what they were doing as part of their JPD programme. I had to remind the SLT link that I needed to interview triad members and remind them I needed the SLT questionnaire too at the mid-way and end points.

### **Barriers and solutions**

In the middle school, cover was an issue for both triads. Triad work was cancelled at the last minute due to lack of cover, despite the fact that money was available to the school for supply for the project. One triad went ahead with two members of the triad in the room and one popping in. This triad was not able to plan together following lesson study principals. I met with this triad to revisit the processes of lesson study and discuss solutions, suggesting the lower school way of working where two supply staff are bought in for the day. This way there can be no last minute cancellation of cover. In the lower school, the triads planned all lessons together one evening before lesson delivery and delivered all lessons over one day. In this school the SLT link mid-way questionnaire suggested that the link person was unclear about their role, so this was discussed. However, I went directly to the triads to ensure that lesson study was happening and did not receive a final evaluation from the SLT link in this school.

## **Impact on capability of teachers and learning of pupils**

My evidence was gathered through interviews of teachers involved in lesson study triads recorded at the mid and end points of the project and questionnaires completed by the SLT links at the mid and end point of the project.

### **Impact on pupils**

#### **Lower school**

In the lower school, pupils were seen to be using more scientific terms to discuss their learning in the lesson and in the pupil interviews. There was a shift in the role of the teacher which was identified by all triad teachers. Teachers were now posing the questions eg demonstrating skittles in water or a raisin in lemonade and pupils then took over.

Pupils were seen to have improved at drawing conclusions. Also, pupils no longer presumed that what they were being told was the truth; they had to test it out for themselves.

One pupil premium pupil, who was very vocal with usually the wrong answers, stopped calling out automatically since the lesson study work and was perceived to be thinking through his answers before calling them out and they were more often correct. All pupil premium pupils were judged by triad members to have made progress. They were able to work more independently, for example they were now using the text book to support them rather than asking the teacher for help straight away. Two lower ability pupils had

made 10 points progress, much of this was attributed to the lesson study work. Less progress was seen for higher achievers, as moving from level 4a to 5c was noted as a particularly large leap to make.

All teachers involved in the science triads agreed that progress had been made due to lesson study work as this year, there were no level 2 pupils in year 4 at the end of the year.

### **Middle school**

The creation of the resource has resulted in pupils being able to work more independently, therefore creating greater capacity for the teacher to support individual needs in lessons.

Middle pupils were seen using 'level speak' within their group conversations and were able to articulate what to do to reach target levels. The competitiveness of the mathematics project led to high pupil engagement and enjoyment.

### **Upper school**

In the vector project undertaken by the mathematics triad, teachers identified an increased use of mathematical language by students. Teachers also saw an improvement in the success at a particularly challenging topic for students and for the teacher. In one group all students improved, most notably pupil premium students. 100 per cent of pupil premium students were unable to complete the vector question at the start of the triad work, but by the end 100 per cent were able to complete the question successfully (appendix four). In the other group, all students increased their understanding; again Pupil Premium students showed the most gain with 66 per cent completing the vector question successfully at the end of the triad work from a starting point of none being able to do the question (appendix five).

In the other upper school project, teachers recognised the value of student feedback and said that they would continue to ask students for this. In one of the upper school projects, students were involved in creating the project resource and giving feedback to improve this. Teachers commented that using the same resource was greatly beneficial as students became familiar and were then able to work more independently due to being able to use the resource independently.

For the triad working on A-level English the creation of an English language framework was seen to increase pupil confidence and the outcome of this was that pupils were more willing to challenge themselves and attempt harder work. Students worked more independently, using resources automatically rather than needing the teacher's help. The teaching was seen to be catering much more for students' needs and allowed students to bridge the gap between classroom essay practice and examination essay writing.

In the English triad at the upper school, progress was seen in timed essay results from the January mock examination (17 students in the group, 2 D grades, the rest achieved E and U grades) to exams in May (all students achieved A and B grades). Three pupil premium students were judged to be making at least the same progress as the rest of the cohort. In 2013 the ALPS ratings (advanced level performance systems) for this group in their AS year was a 7, equating to a judgement of less than satisfactory and placing them in the 10th-24th percentile nationally. This moved to a 6 in their A2 year, equating to a satisfactory in the ALPS ratings and moving them to the 25th-39th percentile as well as moving them from the bottom 25 per cent of achievers into the middle 50 per cent of achievers. Some of this progress was attributed to lesson study work by teachers involved.

Teachers felt that using student views to create resources meant that there was real impact and increased pupil engagement.

## **Impact on teachers**

### **Lower school**

The science triads identified a shift for teachers from focussing on getting pupils to the correct answer, to developing children's skills of analysis, hypothesis and drawing conclusions. The observations and planning of the lesson allowed pupils to increasingly take ownership of their learning.

Teachers reflected that their subject knowledge had improved through working with specialists and discussions within triads. They also noted that their own questioning skills had improved through planning and watching lessons being delivered.

### **Middle school**

Teachers commented that triad work has given them more confidence in the subject. Their realisation that teaching is not only about the right answer, but the way you get there has resulted in lesson planning that is now more focused on skills.

One teacher commented that he now has a greater awareness of success criteria. The result of this for him is that his marking is now more targeted on skills.

In the other project, teachers realised that KS2 and KS3 can be taught the same lesson with differentiation as they used the same project in mathematics with year 5, 7 and 8, building in differentiation.

The triad work boosted the confidence of a teacher in his second year and validated his practice. For two of these teachers, triad work resulted in increased self-reflection on teaching, not just within the lesson study project lessons. The same two teachers felt that this work had been a reminder that they should not assume anything, the same point recognised below by one of the upper school triads.

Teachers reflected that watching a lesson where you knew what was meant to happen was seen as a useful strategy, so teachers could then reflect on how successful it was, followed by a discussion on how to improve for the next lesson in the cycle and this really helped to improve teaching. One teacher involved in this triad said that his teaching grade has improved due to increased opportunities for independent learning, better questioning techniques, resulting in higher pupil engagement. Another teacher said that their teaching grade has improved and that some of this could be attributed to lesson study work. For example, lesson study had led to increased pupil engagement and more use of thinking skills which led to an improved teaching grade.

Teachers felt that they engaged more in lesson study than in formal observations where teachers were just worried and then listening for the grade in their feedback session. Lesson study, unlike formal observations with a summative grade, was seen as unobtrusive because teachers plan the lesson together, meaning they all have ownership of what is being delivered. Also, choosing a focus specific to teacher needs, rather than being told what the focus is according to whole school needs, was seen as much more beneficial and relevant.

### **Upper school**

Triad work had a profound effect on pedagogy and understanding of effective lesson structure. One teacher commented that she does not assume anything and that she now builds in small steps and checks knowledge. Teacher perceptions of what students need to focus on in order to improve has changed significantly. The teacher has been able to verbalise and incorporate into the lessons a better structure for the students of the links between the various aspects of the course which has helped them understand where they are and what they need to do to improve.

The focus of the teaching was seen as moving away from the content and more on how the students learn to apply the frameworks using the texts. Therefore, as seen in the lower and middle school projects due to triad working, there has been a shift away from topics to skills.

Talking about individual pupils and their learning meant that the lesson became better for all pupils. There was a focus on subject skills so the topic was seen as the vehicle to deliver these skills, not the end result.

The opportunities to plan together was seen by triad members in all schools to have an impact on teacher reflection and teacher's own planning, even if they did not teach in the same subject area as the person delivering the lesson.

### **SLT links**

Each senior leader within the three schools was sent a questionnaire at the beginning, mid-point and end of the project in order to gain their views. One senior leader did not return the questionnaire at the end point.

The upper school SLT link commented that the teacher (the same English teacher delivered the planned lesson each time) was able to verbalise and incorporate into the lessons a better structure for the students of the links between the various aspects of the course which has helped the students understand where they are and what they need to do to improve. The lesson study work was then disseminated to other department members and demonstrated to them. This has therefore had an effect on the leadership in KS5 English – as the KS5 leader is more confident about what needs to be done to improve the quality of teaching and learning within the department and how to do this.

In the lower school the senior leader was also in one of the triads. She noted that teachers had become more confident in teaching science enquiry. In addition, triad teachers had become more creative in their planning and were creating open ended lessons. Such was the impact of lesson study work that not only is this being implemented across the school in other subjects and year groups within the school, but also with partner schools.

Teachers warned about the pitfalls also. The whole lesson study process and cycle must be followed to benefit from the process. It takes time, but you need to do this for impact. Commitment from the staff, triad members and SLT is vital. The triads in schools where the SLT link was a triad member seemed to gain most from the project. Perhaps this was because they ensured that cover was available whatever emergency took place on the day of the lesson delivery, perhaps because they kept the triads to the timeframe that I had discussed with them as SLT link. Perhaps these schools were successful because the SLT could see the value of the project as they were actually involved in it. All teachers agreed that for lesson study to succeed, it was crucial that the school honoured their commitment to the time needed to do this. When schools cancelled cover at the last minute motivation was affected as time had already gone into planning the lesson study. Teachers felt that where the cycle was quite tight, eg no delay between lesson delivery and follow up feedback session, lesson study was more effective. It was seen as vital to find times for all stages of planning, delivery and feedback at the outset. The overwhelming view from all phases involved at the mid and end points of the project was that lesson study had made a difference to teaching and learning.

## **Impact on the alliance and alliance partners**

### **Impact on alliance partners**

The three schools involved worked as individual establishments for the project, although I was able to share ideas for the most effective ways of making lesson study work where there were barriers to the success of the project from what I had heard at the other schools. One school is implementing lesson study as their main CPD activity and is introducing their partner schools to lesson study.

## Leadership learning

The three schools had very different models of CPD up to this point.

One school was in the fourth year of lesson study using it as the main CPD vehicle. This school had a budget for lesson study cover, which interestingly was underused, suggesting that staff were committed to lesson study and saw the value. The SLT link took part in a triad for this project. The whole school already engages in lesson study work every year. It was interesting to note that a budget is set aside annually in this school for cover, but this is always underused as staff try to avoid cover and find free time for their planning, such is the belief in the effectiveness of lesson study as a tool to improve teaching and learning. Participating in lesson study triads is also an appraisal expectation at this school.

At another school staff frequently worked in twos or threes as an established form of CPD. The SLT link took part in a triad here too. This school has already started more triad work with other teachers with a different focus.

At the third school peer observations had been undertaken for several years, but the focus for the past three years had been on formal observations and some cycles of these formal observations had been unannounced. The SLT link was not part of a triad in this school.

## Teaching school alliance leadership learning

For my leadership of the project persistence and organisation were very important. I reminded SLT links at various points within the cycles as to what they should be doing and sometimes had to remind several times, not due to unwillingness on their part, but due to other workload pressures. In other schools they acted as soon as I contacted them with a reminder. In one case, the school reminded me that it was time for my mid-point visit such was their engagement with the project.

I had thought through the process and actually been involved in a triad the previous year. This helped as I provided materials that I knew worked. The lesson observation sheets and prompt sheets for questions to pupils were seen as useful and helped to clarify the processes once I had done the initial training (appendix two and three). I was not just telling people that this worked, but could point out the successes and possible barriers from personal experience.

Clarity of roles was important so that the SLT link knew what they should be doing and when. This was established on my initial visit, although in one school the SLT member seemed unclear in her mid-point analysis. This is the school where I met with one triad to go through the lesson study methodology in order to make the second part of the project more effective.

It was important for me to build up trust with the triad members so that they were honest in the interviews. For instance, this meant being reliable, doing what I said I was going to do when I was meant to do it.

The fact that the three schools had different CPD cultures was a challenge.

In one school where triad working was very new, I chose one person to be the triad member who would make sure cycles were going to plan. In this school one teacher was not convinced of the value of lesson study at the mid-point. Cover had been cancelled at the last minute, but the triad had tried to continue with the lesson by popping in and out. I met with this triad to talk about the value of lesson study and to get the triad back on track. One of the triad comments in their interview that this was very helpful. I then kept in touch with members of this triad to ensure that their cover was in place and that they were on track with the cycle. I was only able to do this as I work at this school four days a week. If I had not been able to talk to the triad members at this school I would not have known the situation and I think that the SLT link would have had to monitor the triad work much more closely to ensure that it worked successfully in both triads. If this had not happened I think that the project would have failed for one of these triads.

Providing a partnership agreement, stating my role and the role of the school was useful as it started a dialogue in the initial meeting and was useful to refer back to.

Providing paperwork to support those taking part was useful, particularly for the two schools that I did not have close contact with. At the mid-point 17 (out of 18) participating teachers were available for interviews and 16 for the final interviews. All interviews took place at lunchtime, after school or in non-contact time and one completed a written version of the interview, which shows that staff were engaged. Having an SLT link was helpful so that there was just one person in each school for me to contact, rather than six (three in each triad). Choosing a leader from each triad in one school did not work so well in one triad as the view seemed to be that the actual triad work ie planning, observing, teaching and evaluating was extra work without the additional work of being the person to lead the triad. This is the school where triad working was very new.

SLTs need to demonstrate that they support the activity. This can be demonstrated by providing cover so that triad work can go ahead and by asking triad members about how the project is going. Dissemination of the project in the school during or afterwards raises the profile, especially if the school wishes this form of CPD to continue or to roll it out to others. In one school all staff are involved in lesson study. They held an evening where teachers could visit each other to find out about their focus. The best practice was when after this, there were follow up department meetings to talk about what staff had done as a result.

One school had already started to develop lesson study across the school in other year groups and subjects before the end of the project such was the impact of this work.

They are also looking at developing lesson study with their partnership schools, so other schools in the alliance will benefit from the project.

Dissemination of the impact of lesson study on teaching will take place at a Central Bedfordshire conference later in the year as well as being placed on the TSA website. A copy will be sent to each SLT link and each triad member. I intend to contact all alliance headteachers to offer the opportunity to take part in a lesson study project over the next academic year. Three or four schools will then be selected to work with. I will be able to use the findings of this project as evidence that lesson study has real impact on teaching and learning.

## Appendix one: partnership agreement

Year 2: action research - lesson study approach at ..... School

### Research School Agreement

#### **School commitments. The school will:**

Identify an SLT member to act as the school link with the ..... teaching school partnership R&D co-ordinator.

Select the six teachers and allocate them into two triads.

Provide capacity for the six selected teachers to take part in four cycles of planning, observations and evaluations, two in the autumn term and two in the spring term.

Provide capacity for the six selected staff to meet with the R&D co-ordinator at the end of the autumn term and at the end of the project (July 2014) in order to evaluate the project.

Inform parents and students as to the purpose and nature of the research project and obtain parental permission.

#### **Teaching school commitments. Teaching school will:**

Provide training in the lesson study approach for selected teachers

Provide ongoing support as necessary during the project

Provide some financial support to facilitate the lesson study approach

Provide feedback at the mid and end points of the project to the school

#### **Ethics and safeguarding:**

1. All activities will be confidential and anonymised. No individual will be able to be identified in any summary of any of the research activity.
2. All individuals involved – teacher or student – will have the opportunity to withdraw from the research.

#### **Agreement:**

We agree to the commitments identified in this research school agreement.

School representative: (please print, sign & date)	Teaching school representative:
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## Appendix two: lesson study planning and observation record

	Lesson Study 2013/14		Planning and observation record	
Teaching teacher:	Observing teachers:		Class:	Date / period:
Which specific teaching focus is this lesson study aiming to develop?				
	Student A:		Student B:	
<b>Relevant detail</b>  (Why are they your case students?)				
<b>Lesson plan:</b>  (Learning activities and questions)	<b>Expected student response</b>	<b>Actual student response</b>	<b>Expected student response</b>	<b>Actual student response</b>
<b>What progress did each student make?</b>  (evidence from lesson)				
<b>Review</b>  What was the student feedback?				
What would you improve?	<b>Techniques for improvement:</b>		<b>Why do you think it will work?</b>	

## Appendix three: student prompt questions

Possible student prompts

	<b>Case student 1</b>	<b>Case student 2</b>
What did you enjoy about this lesson?		
What did you learn?		
How did you learn these things?		
What part of the teaching and learning activities helped you?		
What did you not enjoy about the lesson?		
What did you find hard to learn?		
Would you know why it was hard?		
What part of the teaching and learning activities did not help you?		
What could change to help you learn better?		

## Appendix four: learning triad – effectiveness of vector lesson

The following exam question appeared at both the start of the lesson and as the plenary in the following lesson.

Figure 1: Vector exam question (1)

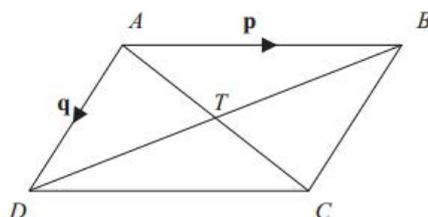


Diagram **NOT** accurately drawn

$AC$  and  $BD$  are diagonals of parallelogram  $ABCD$ .  
 $AC$  and  $BD$  intersect at  $T$ .

→  
 (b) Express  $AT$  in terms of  $\mathbf{p}$  and  $\mathbf{q}$ .

My impression was that no students could do the question at the start of the lesson and that most were able to tackle it with some success during the next lesson.

Looking at pupils books to get hard evidence (10R4).

Table 2: Outcome of learning triad – vector lesson (1)

Number of students	Pupils able to do question at start of lesson	Pupils able to complete whole question correctly next lesson	Pupils able to get half way through question correctly at end of lesson	Pupils able to tackle with some success	Pupils still unable to do question by end
22	0	14 (64%)	5	19 (87%)	3
	High ability				
9	0	5 (63%)	2	7 (88%)	2
	Middle ability				
13	0	9 (69%)	3	12 (92%)	1
	Low ability				
0	0	0	0	0	0
	Pupil premium				
2	0	2 (100%)	0	2 (100%)	0

## Appendix five: learning triad – effectiveness of vector lesson

The following exam question appeared at both the start of the lesson and as the plenary.

Figure 2: Vector exam question (2)

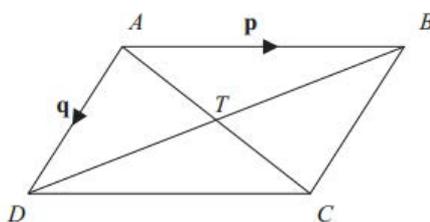


Diagram **NOT** accurately drawn

$AC$  and  $BD$  are diagonals of parallelogram  $ABCD$ .

$AC$  and  $BD$  intersect at  $T$ .

(b) Express  $\vec{AT}$  in terms of  $\mathbf{p}$  and  $\mathbf{q}$ .

My impression was that no students could do the question at the start of the lesson and that most were able to tackle it with some success at end.

Looking at pupils books to get hard evidence (10S2).

Table 3: Outcome of learning triad – vector lesson (2)

Number of students	Pupils able to do question at start of lesson	Pupils able to complete whole question correctly by end of lesson	Pupils able to get half way through question correctly at end of lesson	Pupils able to tackle with some success	Pupils still unable to do question by end
25	0	14 (56%)	6	20 (80%)	5
	High ability				
19	0	10 (53%)	5	15 (79%)	4
	Middle ability				
6	0	4 (67%)	1	5 (83%)	1
	Low ability				
0	0	0	0	0	0
	Pupil premium				
3	0	2 (67%)	0	2 (67%)	1

# Eos Teaching School Alliance

## Context

The teaching school at the heart of Eos TSA is Hartsholme Academy in Lincoln, a primary academy serving an inner city community. Placed in special measures following an Ofsted inspection in 2009, the school moved to outstanding in two years and was then awarded 'most innovative primary school' in 2013 (education innovation awards).

Designated as a teaching school in April 2013, the leadership team at Hartsholme Academy formed the Eos TSA, a national and international network of like-minded schools with a shared mission and core principles:

Creating synergy with other likeminded organisations and partners; challenging the system to develop bespoke solutions for young people leading to outstanding outcomes for their future in the 21st century and beyond.

In autumn 2013, around 40 schools were working with the alliance across primary, secondary and special phases. The largest group is still in Lincolnshire but there are also schools from a much wider area including Cornwall, Bristol, Sheffield, Newcastle, Norfolk and Leicester.

The alliance also has international members with the Vega schools in India and a group of schools in Australia, as well as links with High Tech High in the USA.

The core steering group is made up of two executive directors (one of whom is the executive head at Hartsholme Academy), the director of the TSA, and seven head teachers, consultant heads and local leaders of education (LLEs) from across the alliance.

Strategic partners include:

- Innovation Unit
- Nottingham Trent University
- Bishop Grosseteste University Lincoln
- High Tech High, USA
- Learners First
- Osiris Educational
- David Price OBE, Mike Hughes, Roy Leighton

## The research project: what did we do?

In July 2013 a core group from the alliance steering group worked with the Innovation Unit to establish the vision for the alliance. A significant outcome from this work was the formation of a set of core 'design principles' on which all alliance work would be based. (see appendix one) This was an important first step, linking to Hargreaves' critical components of complex collaboration – magnets, glue and drivers. The Eos TSA design principles form the 'magnets' that attracted schools into the alliance (Hargreaves 2011).

### First cycle

Given that a number of schools were beginning to use project based learning (PBL), the initial question for the first cycle was chosen based on the alliance design principles of teachers planning and designing in teams within schools and across the alliance, with a specific focus on planning for rigorous real world projects. The focus question was 'what is the impact of joint lesson planning and project tuning on the quality of teaching and learning?' The intended outcome was to test whether such collaborative working would create the 'learning commons' described by Price in his work *Open* (2013).

Within the Hargreaves maturity model, the focus was in the area of JPD, and a specific intervention was chosen from the toolkit, namely 'facilitating systematic joint lesson planning across schools'.

Research visits to High Tech High schools in the USA had enabled some alliance members to see the impact of this approach on students and teachers, namely that by insisting teachers share their learning and model collaborative working to the students, student outcomes (including academic but more specifically with real-world skills) were significantly raised. *Work that Matters* from the learning futures project (Patton, 2012) also provided useful guidance on the structures and protocols for developing PBL. Berger's work with Expeditionary Learning schools and from his book *An Ethic of Excellence* (2003) were also key guidance.

Four primary schools were identified to take part, with specific year group teams chosen and paired up with those in a partner school to work together. Schools were chosen based on their level of engagement with the pedagogy of project based and immersive learning. Most of the schools had already engaged in some form of professional development within the alliance, for example attending an open day at Hartsholme Academy or a shared training day. The initial communication was with the headteachers who then identified those teachers they felt best placed to take part. Two larger schools identified year 3/4 teams (5 or 6 classes, approx. 150-180 students) and two smaller schools their year 2 teams (4 classes, 120 students). The schools in each pairing were not geographically close.

Project Tuning follows a specific protocol after the project plan has been designed and co-constructed (see appendix two).

The teacher brings their project plan to a group of colleagues who give structured and constructive feedback, help to identify potential problems and follow the critique process which is another key element of the PBL pedagogy. The protocol is formal and tight with a focus on probing questions and discussion.

At the end of the first cycle review discussions found that, whilst collaborative planning and tuning was developing within individual schools, the work across pairs of schools had not happened with any success. Tentative steps were being taken by individual teachers and teams to share learning informally with others in the alliance, for example using Twitter feeds, with positive feedback. How could trust and social capital be developed further in the second cycle? Hargreaves described the need to start with school leaders and feed the trust downwards through the alliance. Price describes how leaders must not only believe and invest in a collaborative learning culture, 'they have to live it, too' (Price, 2013: 135). The focus for the second cycle would therefore shift to examine how trust and social capital amongst alliance leaders could be developed and modelled.

### **Second cycle – summer term 2014**

A second focus question was formulated - How can we build a collaborative system which develops self-sustaining networks across a geographically widespread alliance? Within the Hargreaves model this represented a shift from JPD to establishing trust and high social capital, with a new intervention – 'using an external facilitator to help build trust and broker relationships'. The intended outcomes of this cycle were to establish a measure of trust which could be used across the alliance, to understand the key strengths and skills of alliance leaders and to build sufficient trust at leadership level to enable true collaboration to move to all levels.

An external facilitator agreed to work with a group of 10 alliance leaders, asked to participate because their schools had the potential to become regional alliance hubs and because they personally were committed to building the networks and engaging with the facilitator. The leaders represented three secondary schools and five primary schools plus the alliance director and executive directors.

Over a three month period, the group met regularly including one residential session with socratic dinner, rotating around different schools and geographical locations each time. Sessions explored the interrelated elements of the 'Butterfly Model matrix'<sup>8</sup> - the values, intelligences and creative processes linked to the four key human needs: to question, develop relationships, resilience and results (Leighton, 2012). A significant part of the work was based in the research of Dr. Clare Graves (1970) and the work of Beck and Cowan (1996) which took Graves's research and developed it further.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.royleighton.com/the-butterfly-model1>

In particular, the following questions were key to the discussion and learning:

- What values do we hold and what motivates us as individuals?
- What values do we share as a group and how do we motivate each other?
- Where are we as a group / alliance within the Hero's Journey / Learning Line (Leighton, 2012)?
- How do the developmental phases of Graves's model relate to the development of the alliance?
- How do our individual strengths and drivers complement the others in the group to create an effective team?
- How do we widen the creativity of the initial group to others to ensure we all have a shared passion for change?

An important element throughout the cycle was to develop a way for the participants to communicate and collaborate between facilitated sessions. An online community was created to enable the group to post thoughts and reflections, links to relevant reading and photos/clips of learning taking place in their own schools. Participants could also take part in additional online discussions to remove barriers created by geographical location.

A trust survey was developed, based on the model from Hargreaves (2011) and completed by group participants to establish a baseline, who also contributed to the leadership learning logs.

Alongside the work with this small group, the alliance was developing a peer-to-peer school review process based on the alliance design principles which would be trialled in several schools during the cycle and would provide evidence of wider outcomes for students, staff and schools.

## **Impact on capability of teachers and learning of pupils**

**Cycle one: joint lesson planning and project tuning** - feedback and evidence from peer reviews indicate that collaborative planning processes have increased in use and effectiveness as a result of the focus on joint planning and project tuning in all schools involved. However, the extent to which it has improved practice is variable and dependent on several factors

- length of time teachers have been using and planning for PBL
- coaching culture in the school
- whether the use of PBL is limited to one team or is used across the whole school

Individual schools all had training from either High Tech High or Hartsholme Academy staff and explored the tuning protocol. In one school where the staff were very new to planning for PBL, even though teachers were already used to planning in teams, they were not sufficiently confident with the tuning protocols to try the process with their partner school. Instead, they preferred to try out the processes within their own team and spread the practice to other year group teams within their own school. This worked well and the planning process now involves the whole school staff – project designing now takes place collaboratively with:

- ideas sharing at initial stages for designing project outcomes and essential questions
- project tuning involving all teachers following a year group planning day
- project tuning during the course of the project

This has enabled teachers to refine and develop the essential elements of each project to ensure that outcomes are real, purposeful and engaging.

The strategy was more successful for those schools where a coaching culture was already embedded. Feedback from staff indicated that these teachers were more comfortable with the tuning process, in particular taking on the roles of presenter and ‘tuner’, and in asking probing questions whilst keeping the process supportive.

As a result of increased teacher confidence, a further development has been the involvement of students and parents in the planning stages in all the schools. For example, one school sends out leaflets inviting parents to contribute ideas, skills and knowledge for each new project. All four schools involve students by discussing the project plan and using the students’ ideas for immersive environments, exhibitions and real outcomes. All schools reported that the involvement of students in planning and designing projects increased engagement and motivation for learning significantly, with most schools also reporting increased engagement from parents.

Evidence from the peer-to-peer school review trial (including learning walks; discussions with students and staff; and scrutiny of planning and student work) indicates that, in those schools adopting the collaborative planning strategy, teachers spend a greater amount of time in professional dialogue and reflection on their practice, teachers and students feel more inspired by the projects, and both planning and teaching is of a higher quality than that previously observed and monitored by senior leaders.

Whilst the schools did not achieve the initial goal of teachers planning with colleagues in **other** schools, the success of the strategy **within** schools has had a significant impact. Although teachers are not yet formally planning and tuning together across schools, they are definitely communicating more and sharing ideas informally via online communities and social networks. Reflective feedback from individual teachers indicates that they feel this has a positive impact on the quality of their planning within their own teams / schools.

This suggests that a self-organising system is beginning to emerge through building digital links - individuals are engaging in self-directed learning and feeding off each other.

## **Impact on the alliance and alliance partners**

### **Cycle two: building a collaborative system which develops self-sustaining networks.**

As a result of the work in the second cycle, the most significant impact on the alliance has been in the partnership competence dimension of Hargreaves' maturity model, particularly the high social capital strand involving trust and reciprocity.

A trust survey was used as a baseline measure and completed during cycle two and will to be repeated during the autumn term (appendix four). As such it does not yet show changes over time for each school. However there was a clear distinction in responses depending on the length of time the school had been in the alliance. For example, on questions referring to trust, openness, care and support within a participant's own school, all responses were in the positive bracket (1-3) with the majority scoring 1 or 2. However, when examining the related statements referring to alliance colleagues, schools in the alliance less than 12 months scored more responses dipping into the negative bracket whilst schools in the alliance or working with Hartsholme Academy for over 18 months responded much more positively. Two responses were from teachers rather than school leaders, these also indicated less trust in alliance colleagues than the responses of alliance leaders, perhaps reflecting the greater amount of time the leaders in the research group had already spent working together. As there were only two responses in this category however no certain conclusions can be reached and would indicate an interesting opportunity to repeat the survey with a larger group and greater spread of roles within schools.

Involving senior leaders directly in the second cycle resulted in significantly more 'buy-in' at leadership levels than in the first cycle. Participants' responses, both during the face-to-face sessions and through posts in the private online community indicate that there are now much higher levels of openness and honesty amongst this alliance group and much more willingness to share intellectual capital. There is emerging evidence that this is resulting in greater collaboration between schools at other levels of leadership and teaching, although it is too early to state this with secure evidence.

By the end of the second cycle the group participants had taken on more ownership of the process and they were able to relate the model to the development plan for the alliance as a whole. Understanding the group through spiral dynamics, both in terms of individuals' skills and strengths and in the stages of development of the alliance as a group, is enabling alliance partners to begin to work more closely, for example with the peer to peer review process. The first school from this group became a regional hub in

the autumn term 2014, with sufficient confidence to begin advising and supporting other schools in their local area.

For alliance leaders and particularly the steering group, the second cycle work on spiral dynamics has also impacted positively on the 'disciplined innovation' strand within the collaborative capital dimension of the maturity model. Feedback indicates that there is a clearer vision and plan for how the alliance will develop over time, with agreed priorities for innovation to improve teaching and learning which are reflected clearly in the peer review documents. Some of the schools involved in this cycle are already advising and supporting other schools in these innovations through shared JPD.

## **Teaching school alliance leadership learning**

### **Leadership skills and behaviours**

Appendix three gives a summary of the responses from participants for the leadership logs.

Motivation received the highest score, with strategy, communication, entrepreneurial judgement, teamwork and interpersonal skills also high.

Motivation was related directly to the work with the facilitator on aligning people to work towards a common goal. All participants indicated that gaining a deeper understanding of each other's values, drivers and skills was a key factor in developing a deep trust in order to work together more effectively. One participant also commented that the work had enabled her to engage in similar trust building activities with her own staff team, motivating them in turn to widen their work with other schools and create wider commitment to the alliance design principles.

The other high scoring areas also related to the skills and behaviours required to create an effective team and in building and sharing the vision and strategy for the alliance, all of which were covered within the second cycle's work. Again, participants reflected on how they were now beginning to translate this work into work with their own staff teams, building capacity and shared commitment.

### **Key leadership challenges**

Within cycle one, reflections and feedback suggested we were trying to move faster than some schools were ready for; they needed time to establish new systems in their own schools before having confidence to work with other schools.

Having project leads within each school to ensure commitment from staff and to liaise with the main project lead would have been more successful also, as it was difficult for the single project lead to meet regularly with all the schools.

Within cycle two, because this work directly involved key leaders at school and alliance level, and was specifically aimed at developing trust and relationships at leadership level, there was much more buy-in, especially where those leaders were able to attend all face-to-face sessions. This in itself is a challenge at leadership level due to diary and own school pressures. However, for the schools whose leaders were involved, the majority now have greater levels of commitment to the success of the alliance and are seeing greater partnership working at teacher level, as reflected in the leadership logs (although this would next need to be quantified through a wider trust survey).

Hargreaves refers to building deep trust for high social capital – ‘trust is built slowly, especially for leaders, who may have to share fears and anxieties as well as hopes and aspirations about the partnership. Building deep trust within one school is a significant challenge for school leaders: building trust across schools is an even tougher challenge for forging a successful strategic alliance’. The participants in the group with the external facilitator explored each individual’s and each school’s strengths, values and drivers in depth, and this understanding helped ‘all parties believe they have something to offer to others and something to gain from others. This conviction that schools have complementary strengths allows social capital, in its core of trust and reciprocity, to flourish’ (Hargreaves, 2011: 11 and 19).

It became clear during the second cycle that enabling individuals to engage with their community online was an important factor in the success of the group, especially when individuals were restricted in attending face-to-face sessions by significant geographical distance. The development of the private online community allowed the group to share, discuss and reflect on their learning in real time but with the security of a private group to maintain the element of trust. Learning was also expanded in this way as new links, articles and research ideas were shared easily.

### **Lessons about leadership of successful TSAs which improve teaching and learning**

- Starting with key leaders / figures in the alliance - ensure ‘buy-in’ and shared commitment at this level before it can successfully transfer to other levels across partners and schools.
- Taking time as a leadership group to really know each other’s values, drivers and strengths – clear vision and strategic direction in order to plan successfully and to know who is best placed to take on each role.
- Understanding the development path or ‘learning line’ of the organisation – understanding where the current position is and what the shared destination is within a set time period, but also knowing where the leading group are in relation to others joining at later stages – not getting so far ahead that the journey feels unrealistic for others to reach.

- Ensuring everyone can share their learning easily and quickly but also with security to enable openness, honesty and trust to develop – the power of online communities.

Alliance leaders continue to share learning via the online community and are developing further communities for new groups, for example for those engaging in the peer reviews.

The first regional hub opened in October 2014 and is led by one of the participants in the second cycle research group.

Future research priorities are likely to focus on key features of PBL, including the impact of critique on the quality of students' work, and the impact of PBL and immersive learning on student achievement and community engagement.

## Appendices

Appendices one, two and three are included in this case study. Appendix four (Trust survey results) is available on the alliance website<sup>9</sup>.

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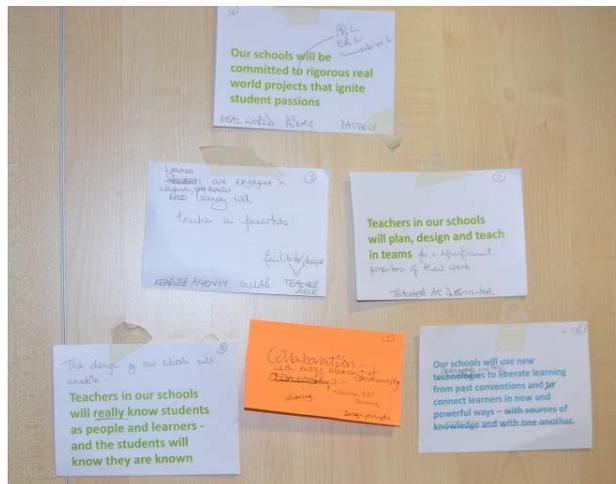
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<sup>9</sup> [www.eoseducation.co.uk](http://www.eoseducation.co.uk)

# Appendix one: EOS design principles

Innovation Unit workshop: July 2013



**Our schools will be committed to rigorous real world projects that ignite student passions**

**Learners are engaged in collaborative, self-directed learning with teachers as facilitators**

**The design of our schools will enable teachers to really know students as people and learners – and the students will know they are known**

**Students demonstrate excellent rates of progress and academic achievement placing them with or above their peers**

**Collaboration – with every element of the community**

**Teachers in our schools will plan, design and teach in teams for a significant proportion of their work**

**Our schools will use new pedagogies and tools to liberate learning from past conventions and connect learners in new and powerful ways**

## Appendix two: Project tuning protocols

### Norms

- Be hard on content, soft on the person
- Share the air (step up and step back)
- Be kind, helpful, and specific

### Presenter (4 minutes – group may only listen, not talk)

Explain the gist of your project (product, process, content) and, if you can, explain an 'issue' you have that you would like the group to focus on.

### Clarifying questions (3 minutes)

Tuners have an opportunity to ask 'clarifying' questions in order to get information that may have been omitted in the presentation that they feel would help them better understand the project and / or issue. Responses should be short answer or yes / no.

### Probing questions (4 min)

Participants get the opportunity to ask deeper questions. These are meant to challenge the thinking of the presenter.

### Discussion (7 minutes)

The presenter sits quietly and physically pulls back from the group and listens (may not talk). The presenter should take notes as the participants discuss the project with one another and share warm and cool feedback. Please do not involve the presenter in this step.

### Reflection (4 minutes)

Presenter speaks to what he / she got out of the listening experience.

### Reflection (2 minutes)

Participants comment on the process.

## Appendix three: leadership learning log - summary

How instrumental were the following leadership skills / behaviours in making your selected intervention(s) effective during this cycle of activity? Using individual responses, the results have been combined to show those skills / behaviours rated **high**, **medium** or **low** overall by the group.

**Table 4: Leadership learning log**

<b>Strategy</b>	Translating the alliance's vision and the board's priorities into a plan of action with agreed milestones.	High
<b>Communication</b>	Creating a simple, clear narrative or strategy for what the alliance is trying to achieve.	High
<b>Entrepreneurial judgement</b>	Encouraging new ideas and approaches as the alliance develops and being able to assess and mitigate risks from new ventures.	High
Performance	An unremitting focus on improving results and outcomes, as well as on inputs, outputs and process.	Low
Analysis	Deploying staff and resources efficiently across schools in the alliance according to analysed need and to maximise economies of scale.	Low
<b>Teamwork</b>	Demonstrating a belief in staff, fostering a sense of teamwork and adopting practices to enable working through others.	High
<b>Interpersonal skills</b>	Practising interpersonal skills, persuading through vision and modelling collaborative behaviours.	High
Accountability	Leading in a clear but open way by working closely with chairs of governors and empowering senior and middle leaders.	Low
<b>Motivation</b>	Creating and sustaining commitment across the alliance; aligning people to work towards a common goal.	High
Discernment	Understanding the different contexts of schools, identify their distinctive problems and the strategies needed at different points in their improvement journeys.	Med
Learning	Continuing to be a leader of learning and fostering self as well as staff development.	Med
Personal resilience and tenacity	Demonstrating the ability to see things through and work through challenges.	Med

# Fairfields Teaching School Alliance

## Teaching school alliances and context

Fairfields School is a community special school for pupils between the ages of 3 and 11, with severe and profound learning difficulties. The school is located in Northampton and serves the town and the south and west of Northamptonshire. In July 2014 the school had 117 pupils on roll.

Fairfields has been recognised three times by Ofsted as being an outstanding school in every category and are committed to the highest quality educational provision and opportunity for the children.

Fairfields was last inspected in March 2014. The Ofsted report stated that:

Teaching is inspirational. Teachers plan creatively to ensure activities are closely tailored to pupil's capabilities. They provide the correct level of challenge to help pupils to move on to their next important small step in learning.

The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils enjoy learning because teachers remove obstacles that could interfere with their learning. For example, they position pupils comfortably, when required, using specially adapted chairs so that they can reach the equipment they need to learn.

Fairfields was designated as a teaching school in April 2012 (Cohort 2).

In July 2014 the strategic board was made up of six members and they were responsible for co-ordinating the 'big 6' areas. There were also 35 alliance members made up of primary, secondary and special schools and a university to provide the accreditation for ITT.

Fairfields had the desire to become a teaching school as they had the philosophy to train every teacher to teach every child. All work was carried out in the six key areas but the main priorities were ITT and R&D.

When planning for ITT initial decisions were made by the strategic board, the responsibility for ITT was designated to the lead school (Fairfields) who had a leadership group to develop the work in this area. The R&D case study linked into this work focused on the role of the mentor and their journey from mentor to coach in supporting their students in being reflective practitioners. This was led by a middle leader within the lead school.

Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.

Benjamin Franklin

## What did the research project set out to achieve?

School Direct is a school based learning route into teaching launched in 2012, with the first cohort of students training during 2013-14. School experience is a key element of the programme with students being based in settings for an academic year (two placements). The programme aims to be intellectually challenging whilst fully preparing the student for the practical demands of teaching.

As ITT was a key priority for the teaching school, it was decided that student progress and achievement was essential to the success of the programme. To ensure this was achieved the emphasis was put on the knowledge and skills of the school-based mentor as their role was paramount in the process. This then linked into the alliance R&D project. This also linked into the mentoring and coaching strand and the alliance architecture strand of the Hargreaves maturity model (2011, 2012). An action plan for the project was written and a research question set.

- **Can the development of the skills of a mentor impact on the progress of an ITT student?**

Once the ITT students had been selected and placed in their main placement schools, headteachers were asked to select a school based mentor to support their student. There were no criteria for this at the time (see appendices one and two for criteria developed after the project concluded). Some mentors were asked to undertake the role based on their experience and expertise and others requested to assume the role as part of their own professional development. The skills, knowledge and experience of the mentors ranged between novice and extremely experienced mentors, some of whom had whole school leadership responsibilities. The majority of the mentors had carried out this role in other ITT programmes (postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE), BA with primary teaching qualified teacher status (BAQTS)).

All mentors were then audited on their mentoring skills (appendix three). The audit was compiled by the alliance leads and covered the variety of strengths and skills required by a mentor. This was sent to each mentor and they were asked to rate themselves through a range of 1-4. These results were collated and analysed.

The main development needs of the group focused on giving feedback, gaining new insights, questioning, having a balance of talking and listening, and being able to support others in exploring a situation. Bespoke training was then delivered to provide the mentors with the appropriate skills required during the programme, covering language strategies for mentoring, questions and problem solving, motivation and coaching skills.

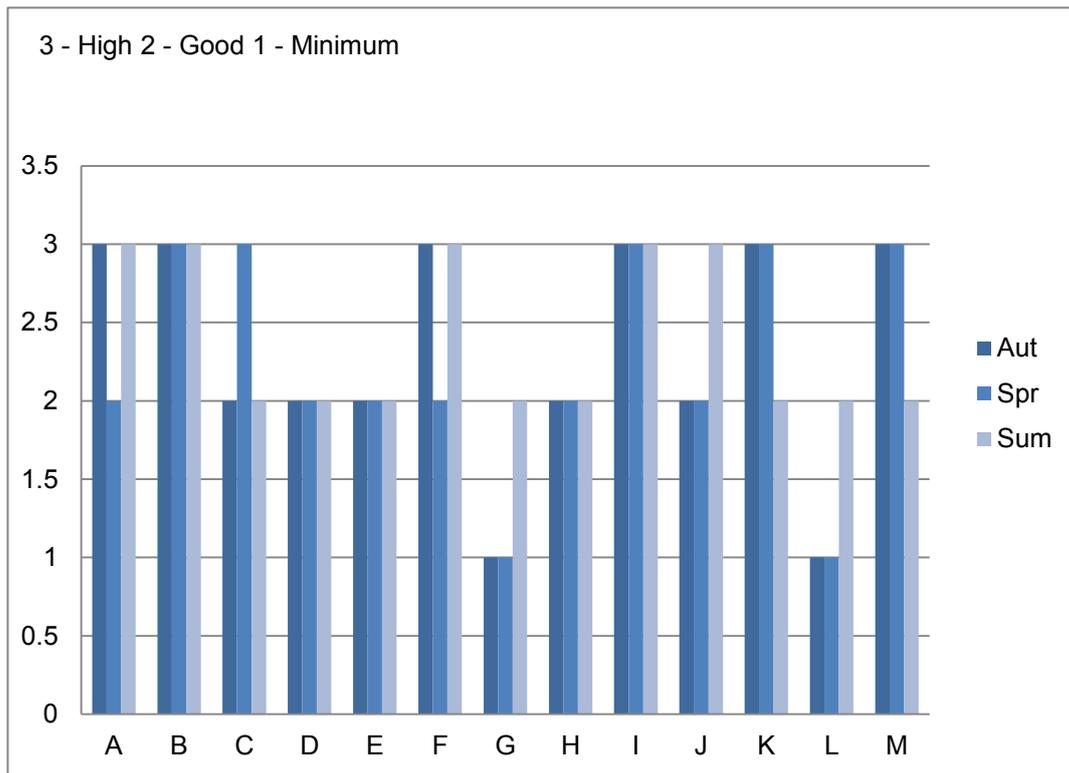
In addition to this training, the university provided sessions which had a focus on the delivery and assessment required throughout the programme.

This training was well received by the mentors and positive feedback was given in the evaluations.

Regular mentor meetings were held over the academic year, hosted by the teaching school and / or the university.

During the programme student achievement was also monitored. Each mentor monitored the students' progress against the teaching standards and set targets using University assessment forms through the format of a weekly review and then produced a final report at the end of each placement. Copies of this assessment were shared with the teaching school so student progress could be tracked over the academic year.

**Figure 3: Student grade assessment points 1, 2 and 3**



Students were visited at the start of the programme by the alliance professional tutor and then throughout their placements by a university personal tutor. The professional tutor monitored the student progress and was then used if / when needed to add additional support. At the end of the academic year the mentors were sent the audit again to assess whether their skills had improved over the academic year. They were also asked to evaluate the School Direct programme.

## **Mentor evaluation (based on 7 evaluation forms returned)**

### **How would you rate information, support and structure of the programme?**

Mentors gave grades of excellent and good. Comments were made about the structure of the programme and how this had improved once the students were on placement four days a week.

### **At the beginning of the programme we delivered some mentor skills training. Have you been able to use this training during the programme?**

All mentors responded 'yes'.

Example of success:

The coaching skills were used when giving feedback to the student. Through this strategy they were able to identify areas of development and select their own targets.

### **Information of successes in the programme**

- positive ongoing support networks
- regular mentor meetings

### **Recommendations for future programmes**

- opportunities for first placement and second placement mentors to meet and discuss each placement
- communication – consistency between the university and alliance
- ensuring content in sessions delivered by the university and alliance is not duplicated

### **Impact on capability of teachers**

When comparing the results of both the mentor audits (of the number that were returned) it was evident that mentors felt their skills had improved in all areas, when looking at the average score.

Figure 4: Comparison between audits carried out in September 2013 and July 2014

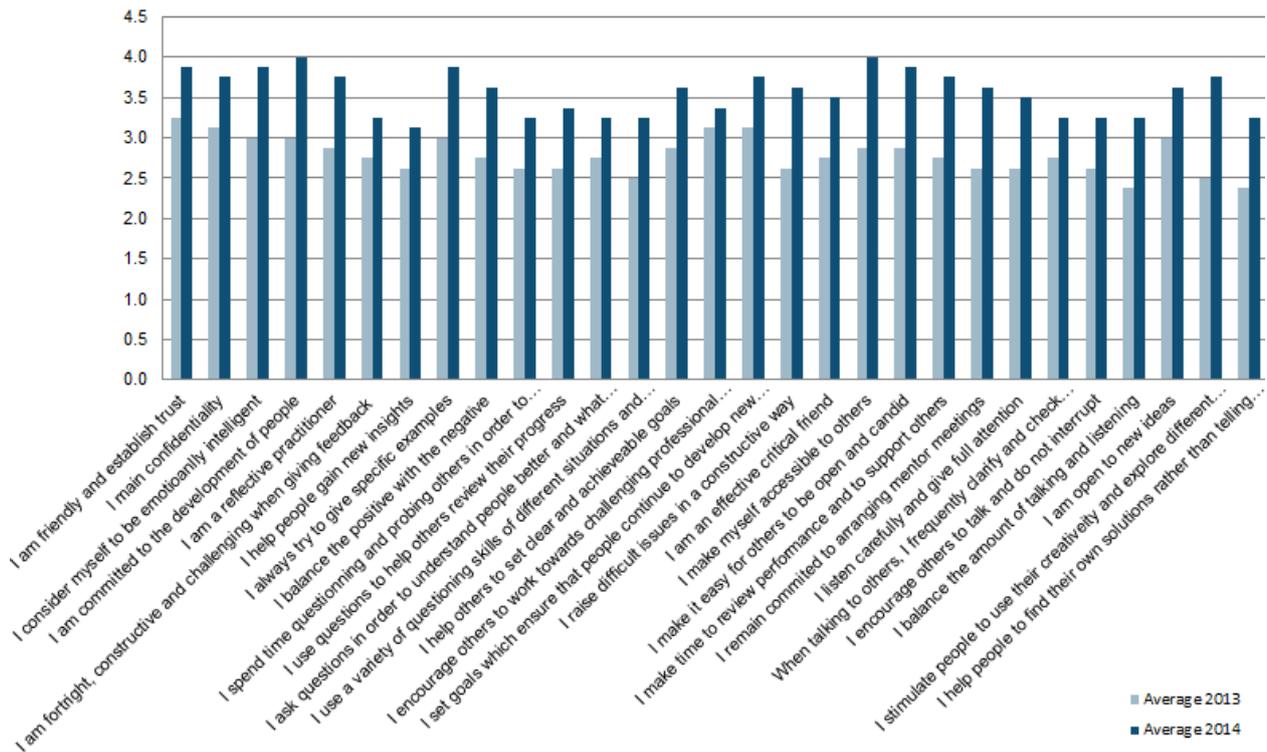


Figure 4 shows there was an impact through the training and support that was given through the university and the alliance but also in the mentors' confidence to fulfil the role within their setting. The main increase in the score was in 'stimulating people to use their creativity and explore different situations' which shows a clear link to using coaching strategies.

All students passed the School Direct programme with either a good or high grade. They all secured jobs ready for the start of the academic year 2014-15. The university and alliance were confident that each student was 'NQT ready' and had a clear development plan for their induction into teaching.

The bespoke training had an impact on developing the skills of the mentors.

All mentors expressed that the training day was either good or excellent, providing a good introduction to mentoring and an opportunity for professionals to reflect on their own practice and strategies to use when mentoring. The coaching element of the training focused on the GROW technique, which focus' on the **goal** the person wants to receive, **reality** of what is currently happening, **options** of what the individual could do, and the action points for the future promoting the **way** forward. This provided the mentors with the opportunity to structure there sessions with their student, supporting them to identify their own strengths and areas of development but also the journey to achieve their goals.

Direct feedback from the mentors included the following comments:

- The training has empowered me to coach my assigned trainee.



## Impact on alliance and alliance partners

During the project the members of the strategic board were updated on a regular basis about the developments, and this information was disseminated down to alliance members through the teaching school newsletter.

The strategic board were more involved through the key area of ITT. It was identified quite early on in the School Direct programme that good lines of communication between the alliance and the university were essential, especially during term one. This was mainly due to some final changes in the ITT programme by the university to ensure it was meeting the Government *School Direct Operational manual* (NCTL, 2014). This highlighted the importance of ensuring the programme is finalised and all training and paperwork is completed before the training year begins.

As this was the first year of School Direct, it was also evident that the strategic board and university had to work in partnership, the teaching school leading the programme with the university providing the assessment and accreditation body.

When selecting a higher education institute (HEI) provider for the School Direct programme it is important to consider what the programme is going to look like and that the students have optimum time in the classroom, while meeting the programme expectations for the alliance.

As alliance leaders it is essential to have a shared ethos with strategic priorities which are connected through a common purpose. The distributed leadership model was used effectively to develop middle leaders within the project, with the alliance leading and the middle leaders co-ordinating and delivering the project. Working with a research network gave the opportunity for the alliance to challenge current ways of working and existing principles, striving for improvement. This was made more effective when relating it back to previous work in the area.

The model of school-based enquiry gave the alliance clear expectations and an opportunity to lead the sharing of expertise to develop skills and practice.

## Teaching school alliance leadership learning

From carrying out this research, learning has occurred within the role of the mentor and the wider dimension of School Direct and running an ITT programme.

### Communication

Throughout the ITT programme it is essential to set up open lines of communication between the teaching school and all other stakeholders. When possible use a variety of communication strategies eg face-to-face meetings, phone, text and email, and utilise these to incorporate individual preferences to ensure all parties are receiving up to date

information and are consulted when changes occur. When sending information by email it was important to make them look immediately distinctive when arriving in the headteachers' or mentors' inboxes so they were not overlooked.

### **School Direct leadership team**

The School Direct programme had a professional tutor, employed by the alliance, to support the students and mentors during each placement. Initially they visited the students on a half termly basis but due to the number of students, this was not time effective and was unmanageable. Their role changed throughout the project to visiting the students on a needs basis. On reflection, having a bank of tutors working together on behalf of the university and alliance would be more effective. This model would ensure mentor assessments are moderated and students are supported throughout the programme, not just when needed. It would also provide an opportunity for their own judgements to be moderated and quality assured as well as it being more manageable with time.

### **Professional standards**

At the start of the School Direct programme clear expectations need to be highlighted with an emphasis on professionalism, including how students communicate with alliance, university and school professionals and dress code. There should also be a focus on e-safety and safeguarding.

### **Mentor standards**

During the project, mentors were selected by the headteacher. Although it is right for the headteacher to use their own professional judgement when selecting a mentor it is also essential to ensure that the alliance and university are setting high standards when allocating mentor support. Having a set of mentor standards or a selection criteria will help make sure students are placed with a professional with the knowledge and skills to support them through the programme.

### **Collaborative working**

The model used for School Direct meant that the students were out of their placement school for two days a week. This left them with three days a week to carry out directed tasks, teach lessons and focus on the children's learning journey. During the programme these sessions were reduced with the student only attending the taught sessions delivered by the university.

Using a model of collaborative working by the alliance and university for taught sessions, optimises the time students spend within the classroom. Taught sessions delivered by the university and alliance together ensures the students are receiving the essential elements of the PGCE programme with the added dimension of current classroom practice and the impact of new initiatives and policies.

This is an example of a two week model:

M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F
Collaborative training by university and alliance		School based practice							

## Placements

One of the biggest challenges during this project was the placement of the teaching students. This was mainly due to the pressures felt by teachers within the classroom, especially with the changes to performance management. School sometimes felt having a teaching student was a burden in the classroom that will affect pupil progress. It was emphasised by the teaching school that by having a teaching student they are investing in the future of the profession and having a rigorous recruitment policy will ensure there are a high standard of trainees being placed within schools. This then impacted on how the mentors were recruited to support the students. If a mentor had a clear understanding of their role, was given the time and support to achieve this role and had the passion for training future teachers, this then became a positive experience for all involved.

There is a huge demand on schools with placements being requested by teaching schools, SCITT programmes and universities for both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. This demand is then increased with additional initiatives like Teach First, Troops to Teachers and Researchers in Schools.

From September 2014 Northamptonshire will have 10 teaching schools across the county all looking for placements which will have an impact on ITT recruitment and placement for training year 2015-16.

All ITT providers need to work collaboratively across county / regional areas to assess the number of ITT places required are in line with the NQT projections across that area, working with schools to ensure students have placements. This could then be reviewed at a national level which will then work towards the recruitment crisis in certain areas of the country.

## The future for ITT

The new Ofsted guidance for initial teacher education (ITE) inspects universities using a two stage model.

The first stage can take place at any point during the summer term and will focus on the quality of training and observations of trainees' teaching. The second stage will occur in the autumn term following completion of the training and will focus on the quality of NQTs' / former trainees' teaching as a result of the training provided.

Ofsted, 2014

With this change in inspection and the induction of NQTs being statutory since 1999 the NQTs are given support after their time in an ITT programme. Many teaching schools and universities are delivering programmes to support teachers in their first year of teaching, with some offering level 7 credits. It is important to consider School Direct being a two year programme which continues working with NQTs in their first year of teaching, providing bespoke training based on their development areas from their career entry training plan, with options to continue to access level 7 modules. This will also support the trainees entering the profession at a minimum level and who need additional mentoring and support to improve standards to successfully complete their NQT year. This will then impact the training of mentors to enable schools to support NQTs.

## Conclusion

It is essential to have teachers trained to a high standard to ensure that all pupils reach their full potential in school through outstanding teaching. As such mentors need to have the appropriate skills in order to impact on the progress of an ITT student.

Quality mentoring happens when mentors are:

- experienced in their role
- equipped with the appropriate skills
- given support by their school, the alliance and university
- given the knowledge and understanding of the ITT programme
- given the time to support their student

## Additional resources

A mentor toolkit has been created with an example criteria and model to be used within teaching schools when selecting mentors and developing their professional skills.

## References

Ofsted, (2014), *Inspecting initial teacher education – inspection handbook*, London, Ofsted

Hargreaves, D H (2011). *Leading a self-improving system*. Nottingham, NCSL

Hargreaves, D H (2012). *A self-improving school system: towards maturity*. Nottingham, NCSL

NCTL, (2014), *School Direct: operations manual – academic year 2014-15*, London, NCTL

## Appendix one: Criteria for mentors supporting ITT students

### Rationale

To develop practitioners during their ITT they require a variety of experiences and strategies used within the classroom. It is essential that they have a practitioner with the range of skills and knowledge to support them through their journey, who is experienced to support and assess effectively throughout the process. This criteria has been produced to ensure there are high standards for ITT and that mentors are trained and educated at the same level in each setting.

NB: this guidance can also be used when working with NQTs: 'the induction tutor must hold qualified teacher status (QTS) and have the necessary skills and knowledge to work successfully in this role and should be able to provide effective coaching and mentoring.

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### Mentor criteria

- meeting the teaching standards / relevant experience (3 year of teaching, with 1 year in current setting)
- establishing an effective working relationship
- skills (questioning, listening, motivation)
- knowledge (curriculum, assessment, current issues)
- reflective practitioner
- coaching and / or facilitation
- leadership

### Framework

Stage 1 – reflects the evidence of the teaching standards through performance management

Stage 2 – reflects the mentor criteria with a record of evidence being completed

Stage 3 – role allocated by SLT (optional endorsement given by the teaching school)

Stage 4 – professional development. Audit of skills is completed. Support and training received where appropriate.

## Appendix two: Criteria for mentors: evidence form

Please outline your teaching experience, making reference to the teaching standards where appropriate.
How do you establish effective working relationships?
What skills do you think are important to mentoring? Can you give examples of where you have used them?
What specific knowledge can you bring to the role of a mentor?
Why is being a reflective practitioner important to ITT / NQT programme? Can you give examples of how you are reflective?
Please outline how and when you have used coaching / facilitation skills effectively.
Please outline what leadership impact you have in your teaching career.

## Appendix three: Mentor skills audit

Please circle a rating in the appropriate box next to each question according to the following scale:

1. Never behave in this way.
2. Rarely behave in this way / significant development needed.
3. Occasionally behave in this way / could do more.
4. Frequently behave in this way / competent in this area.
5. Continually demonstrate skills in this area / significant strength.

### Personal style

1	I am friendly and establish trust.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I maintain confidentiality.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I consider myself to be emotionally intelligent.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I am committed to the development of people.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I am a reflective practitioner.	1	2	3	4	5

### Giving feedback

6	I am forthright, constructive and challenging when giving feedback.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I help people gain new insights.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I always try to give specific examples.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I balance the positive with the negative.	1	2	3	4	5

### Questioning

10	I spend time questioning and probing others in order to understand problems fully.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I use questions to help others review their progress.	1	2	3	4	5
12	I ask questions in order to understand people better and what motivates them.	1	2	3	4	5

13	I use a variety of questioning skills for different situations and purposes.	1	2	3	4	5
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### Setting objectives and direction

14	I help others to set clear and achievable goals.	1	2	3	4	5
15	I encourage others to work towards challenging professional and personal development goals.	1	2	3	4	5
16	I set goals which ensure that people continue to develop new knowledge and skills.	1	2	3	4	5

### Supporting colleagues

17	I raise difficult issues in a constructive way.	1	2	3	4	5
18	I am an effective critical friend.	1	2	3	4	5

### Being open and accessible

19	I make myself accessible to others.	1	2	3	4	5
20	I make it easy for others to be open and candid.	1	2	3	4	5
21	I make time to review performance and to support others.	1	2	3	4	5
22	I remain committed to arranging mentor meetings	1	2	3	4	5

### Active listening

23	I listen carefully and give full attention.	1	2	3	4	5
24	When talking to others, I frequently clarify and check understanding.	1	2	3	4	5
25	I encourage others to talk and do not interrupt.	1	2	3	4	5
26	I balance the amount of talking and listening.	1	2	3	4	5

### Flexibility

27	I am open to new ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
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28	I stimulate people to use their creativity and explore different situations.	1	2	3	4	5
29	I help people to find their own solutions rather than telling people what to do.	1	2	3	4	5

# George Abbot Teaching School Alliance

## Teaching school alliances and context

George Abbot TSA includes 22 primary, special and secondary schools. In addition, the TSA works closely with the Guildford Schools Confederation and the Guildford 11-19 Partnership.

A key priority for this project was for us to work alongside a range of local schools. Initial interest had been expressed through the wider TSA strategic group with individual schools agreeing to participate in the project. The TSA strategic group also felt that a focus on coaching from the range of possible 'interventions' would be the most appropriate. The specific focus of our action research project aimed to:

Develop teacher peer-to-peer mentoring and / or coaching within and across schools in the alliance.

This project was led by an independent consultant who undertook a range of work on behalf of the TSA and who had been involved in writing the original project brief. This did provide additional capacity for the alliance and did allow for flexible working.

Participating schools were invited through the TSA strategic group and expressions of interest were received. Each participating school nominated a senior member of staff as school lead who, alongside the project lead, developed the project overall and secured commitment from within their own schools.

## What did the research project set out to achieve? What did the project do?

Various coaching models existed in each of the schools. They were at various stages of development, tended to err towards mentoring as their general tone and involved those requiring specific support either as they were relatively new to the profession or were under performing.

In these initial discussions, the school leads agreed a set of principles which would underpin the direction of the project:

- to develop a model of coaching which would involve teachers who were 'good' or 'outstanding' who can be neglected in some school-based coaching models
- to create opportunities for professional dialogue to take place between colleagues with a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. This would be peer-to-peer coaching providing those involved with developmental support

It took several weeks for the nature of the professional relationships and exact focus of the project to be defined. Whilst this was a slow burn at the outset, it did help to establish professional trust between partner schools and between school leads which in the medium to long-term proved to be invaluable. These meetings of School Leads were essential in the early stages of the project and instrumental in generating trust between colleagues within the alliance and to ensure an understanding of different schools and phases.

In year 1, five schools participated in the project (two secondary, one special, two primary) each with a nominated school lead. The school leads set the overall direction and priority for the development of the project within each school as well as identifying suitable staff and ensuring that momentum was maintained within each school. During year 1, 36 colleagues were involved in the project and initially involved teachers selecting their own peer partner. Every teacher undertook a self-assessment based on the Ofsted criteria as a baseline in order to identify a development focus at the start and end of the year. The following four stages were undertaken for each cycle of coaching support:

- peer partners met to discuss their self-assessment priorities
- peer partners jointly planned a lesson to identify strategies to address specific issues. This plan also:
  - emphasised the teacher's development focus from their self-assessment
  - identified three students who would provide an additional focus for the lesson observation and in some cases, to provide lesson observation feedback
- lesson observation undertaken
- lesson observation feedback from the peer partner and where relevant, from the students.

After this first cycle, it would be repeated with the other peer partner. Two full cycles were undertaken in the first year.

During the first year, coach training was offered to all those involved. This training was offered after the first cycle of pair observations. This was a deliberate decision made by the school leads as we were keen for professional relationships to be developed before we provided training, a possible framework for the coaching dialogue. This was also an opportunity to reinforce the skills that these 'outstanding' teachers already possessed. Most participating teachers took part in this training and in such cases, professional partnerships were strengthened. It was noted that those who did not undertake coach training did not have such a positive experience and were less engaged in the development of the project.

Each coaching cycle had a clear **development focus**, which encouraged teachers to try a new approach or to focus on an area of 'concern'. Areas of focus for these planning / observation cycles included:

- ensuring that the quieter members of the class on a C/D borderline progress within the lesson using effective assessment for learning (AfL) strategies
- exploring ways to engage more disruptive pupils in higher sets
- explore how students could self-assess their own photographic work to actively create practical work which shows more depth and skill
- improve progress of girls (C/D border)

See appendix one for further examples.

In order to address these priorities, the collaborative planning process supported teachers in **developing new approaches** to their teaching. These approaches included:

- increased level of questioning to certain pupils (1:1 support)
- putting certain pupils into a leadership roles to develop/consolidate their learning during group work
- use new approaches to AfL.

See appendix two for further examples.

During year 2 there was a change in the number of schools / teachers involved In year 2, three schools participated in the project (one secondary, two primary) involving 18 colleagues. In part this was due to the following reasons:

- School leads and / or members of staff moving schools. In such cases, the level of engagement, commitment and broader enthusiasm dropped, leading to a reduction in the numbers participating.
- Changes in school circumstances – school priorities, Ofsted judgement, etc – meant that some schools could no longer commit staff to be involved.

The process during year 2 followed the same cycle of peer-to-peer coaching support and lesson planning / observation. During year 2, however, six secondary colleagues and six primary colleagues became peer partners and undertook cross-phase peer coaching. This was a particularly powerful development of the project and the schools involved were also closer to each other in geographical terms. This helped with facilitating visits to partner schools.

## Impact on capability of teachers and learning of pupils

All teachers undertook a self-assessment using Ofsted grading criteria at the start of their engagement in the project, at the end of year 1 if involved over two years and at the end of year 2. Teachers were asked to undertake a self-assessment in which they graded themselves using the 4-point Ofsted criteria. At the start of the project, teachers graded themselves on average 1.82, at the end of year 1 they graded themselves 1.57 and at the end of the project 1.45 (1 = 'outstanding', 2 = 'good', etc.).

Discussions with school leads from three of the schools confirmed the validity of this self-assessment. In one school, improvements in the practice of the participants had been noted in their performance appraisal – though this impact might not just have been due to being part of the peer-to-peer coaching group but to other CPD activity as well. Two of the other school leads described how participation in the programme had helped their staff gain sufficient confidence to apply and / or take on new roles within their school.

At the end of the two-year project, all staff were interviewed about the impact of the strands within the project and provided feedback and the perceived impact around these:

1. Coaching
2. Peer planning
3. Peer observation
4. Teaching and wider professional practice
5. Cross-phase working

Staff were asked to judge the impact of each of these 5 strands using a 5 point scale (1 = minimal impact – 5 = Significant impact).

**Table 5: Impact of project strands**

Project strands	Minimal impact ----- Significant impact				
	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Coaching</b>	0	3	3	6	6
<b>Peer planning</b>	0	0	8	5	5
<b>Peer observation</b>	0	0	3	8	7
<b>Teaching and wider professional practice</b>	0	2	5	5	6
<b>Cross-phase</b>	0	2	1	3	4

**Note:** Only 10 teachers were involved in the cross-phase work.

## 1. Coaching

Colleagues felt that the coaching process had significant impact, with 12 out of the 18 participants scoring this element with a 4 or 5 score on the 5-point scale. Colleagues who had been involved in the process from the start and therefore had developed professional relationships over two years and had attended a specific coach training session found the process more useful. Feedback from staff included:

It has been really useful, it changes your perspective on how you look at the children and also lesson observations.

A great opportunity for inward reflection... and to formally sit down for a work-related discussion and professional dialogue.

Helpful to put my own thoughts in order.

You can change things with the right coaching atmosphere.

## 2. Peer planning

Peer planning is a common feature in the primary phase with significantly less emphasis in the secondary phase. 10 of the 18 scored this element 4 or 5 on the 5-point scale. Within this project, the peer planning provided an opportunity to explore a development issue in a collaborative way and through the planning stage. It is interesting to note that one pair added an additional stage in the process by undertaking a lesson observation before the peer planning so that they understood the context of the class and teacher more. This seemed to generate a more robust and informed peer planning stage. Secondary colleague suggested that:

It was great to focus not on a problem but on ways to support it.

Nice to discuss plan rather than having pressure to do it in a certain way.

## 3. Peer observation

Having jointly planned the lesson and then identified a development priority and specific students to talk to at the end of the lesson, a peer observation took place. As discussed earlier, the project underplayed formal lesson grading and the use of complex observation recording documentation and this non-judgemental approach was well received.

This element was the highest of all elements reviewed, with 15 out of 18 scoring this 4 or 5 on the 5-point scale. Teacher comments on this element speak for themselves:

It was nice not to have to fill in lots of formal information in the lesson... and to have time to watch and to talk to the students.

... when observing I was more focussed on the students and the learning and less on the teacher.

I felt more engaged with the lesson... more aware of what was going on as I had a better understanding of what the teacher wanted to do.

Feedback was more fluent.

More a discussion than a formal observation. More of a discussion than a judgement and therefore more productive. You are talking about what you might change and develop much more.

Those observed also agreed, suggesting:

I was much braver and pushed the boundaries more.

It is worth noting that one teacher suggested that the move to performance related pay might mean that people are less likely to share problems and will want to 'keep things quiet'.

#### **4. Teaching and wider professional practice**

The impact of this work has yet to be fully explored by many colleagues. It is clear that professional relationships have been improved and developed through the coaching element of this work and has been positive on relationships with both teacher and TAs. One of the school leads also described how the teaching of the participants in his school had become 'less generic and more individual and differentiated'. Many also suggested that they would like to continue working with their peer partner. One colleague commented that they had had the opportunity to draw upon this work at an internal interview as well as through wider roles as part of the school's SCITT. 11 of the 18 scored this element 4 or 5 on the 5-point scale. Feedback from colleagues included:

I more effectively look out for other members of staff to have these discussions with not only in my own department.

I feel I have been given freedom.

I will take 'coaching' into my own career as a manager and a leader.

#### **5. Cross-phase working**

Ten participants were involved in this phase of the project and seven of them scored this element 4 or 5 on the 5-point scale.

Excellent to link with primaries, thought provoking. Amazed by the high expectations of primary school – work seen is 'phenomenal'.

Good to see expectations of year 7 – interesting that secondary colleagues' expectations are not as high as primary.

An opportunity to build professional relationships and address misunderstandings.

It was affirming of our teaching to enhance continuous development at secondary school.

Good to develop links and an opportunity to network and explore further.

Some of this cross-phase work took the form of 'fact finding' visits rather than the model of peer observation as had been undertaken within a teacher's own phase. This was to be expected as it was difficult to undertake peer planning in the same way. However, the feedback above suggests that whilst this may have been the case, such visits were fruitful and, the start of on-going professional relationships.

At the end of each lesson observation, observers were encouraged to seek feedback from students who had been identified at the planning stage (see appendix three and four). This feedback suggested that students were aware of changes in teacher behaviour and approach.

## **Impact on the alliance and alliance partners**

The teaching school executive representing a range of schools were involved throughout this project. In order to ensure engagement from this group and that this project reflected broad need within the alliance, the specific focus for the R&D work was made by the executive and it was they who were instrumental in the selection of the coaching focus. They were also able to identify partner schools to be approached for participation. This group received update reports on project progress.

This project provided schools, senior leaders and teachers within the schools opportunities to develop strong working relationships. In particular it was instrumental in breaking down barriers between George Abbot School as the teaching school and local primary schools. George Abbot School, with 2,000 pupils and around 200 staff, is sometimes seen by primary schools as dominating the local education landscape. However, by working with primary staff, visiting their schools and being prepared to listen and learn from them, the culture and the nature of relationships between schools within the alliance has started to change.

This is facilitating further joint working. At a simple level, there is a wider understanding of colleagues' willingness to engage in wider educational research and collaboration. At a deeper level the project has helped to provide the infrastructure of relationships, trust and techniques to support the development of the multi-academy trust in which George Abbot School is a leading player. Already one of the primary schools participating in the coaching project is part of the trust and another has expressed interest in joining. The

project has helped to show how structures that encourage and enable teachers from different schools to work with each other can help develop staff and improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The learning from this project has also been applied to other R&D projects. In this regard, it has provided a template for future cross-phase work that has already been employed through to recent NCTL R&D projects<sup>10</sup>. In particular:

- The importance of allowing the school leads to set the direction of a collaborative project and to be the advocate for its on-going development within a school.
- The importance of having a school lead within each school to support other staff who are involved and to become members of the project steering group.
- The benefits gained from the project being led by a member of staff who is not limited by teaching timetables and wider school commitments.
- The wider professional development opportunities for teachers to participate in additional activities allowing for professional growth and development.
- Linking the application of learning from subject specific training to improved classroom practice by using coaching programmes within the TSA schools to provide a rounded model of staff development, capacity building and school improvement.

In addition George Abbot School is considering how it might extend the use of peer-to-peer coaching as part of its professional development offer to staff.

The overall status of this project within the alliance was enhanced when we were asked to present the initial findings at the national 'Seizing Success' conference in 2013.

## Teaching school alliance leadership learning

This two-year project facilitated the development not only of a model of peer-to-peer support through coaching, it also supported the development of professional relationships between school leads and between teachers within each school and between schools. The cross-phase work in particular provided an opportunity for teachers to focus on pedagogy and the fundamentals of effective learning and teaching.

The length of this project allowed for the development of professional relationships and understanding which were instrumental to the success of the project. Ensuring that such

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<sup>10</sup> *Closing the gap with the primary national curriculum* (2014) and *Beyond levels: alternative approaches to assessment levels* (2014). Available at [www.gov.uk/nctl](http://www.gov.uk/nctl)

time is invested at the start of a collaborative project such as this is essential in ensuring its long-term success and that staff are committed to it. Whilst this may have meant that this project had a slow start, it did ensure that relationships were robust enough and project direction clear enough to allow for the work to sustain over two years and also allow for changes to the membership and composition of the group. This joint understanding and appreciation of different contexts, cultures and phases was essential.

During the planning process, school leads felt that it was important to work with a set of core principles as set out above. In addition:

- we wanted those involved to direct the project, its agenda and focus without it being set by their school
- we wanted to keep any 'Ofsted focus' in the background
- we did not want to impede or limit the project by over-complicated administrative elements and bureaucratic processes

Time is always a limiting factor. It was essential that we were pragmatic in its use. Whilst the group of teacher coaches were brought together at the launch of the project, for training and for the start / end of each year for a review and planning, school leads were instrumental in facilitating small school-based group meetings in order to maintain the focus and momentum of the project. This clearly reduced the need for the whole group to meet together and became a more cost effective model. Had such relationships not been established at the start of the project, such momentum and support may not have been achieved.

The attitude and leadership approach of the heads and school leads was critical in determining the impact of the project. For example, in one school the school lead was assigned to take on an acting headship part way through the project. It would have been easy for the coaching project to fall by the wayside but she made sure that her responsibility was passed on to one of the other middle leaders in the school who was looking for leadership experience. In this case, the new school lead has been an active participant throughout the first year. In contrast a school lead from one of the (secondary) schools that had participated in the first year of the project could see little that could be gained or learned from working with primary schools and therefore did not engage with the cross-phase work. As a consequence of the school lead's position, the engagement of the school declined.

The project also supported the leadership development of the school leads. One described how participating in the project had:

Improved my skills as a leader and made me reflect more on my leadership and teaching.

Another school lead explained how she gained confidence about leading from putting herself forward to be coached and how this had encouraged other staff to participate. The lead also reported that she had:

Learned how to coach (and to be coached) and to provide feedback in a positive way.

The project was overseen by an independent consultant who, whilst being funded by the TSA through the project grant, was able to utilise their more independent status to help facilitate JPD and to ensure that all partners worked collaboratively and in real partnership rather than the project being led by a school lead with direct affiliation to the lead teaching school.

Using project funding for cover costs was an important element to ensure support from Headteachers. Whilst we did not provide financial remuneration for participants in this work, other more recent projects over a shorter time period have allowed for those engaged to be paid for their time.

## Appendix one: Teacher focus

All teachers were encouraged to establish a specific focus for the lesson observation in the pre-lesson planning with their teacher coach. Some of the areas of focus included:

- focus on the intervention of KS4 students hitting their Fischer Family Trust (FFT) targets
- participation and attainment
- children who made less than expected progress in mathematics
- ensuring that the quieter members of the class on a C/D borderline progress within the lesson using effective AfL strategies
- children who only made one sub-level progress in mathematics last year
- building confidence with less able; delivering challenging material in an engaging way
- disruptive pupils in higher sets
- for students to understand how they can self-assess their own photographic work to actively create practical work which shows more depth and skill. Raising their grade / meeting FFT (peer and self-assessment)
- improve progress of girls (C/D border, EAL, autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) in their teaching group)
- increasing effort and engagement levels with low effort students
- ensuring differentiation is not purely by outcome
- differentiation

## Appendix two: How is your coach having an impact on your work?

All teachers provided feedback on the development of the project and the impact of their coach at the end of year 1.

- nice to discuss strategies with someone else
- opening up mind to new ideas and approaches
- reflecting more on AfL practice and individual needs of children

- encouraging trying new ideas
- changes made in teaching practice
- opportunity to reflect on teaching styles from another perspective
- making you question strategies used
- making you consider new ideas or approach topics / AfL from a different point of view
- acknowledgement of good practice
- honest appraisal, sympathetic approach
- lots of good ideas
- ensuring / requiring dedicated reflection on what changes in practice are needed to improve progress
- I am making sure I am producing new things – motivation
- sharing wisdom and knowledge
- providing a sounding board
- reassurance

### **Appendix three: Impact on teaching**

All teachers provided feedback on the development of the project and the impact on their teaching at the end of year 1.

- increase level of questioning to certain pupils (1:1 support)
- putting certain pupils into a leadership role to develop / consolidate learning (when doing group work) – force pupils out of comfort zone
- use various AfL
- more aware of how to intervene on an individual basis with students
- set groupings based on ability so high achievers not always in charge
- opportunity for one-on-one
- making me more aware of different children's needs

- different techniques to increase student participation
- empowering weaker students (leadership, confidence)
- moved children into different positions / change partner groups etc
- try different styles of learning / input
- reflect more on individual needs
- appreciate more detailed planning that enabled the pupils to show progress and ensured their involvement in groupwork
- monitoring – effective one-to-one feedback
- group empowerment – ensuring the quieter members of the group ‘lead’ during group work
- looking at a ‘no hands’ up culture and the use of (lolly sticks) to randomly select students
- use of dialogue to extend vocabulary
- use of visualiser to model
- ‘chunking’ tasks to break up and alter the delivery or access of information
- linking answers to grade descriptors
- more time spent planning
- more time spent reviewing resources
- focus on seating plan
- yet to complete coaching cycle
- not changed so far as the department has assessment embedded in its delivery, but the task opened up my understanding of my year 11 classes skills in evaluating their progress another way to how we normally approach it. a new assessment sheet specific to Photoshop skills ability has now been created to be used
- increased conscious effort to focus intervention amongst this group
- increased use of targeted questions to this group to develop confidence
- decreased challenging questions

- using language of learning referring to skills needed to become effective learners far more consistently
- use of specific strategies for identified children
- focus on how to be independent, responsible for own learning
- more confident getting quieter students to contribute
- more strategies to encourage engagement when individuals have lost focus

## **Appendix four: Feedback from students**

In most cases, teachers identified up to three students during the peer planning stage. In most cases this would involve a brief discussion following the observation in order to take specific student feedback.

- positive as they can see an increase in attainment levels through end of unit tests
- need to develop – lack of interaction with pupils during the lesson (observer). Needs to occur more to gain good perspective on the value
- still struggle with group leader tasks. Think this is due to the higher attaining group as a whole and they feel intimidated by their peers
- we interviewed three focused children after our observation. This was very interesting and helped focus on their needs
- a little surprised but did appreciate and acknowledged the extra attention
- they felt that they had ‘learnt more in lesson’
- progress in lesson was felt to be greater than in previous lessons and although they were put in the spotlight, they appreciated the chance to speak and contribute to the lesson
- not always keen on showing work under visualiser
- liked lolly sticks – fair but some children felt the pressure
- involving children in dialogue boosted their confidence
- students felt they had had the information presented in different ways
- frustration of kinaesthetic learners at curriculum requirements
- time and space constraints in labs

- lower ability C FFT students gained most as clear jump in Photoshop skills can be targeted and shown to improve
- more confidence and increased verbal engagement
- initial observations – feedback confirmed areas that needed developing
- there has been a visible development and improvement in attainment
- really useful. Children gave feedback on strategies and possible improvements

# George Spencer Teaching School Alliance

## Teaching school alliance and context

The George Spencer TSA is centred around one secondary school judged to be 'outstanding' by Ofsted in 2010: George Spencer Academy which is a 'leading edge' school and a national support school (NSS). George Spencer Academy is a larger than the average sized secondary school (11-18) with 1,318 pupils on roll in 2013. Most pupils are from white British backgrounds. The school is situated in a relatively advantaged area, but draws its pupils from the full range of social and economic backgrounds.

The George Spencer TSA formed part of the first cohort of Teaching Schools designated in September 2011. Since then it has continued to broaden and deepen the scope and depth of its partnership work, driven a collective sense of moral purpose and a commitment to share. The TSA has a diverse collection of schools in different phases, contexts and different faiths.

ITT provision; CPD and leadership training and development programmes and school-to-school support work have played a key role in expanding partnership connections with other schools, agencies and HEIs locally, regionally and nationally. The TSA is working closely with TSAs in the region to share expertise, best practice and resources, develop enquiry based joint practice, and harness the impact on school improvement across and beyond localities. Currently it is leading the maths hubs east midlands west – in collaboration with four TSAs and two HEI partners in the region.

### Focus of the project

The George Spencer Academy has implemented a school-wide model that integrates practitioner enquiry into our appraisal process. The model hinges around the use of teacher learning communities (TLC) and a minimum of 50 per cent of timetabled CPD time is given to the functioning of TLCs to include an INSET day for 'best practice' visits. Each TLC is led by an enquiry leader who supports and challenges the group to achieve its goals.

This model was introduced in 2012/13. Since then, it has contributed to a culture in the school where improvements in professional practice is informed by evidence. Teachers' key enquiry questions are related directly to school improvement priorities for teaching and learning. In 2013/14 they were aligned to the concept of meta-analyses, using the top 10 interventions from Hattie's Visible Learning (2009). The school used the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) DIY evaluation toolkit to develop enquiry templates. Efforts were made to ensure that the templates were an integral part of the appraisal system so that staff did not see enquiries as an add-on to the process and that enquiry outcomes and outputs could be circumvented at the final review by appraisers and appraisees.

The school recognises the important role of enquiry leaders in monitoring the quality of practitioner enquiries. In order to improve their competence to plan and conduct practitioner enquiries and effectively support and challenge staff in their TLCs, the school organised training workshops which focussed on designing and reviewing enquiry action plans. Senior leaders from other alliance schools were also invited to be involved in the workshops. The intention was to engage them in a dialogue about practitioner enquiries. An enquiry leader handbook was created to set out the expectations for enquiry leaders at George Spencer Academy and also, to be used as reference and a guide for them.

At the George Spencer Academy our virtual learning environment hosts a wealth of materials associated with the Sutton Trust, Evidence for Policy and Practice (EPPI) Centre, EEF toolkit and summaries of Hattie's interventions. These materials were extended as a repository for professionals across our alliance.

Staff surveys were carried out at the end of each annual cycle to review the impact of practitioner enquiries on teachers' professional practices and the learning of pupils. The surveys were also designed to help our senior leaders to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the current systems and areas for improvement. In summary, the purposes were twofold. First, we wanted to understand better how to further integrate staff-led enquiries into the systems and cultures of the school so that they were seen by most staff as a means to support and improve their professional capabilities. Second, we wanted to identify successes and challenges and use them as evidence and examples for developing JPD within and between schools in our alliance, such that the outputs were useful and could better inform future practice.

## Impact on teachers and school culture

Results of the staff survey at the end of 2014 provided promising evidence of their perceived impact of the enquiry process on their research capability and professional practice. A total of 83 teaching staff out of 92 completed the survey, including classroom teachers, senior leaders and enquiry leaders.

Almost 1 in 4 (n=19, 24 per cent) reported that their enquiries helped them to **improve their practice as a teacher and / or leader** 'very significantly' / 'a lot'. More specifically, undertaking practitioner enquiries was seen by

- 62 per cent (n=51) as having helped to improve a shared commitment to high standards of teaching and learning in the school;
- almost 1 in 5 (n=16, 19 per cent) as having 'very significantly' improved the school's approach to learning;
- more than 1 in 5 (n=18, 22 per cent) as having 'very significantly' improved a shared commitment to collaboration with colleagues to improve their professional practice.

Evidence also shows that the majority of the staff at the George Spencer Academy believed that **the structure and systems** worked well and that **an enquiry-led, evidence-based professional culture** was beginning to bear fruit:

- Close to all (n=75, 91 per cent) felt that they had access to useful professional development opportunities in the school and 89 per cent (n=74) agreed that they had access to support to help improve the quality of their enquiries.
- The vast majority reported using research evidence to inform their teaching practice (n=73, 88 per cent) and the focus of their enquiries (81 per cent, n=67).
- More than one in three (n=29, 35 per cent) agreed 'very strongly' that collaborative activity between staff had a positive impact on standards of teaching in the school.

When setting up the whole school model for school-based enquiry across all staff, thematically focussed TLCs were created to support the enquiry process. Although the large majority (73 per cent, n=60) reported that TLCs had varying degrees of impact on the quality of their enquiry (ranging from 'very significantly' to 'some'), more than 1 in 4 (27 per cent, n=22) felt that it hardly helped them to improve their enquiry projects. Nonetheless, there is encouraging evidence which shows that these TLCs provided a venue for professional discussions and support in the school:

- Close to all (n=76, 92 per cent) agreed that when they were discussing things in their TLCs, they could usually **give their own honest opinions**. Among these, 42 members of staff (51 per cent) strongly agreed with this.
- 85 per cent (n=71) felt that they **supported each other** to improve the quality of their enquiries in their TLCs and 76 per cent (n=61) agreed that there was a **shared view** about what constituted effective practitioner enquiries in their TLCs.

Qualitative data from the survey provided more detailed evidence on how practitioner enquiries helped to improve many staff members' understanding and awareness of the **process of learning**. For example,

They [practitioner enquiries] have allowed me to understand using different approaches to differentiation to help to stretch the higher achievers; to further understand the trends in student participation in extracurricular activities.

It has enabled me to assess whether the exam or coursework options of Cambridge International Exams (CIE) are best for borderline students; ...and to plan interventions for borderline students. It has led me to ask further questions about the impact of exam or coursework relating to gender.

Moreover, the survey results also suggest that enquiry leaders tended to have more positive views on using practitioner enquiries as a means to improve their professional practice. Qualitative feedback showed that the change to structure of sessions and size

of groups were well received and that enquiry leaders were more positive about their skill sets and abilities to support and challenge colleagues in their groups.

- 87 per cent (n=13 out of 15) saw undertaking practitioner enquiry as a useful professional development activity for them. By contrast, only 62 per cent (n=52) of the whole staff reported this.
- Almost all (14 out of 15 enquiry leaders) felt that undertaking practitioner enquiry had helped them to improve the ways in which they taught. By contrast, only 35 per cent of the whole staff reported so.

## **Impact on the alliance and alliance partners**

The training for enquiry leaders involved senior leaders from a primary and a secondary school in the TSA who were committed to creating, building and embedding an evidence-based, enquiry-led professional culture in their schools. We helped the secondary leader to write a compelling narrative case which enabled her to gain support from the SLT and trial a new system and culture of practitioner enquiries in her school.

Irrespective of this achievement and the vice principal's concerted efforts to extend the culture and practice of practitioner enquiries to other alliance schools, creating cross-school TLCs within the alliance remained a challenge. The primary barrier was perceived to be the amount time required for school leaders to identify how practitioner enquiries could be integrated into their institutions. There were also cases where interested schools withdrew their commitment as they went into a category and believed that they 'had bigger issues to worry about'.

However, it is important that this project is seen as one of many cross-school and cross-alliance projects that the George Spencer Academy is currently leading. The maturity of the alliance partnerships benefit from the development of other partnerships in which George Spencer Academy has been involved (eg Challenge Partner hub, the regional maths hub, national leader of education (NLE) networks through the LA). We see R&D activity as an approach that is used to develop and improve all aspects of the teaching school work. As the evidence-based professional culture begins to take root at George Spencer Academy, the focus of the next cycle of activity will be to use current partnership activities as venues for the creation of cross-school TLCs.

## **Teaching school alliance leadership learning**

There have been successes and challenges in our endeavour to establish a whole school approach to practitioner enquiries over the last two years. There are also lessons about extending this model to other schools within the TSA.

## **Leadership modelling**

Gaining support from the SLT to trial the whole school model for school-based enquiry is an important but insufficient condition for change. Engaging school leaders as enquiry leaders from the outset will enable them to model their expectations of the staff. Our experience shows that where senior leaders were competent and committed enquiry leaders, they were more likely to influence, support and challenge the staff in their TLCs effectively.

## **Persistent leadership guidance and communication**

Building and embedding an enquiry-centred whole school appraisal system requires greater guidance for, and regular communications with, each TLC. This will help the staff to follow their enquiry plans, review the enquiry process and identify impact throughout each enquiry cycle. This will also help to identify common approaches to using data in planning and evaluating their enquiries. Reflecting on my experience as a senior leader who created the school wide system for practitioner enquiries at George Spencer Academy, I have learned that small things such as being at the end of an email or telephone for the staff can be of critical importance. This has enabled me to help people to resolve issues and obstacles that they encountered and also to share feedback that would encourage them to pursue their enquiries.

## **Leadership commitment and empathy**

Emotional support for the staff is as important as the systemic support when building and embedding a new school wide system and culture. This is especially relevant in the context of practitioner enquiries because the enquiry process is itself professionally demanding, challenging and time-consuming and requires a lot of resilience, persistence and tenacity. As an enquiry leader of my own TLC who carried out two cycles of practitioner enquiries, I was able to empathise with the challenges that my staff had experienced and offer appropriate and responsive support and encouragement.

I think this [practitioner enquiry] is an area that can always be improved and will always require gaining both hearts and minds in an institution even one like ours that is well on the way. If it improves the quality of teaching such that our students get an even better deal and become better learners and achieve their potential then they will be won over.

vice principal of George Spencer Academy

## **Reflections on future steps**

- **Relating the focus of practitioner enquiries to subject and curriculum knowledge more closely:** this is particularly relevant given the profile and priority of both these areas as the result of new GCEs, GCSEs and national curriculum.

- **Continuing to develop and empower enquiry leaders:** this includes reviewing the effectiveness of the TLCs.
- **Setting up separate, targeted events with advocates from other alliance schools:** heads, whilst supportive, are not always advocates but are happy for another member of SLT to be. The next step is to identify advocates within each school to share best practice and review systems and processes of practitioner enquiries with them.
- **Building on trusting relationships and disseminating best practice and success stories within and across schools:** the purpose is to build a shared commitment to high standards of teaching and learning and create evidence-based professional cultures and systems within and across schools in the TSA.

## References

Hattie, J. (2009) *Visible Learning*. Routledge, London

# Jurassic Coast Teaching School Alliance

## Teaching school alliances and context

The Woodroffe School is an 11-18 rural foundation school with around 1100 students. Judged outstanding in 2011, it became a teaching school in cohort 2 and has completed two successful years. Previously a specialist visual arts college, with additional specialisms in mathematics and computing, the school has high academic standards and a unique ethos. It is also highly innovative, with a successful and well-known literacy curriculum, and an unusual pathway system in year 9. It is renowned for the quality of its CPD provision and it is an NSS. It is currently developing its involvement in research and its latest learning plan focuses on teachers as researchers. It has also recently been successful in its bid to become a national maths hub.

Woodroffe School leads an alliance of 11 secondary schools and around 25 primaries drawn from three counties: Dorset, Devon and Somerset. The alliance includes a grammar school, several academies, federations and a multi-academy trust. It also has very strong links with the University of Exeter, Babcock, Devon and Dorset LAs. The alliance name, **The Jurassic Coast TSA**, reflects its geographical location. It is intensely focused on learning and seeks to unite schools across the region classroom-to-classroom, rather than boardroom-to-boardroom. This is proving to be very successful and there is currently a high degree of trust and mutual support.

Jurassic Coast TSA is led by a steering group which meets every five weeks and there is strong evidence of distributed leadership. The alliance has been very successful in bidding for grants and projects, and these are led not just by the lead school but by a number of others in the partnership. There are high levels of collaboration, with a great deal of expertise on offer via mutual support mechanisms. Support for schools beyond the alliance also takes place, most notably in collaboration with Babcock and Dorset LA. The alliance also works very closely with the University of Exeter in developing and delivering the School Direct programme.

## What did the research project set out to achieve? What did the project do?

Like all good research projects, this one builds upon work done before. In order to explore the leadership of great pedagogy, the first step is to ensure that a way has been devised to make sure that great pedagogy is taking place, and then to work out a way to make sure it can be spread through other classrooms and other schools.

The Woodroffe School had been using the simple 'trio' method for sharing ideas and delivering CPD for some time and decided that the patterns of interaction that had been developed would provide a useful model for the development of the TSA. Trios were initially used for colleagues to share ideas in departments but this quickly grew to

accommodate cross-curricular working. From there it was an easy step to introduce cross-phase Trios, using primary feeder schools.

First thoughts regarding the proposed structure of a TSA suggested that most models were top down and not classroom based: groups of schools were joining together with the strongest interaction at senior leadership Level. The Jurassic Coast TSA, as it came to be called, was determined from the outset to ensure that it would have a different focus and that interaction would be bottom-up and not top-down. The obvious way to do this was to get teachers to share their classroom practice and to begin working across schools rather than simply within schools. The best way of doing this would be via trio working, which had already proved successful both at Woodroffe School and in its relations with partner primaries.

A trio has a significant advantage over other forms of collaborative working. A pair can by mutual agreement subvert the original plan; meetings can be postponed, short-cuts taken, and an easy relationship established to soften the process. In a group of four or five, it is easy for someone to take a back seat, or miss meetings, and then the sense of group engagement dwindles. A trio is different: each member feels a strong commitment to the other two and doesn't want to let them down. If one stops working, the others feel let down and there is therefore a much greater sense of group responsibility and yet, three participants are enough to ensure variety and challenge.

So, in order to allow the exploration and development of great pedagogy, what better way than to establish trios across the alliance schools, at first in a limited, experimental manner, but later in a more structured and sustainable system. The ultimate aim was to ensure that the trios became the glue that cemented the various alliance schools together.

The initial group of trios proved to be very successful and quickly expanded so that we now have a fairly sophisticated network in operation, with regular requests from participating schools to expand the network even further. Of course, all this doesn't just happen; the project needs to be led, and it is the leadership of this approach to developing great pedagogy that is the focus of this study. But how was this to be monitored and recorded? The obvious solution was simply to record the process as it unfolded and reflect upon each step taken. This has been done via a blog<sup>11</sup>, which has sought to record both the process and the issues arising as the trio network has developed.

The initial relatively small number of trios has expanded and we now have six cross-alliance trios in operation this year from six different secondary schools; two primary cross-alliance trios; and one cultural trio, focusing on our work as a cultural lead school and involving an arts practitioner rather than a third teacher. We have also developed a

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.jctsa.org.uk/category/r-d-leadership-log/>

system whereby new trios are led by our SLEs, and this seems to be an excellent use of their time. The aim is that once colleagues have participated in a trio they will be able to lead a trio in future.

Of course, training was provided to ensure that the trios were operating in similar ways and also to ensure that there was a real focus on achieving strong outcomes. All of this has been recorded on the Jurassic Coast TSA website, either as part of the leadership blog mentioned above or in the CPD section<sup>12</sup>:

The successful operation of the trio network has allowed the exploration of a range of leadership issues, including:

- creating a rationale
- devising the system
- creating and delivering a CPD programme
- ensuring the 'buy in' from alliance schools
- managing budgets and providing teacher release time
- monitoring the operation of the network
- building in opportunities for reflection and evaluation
- sharing good practice

The trios themselves worked on a wide range of topics, usually self-chosen but often linking to the development plans of the schools involved. The key driver, however, was the interests and needs of the staff involved as this led to high levels of commitment and interest. Topics explored included:

- Does engaging with higher order questioning skills enhance and develop expertise?
- Investigating how to raise curiosity levels in the classroom through planning.
- Strategies for encouraging progress for all.
- Higher level thinking skills in the classroom.
- Differentiation for Independence.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.jctsa.org.uk/the-big-six/cpdleadership/trio-work/>

- Really effective group work.

With regard to the Hargreaves revised maturity model (2012), it is clear that the research illuminates several areas. The trio structure has spread across the alliance and not only works as a highly effective way of drawing colleagues together but has been recognised as a powerful CPD tool. The days of teachers being sent on courses to be 'trained' are over and there is a strengthening recognition that mutual support and challenge is a much more effective means of developing professional skills. Moreover, the focus in the trios on teachers as researchers has allowed us to build a much more coherent system which is evident in a continuum stretching from our ITT support right up to leadership training. Working closely with the university, we have been developing a School Direct model which builds on Exeter's MA provision, which is now part of their PGCE course, and leads directly into our alliance CPD programme. Trainees who join alliance schools can continue with their MA course at the University of Exeter and engage in research projects through the trio programme. This is directly in line with the leading column of the JPD section of Hargreaves's model:

The school has a highly sophisticated model of professional development that integrates ITT and CPD into a coherent whole, in which leadership development begins in ITT and progresses to senior leadership roles and succession planning. JPD is embedded in all professional development and applies across partnerships. Staff are skilled in the design and management of innovation and the school serves as an innovation hub.

At first, the talent identification element of the model doesn't seem to apply to the trio programme but it is obvious that the more contact there is between schools, the more knowledge of teachers' strengths becomes known. The model also allows developing teachers to shape their own learning according to their learning needs by joining trios and engaging in research which not only develops their pedagogy but their leadership skills. With so much inter school activity taking place, the identification of outstanding practice becomes much more straightforward.

The most powerful effect of the work, however, must be in relation to social capital:

High levels of trust are now well established and at each level there is sufficient confidence and experience to advise and support other partnerships in the art of establishing and sustaining trust. Success in effective reciprocity is validated and quality assured externally. Staff have experience of supporting other schools in how to establish the principle of reciprocity and operate it in practice to improve teaching and learning.

With teachers visiting each other's classrooms across the alliance a high degree of trust is essential, and the more the visits take place the more the trust develops. It should not be forgotten that in order for this to happen, there needs to be high levels of trust between headteachers and senior leaders.

Perhaps one of the most interesting features of a truly collaborative network is the ability of its leaders to put aside the competitive aspects of the local environment (eg schools competing to attract the same pupils) in order to focus on the development of learning. Something akin to the literary 'willing suspension of disbelief' comes into operation as heads and principals put aside squabbles over pupil numbers and competing reputations in recognition of the fact that collaborative working is of huge benefit to all concerned. They may still be driven by self interest – the idea that heads will eventually care about the progress of all children in an area is perhaps some way off – but the impact is still general and profound. This means that Hargreaves's 'moral purpose' may emerge almost by accident. The real moral purpose is the intense focus on learning and the realisation that learning improves when staff collaborate. Heads may initially focus on the improvement in learning in their own establishments but the ultimate effect is system-wide improvement and thus a shared moral purpose.

Evaluation is built into the system. As teachers working in trios begin to see themselves as researchers, it is only natural that they should evaluate their activities. The word 'evaluation' has become somewhat hackneyed and is often seen as something tedious to be done at the end of a course or a series of activities. When seen in the light of the culmination of a research project, it is viewed differently. Here evaluation means testing whether the initial hypothesis was accurate, and teachers keen to improve their practice are happy to do this. Similarly, the analytical approach to supporting other schools, which Hargreaves describes, is essential to an effective trio project.

Finally, the notion of disciplined innovation is key to the success of trios. Discipline is provided by training, agreed protocols and the need to work with colleagues in a supportive and investigative fashion. It is also small scale; innovative practice is contained and tested before being rolled out more widely if successful.

## **Impact on capability of teachers and learning of pupils**

Measuring the impact of the research is not straightforward. The impact has undoubtedly been profound but to set this out in empirical terms has proved to be challenging. The most obvious indication of the success of the work has been the trio presentation evenings. The first one in July 2013 was something of a revelation: the presentations were detailed, insightful and, above all, enthusiastic. The discussion of pedagogy was complex and challenging, and it was clear that the participants had evidently enjoyed participating in the programme and gained a huge amount from it. Subsequent evaluations were equally positive, and the fact that more colleagues volunteered to take part in the second year was in itself a sign of success.

This study did attempt, however, to employ a mixed-methods approach. There was to be a quantitative analysis of the limited data available: a review of the progress scores of the classes involved, and a brief 'before and after' study of the participants' lesson grades. However, it soon became clear that an analysis of this kind would need a much more

systematic approach. An attempt was made to gather progress data, and lesson observation ratings for the teachers involved, but the quality of the information returned was variable and not particularly useful.

The qualitative analysis yielded more significant results and consisted of interviews, questionnaires and evaluative summaries many of which have been posted on the blog. There were clear patterns, however, in teachers' responses to trio working:

- teachers feel more confident about their teaching
- they feel energised by the process
- they represent an excellent structural device for facilitating collaborative working
- staff concerns about working in alien cultures lessen over time
- there is a greater interest in pedagogy and research, whether through research lesson study or JPD
- pupils are beginning to benefit from a greater focus on classroom practice
- some impact can be observed on the cultures of the schools involved and the wider culture of the alliance

## **Impact on the alliance and alliance partners**

There are two factors here: the ownership of the project by the participants in the trios, and the ownership of the project by leadership teams of the schools involved. The former happened quickly. Colleagues became quickly engaged and simply 'got on' with the work. A significant factor here was the ability of the groups to choose their own projects. The projects were also facilitated by a £500 grant which made the provision of cover and travel much easier.

The grant obviously made the projects more palatable to the leadership groups and they were therefore more willing to give teachers release time. This was particularly important in primary schools where CPD budgets are often very small. Therefore, ownership began at classroom level but quickly moved up the system as enthusiasm for trio working grew. Participants in some cases quickly introduced the idea into their own departments and, of course, the success of the trios was regularly discussed at steering group meetings. The trio presentation evening, attended by heads from many of the partner schools, was the icing on the cake, giving huge credibility to the project.

In this way, ownership grew up through the system until leadership teams became strongly committed. As described above, the links created at classroom level have fed into the wider system and allowed a striking growth of maturity to develop, with many individual schools emulating the practices of the wider system in their own settings.

The relationship between the trio project and the alliance's development of research is perhaps one of the most interesting features of the project and one where impact is likely to grow as the partnership moves on. As a rural TSA, it was felt that one of the areas where colleagues could really excel was in the development of research, and to some extent this has proved to be true. Jurassic Coast TSA has been involved in a wide range of research activities including closing the gap: test and learn, MyScience, empowering partnerships and, more recently, evidence-based research. It has also been keen from the outset to develop a more formal approach to run alongside the research done in trios and CPD sessions. As a result, we now have a research in action group, run by the University of Exeter which allows teachers with limited experience of research to try out more academic working. If they enjoy it, they can use the credits they have accrued towards a Master of Education (M.Ed.).

Initially, the idea was that teachers would be encouraged to take part in M.Ed courses as the inevitable next step in their professional development. The trio project, however, has indicated another, more practicable and perhaps more powerful line of development. For many teachers, the idea of 'research' is quite off-putting. They see it as narrowly academic, not closely related to classroom practice, and a huge drain on their time. However, the kind of investigations they were undertaking as part of their trio groups clearly fall into the category of research. This led to discussions about ways to encourage colleagues to see research differently, as something to be embedded in their daily practice, not as something high flown and irredeemably academic.

This discussion helped us to develop a new professional model for teachers at Woodroffe School, a model which is gaining traction with the alliance as a whole. Teachers were already keen to develop their subject skills (most teachers coming into the profession do see themselves as subject specialists) and, largely through the work of the NCTL, they were prepared to see themselves as leaders. The third aspect of professionalism, which is evident in everything they do, tends to get neglected, however: teachers as experts in pedagogy. For many, pedagogy was something that featured in lectures as part of their PGCE courses but which has been forgotten ever since. Young teachers coming into the profession are much more alive to the importance of pedagogy and thus really positive role models for other colleagues (here we might note the powerful impact on having ITT trainees in school) but the 'research' work done in trios is proving to be a much more simple, yet powerful way of encouraging teachers to see themselves as pedagogical explorers.

There is a strong case to be made for re-inventing the role and to re-establish teaching as a highly skilled profession. Teachers have advanced skills in three areas: subject knowledge, leadership and pedagogy.

The next step for the alliance is therefore to explore this idea in more depth: to encourage teachers to see research as a key element in their teaching and to give them the freedom to develop ideas collaboratively across a range of schools. This is not only powerful CPD but it is also important in creating a much better image of teachers as

professionals. It surely does not need to be said, therefore, that this empowerment is likely to feed directly into the classroom in terms of confidence and more highly skilled professional practice. The challenge for leadership teams is to find ways to encourage this kind of empowerment.

## Teaching school alliance leadership learning

In the leadership blog summarising this research project, one of the more lighthearted entries is as follows. An alliance leader must be:

- creative and full of good ideas
- patient
- committed to the teaching school experiment
- committed to improving practice in the classroom – and classrooms in other schools
- tolerant
- persuasive
- good at navigating bureaucracy
- a fantastic form filler
- resilient
- slightly mad

Although not entirely solemn, there is truth in each of these bullet points. There are considerable challenges to creating an effective and genuinely cooperative alliance of schools.

The leadership issues emerging from this research project are not significantly different from those relating to leading a TSA. A list is perhaps the simplest way to set out some of the challenges:

- Communication can be a massive problem. Making sure all of the schools involved reply to emails, attend meetings, meet deadlines etc. takes a huge amount of managing.
- Communicating with primary colleagues is particularly difficult, partly due to the fact that primary schools are often under-resourced and short staffed.
- Organisation of the trios can be challenging but this is a management issue not

necessarily a leadership issue. There are undoubted complexities in trying to match up teachers from seven or eight different schools, particularly in terms of arranging times to meet and lessons to observe, but these things can be done with commitment and enthusiasm.

- Ensuring the ‘buy-in’ of other headteachers can be very demanding. Often teachers are keen to participate but their SLTs need persuading of the benefits, particularly when they are focused on league tables, students’ progress etc.
- Evaluating the results of the work is also a challenge. Often it is easy to be pleased simply that something has actually happened rather than being truly evaluative. Staff may have worked in trios and really enjoyed it but have they really achieved anything and what has been the impact on the students they teach?
- Outcomes can be measured by teacher evaluations but is it really possible to measure outcomes by measuring student progress across alliance schools? A teacher could certainly learn an enormous amount by working with colleagues but the impact of this in his or her own classroom is surely almost impossible to measure. You could compare results this year to results last year but it would not be possible to eliminate the other factors that may have led to an improvement. It may simply have been a brighter or harder working cohort of students. Evaluation therefore may have to depend upon soft data: teacher’s reactions, audience response and the willingness of those involved to repeat the experience.
- Finance is also a challenge. The project was funded but it was not a vast amount of money. If a genuine set of costs were to be worked out, including headteacher time, leadership team time, meeting time, travel costs (significant in a rural area), supply cover etc. I am sure that we would already have exceeded our budget. Of course, financial incentives to participating schools are important, and early on we took the decision to give the initial trios £1,000 to cover costs, now reduced to £500, but this meant that other budgets had to be found.

The most striking learning point from all this is perhaps the difference between school leadership and system leadership – and a very particular kind of system leadership, one where the leader is given no power over the parties involved. A headteacher works largely by persuasion, convincing his or her staff that the next initiative is a good thing.

Ultimately, however, he or she has the power to direct and things can therefore get done. This is true too of a leader of a federation or an academy chain.

Leadership of an alliance is altogether different because here the leader does not have the ability to direct, and forward movement can only be brought about by negotiation, mutual agreement and mutual interest. Leading this kind of system can be very difficult indeed, depending as it does largely on the leader’s ability to engage the support of other leaders.

It should also be noted that the lead school has all the responsibility and accountability. Partner schools can enthusiastically join the alliance and participate when and to whatever extent it suits them. And who can blame them? A head of any school works for the best interests of his or her own school, and takes what he or she can when it is offered. Getting alliance partners to see themselves as partners in a joint enterprise is vital to the success of an alliance but in reality something that is very difficult to do. I wonder how many of the larger alliances have the genuine commitment of their partner schools, rather than a commitment based on lip service at steering group or board meetings?

There are so many constraints upon collaboration that it is indeed a wonder that we manage to get things done at all. From the perspective of schools asked to join the alliance, the key question is 'what's in it for me?' and, of course, this shapes their response to the whole set up. They participate actively when it is to their advantage (particularly if money is involved) and then drop back if they don't see anything in it for them. And, quite honestly, what school leader wouldn't do the same? If you are running an alliance, however, you need to ensure that your alliance partners are involved at every step – and involved actively.

Other issues often intervene: schools worried about an Ofsted visit, tend unfortunately to look inwards and retreat from the world. Others worried about finance, refuse to allow staff out to participate in activities. In some places, conflicts of interest abound, so that the exciting school improvement day your alliance has planned is blown off course by a county initiative, or a national event. Primary schools often do not have the staff to send out, or to commit to the time needed to allow real collaboration.

Leadership of great pedagogy is much easier within your own school because you are able to exercise significant control over what goes on there. It is much harder over a wider system. The Jurassic Coast TSA has been focusing on what happens in the classroom where the leadership of learning is the key to the whole thing. Leadership at the higher levels plays a significant part in the process, creating the culture and climate for great learning to develop, but it is in the classroom where the difference is made.

Great leadership should therefore be directly connected to the classroom – or linked as closely as possible.

## Conclusion

The obvious point to begin with is that the leadership of great pedagogy is a complex undertaking. It involves immense personal commitment, a wide range of skills including the ability to persuade and to inspire, and a sense of relentless optimism. In addition, a number of key findings have emerged:

- great pedagogy develops more rapidly when schools co-operate

- high levels of trust are essential
- linking classroom to classroom is an effective catalyst for creating networks of trust
- encouraging colleagues to visit other schools and to work with colleagues from other schools is both inspiring and liberating
- leaders can't control everything; they have to have the ability to inspire and the skills to create the structures necessary for teachers to work according to their own enthusiasms and interests
- good leadership allows teachers to appreciate and develop their own professionalism
- great leadership should be directly connected to the classroom – or linked as closely as possible

## Next steps

Trios will definitely continue to play a key part in the development of the Jurassic Coast TSA and it is hoped that more and more colleagues will become involved each year. However, the links established between research and classroom practice will now become the basis for the next phase of development as we seek to embed a more sophisticated and professional approach towards teaching across the alliance.

# New River Teaching School Alliance

## Teaching school alliances and context

The New River TSA has six schools involved in projects at some level (including School Direct and research projects) with three strategic partners; Alexandra Park School (lead school), Fortismere School and Woodside School. The alliance commenced in September 2013 and therefore this project took place during the alliance's first year.

The key priorities at the beginning of the year for the New River TSA, that were relevant to this project, were:

- For the alliance to provide leadership to the school system in R&D;
- Research programmes to be active in alliance schools with on-going school-based enquiry projects on locally identified priorities; and
- R&D increasingly seen as an integral part of practice across all alliance schools.

Each school within the alliance has a nominated lead member from their SLT that is responsible for alliance related projects within that school. An assistant head at Alexandra Park School has responsibility of overseeing all alliance related projects. Within each school, projects can be further dispersed with most schools opting for this as a way of utilising their lead practitioners.

## What did the research project set out to achieve?

This project had two overarching objectives: one looking at improving the dissemination of pedagogy across an alliance and the second looking at improving pedagogy at a school level.

**Objective 1:** For the first objective (alliance level) the aim was developing strategies to share resources, staff and pedagogy between schools in the alliance but in a time effective way, ie how can we share pedagogy between schools in the alliance without taking teachers out of their school on a regular basis where time is lost travelling and cover implications can be substantial.

**Objective 2:** For the second objective (school level) the strategic partners within the alliance met and discussed pedagogical issues within each school. After discussion the decision was reached that a common area requiring focus was differentiation in the classroom. This was further divided into two sections, the first being to agree on set criteria to measure the effectiveness of differentiation during a lesson observation, i.e. a lesson pro forma to ensure that there was an agreement across the alliance about what constitutes good or outstanding differentiation. The second goal was pooling resources

on how to support the coaching of differentiation, particularly from a focus of middle manager coaching a teacher within their department.

As the alliance started in the same academic year as the project we included the three strategic partners. Although a few other schools joined as the year progressed in different capacities, we decided to keep the focus on the three strategic partners as any addition in terms of schools would potentially complicate things at this early stage of developing the project and the alliance.

An overall lead person was designated with responsibility for leading this project. In addition there was a nominated lead person from each of the schools (the overall lead was also one of the nominated lead for one of the schools).

To meet the alliance level objective the nominated leads in each school brainstormed the types of options available to meet the objective of sharing pedagogical ideas between alliances – other than face-to-face meetings. We explored options such as video conferencing facilities and chat rooms. The overall lead enlisted the support of the head of information and communication technology (ICT) at Fortismere School. The ideas were narrowed down and as a result a page on our managed learning environment (MLE) was developed and dedicated to this project (appendix four). On this page we set up the capabilities to upload files and have discussion on a forum (appendix five and six).

Once the MLE page/s was set up we had our model of how we were going to share pedagogy across the alliance. We would share documents and use the forum capabilities to discuss the implications of the objectives and other questions, as and when they arose.

For the school level objective (objective 2) we would use the model above to improve differentiation within the school. To ensure we had a clear and measurable outcome we decided to focus on one department within the humanities faculty, ie each school chose one subject from their humanities department. Our goal was to target middle leaders by first having a standardised pro forma for observing differentiation and second having a booklet to share strategies for coaching staff in improving their differentiation.

The overall lead then created an overview of how the project should take place, ie when deadlines should be met and so forth. Measuring the impact of a project like this was always going to be difficult as gathering hard data where a causal link is significantly established is not possible. We decided that as the objectives were related to staff perception that a suitable method to assess the impact of the project would be to supply a questionnaire to the teachers involved in the project before **and** after their involvement (see appendix one). The questionnaire asked about their perceived understanding of differentiation and their confidence in being able to assess the effectiveness of varying differentiation strategies in the classroom.

The six middle managers involved in the project were briefed on the rationale for the project, what they were required to do and by when (appendix seven). The first stage

was for participants to locate whatever document they currently used in their department to measure differentiation. If they did not have such a document then they were required to discuss with their department what this document would look like. All participants were then asked to upload these documents on to the MLE. The second stage was to ask participants to read what the other middle leaders had uploaded. This was the first time participants were beginning to read about how observing differentiation was completed in other schools. The third stage was for participants to share their thoughts on each other's ideas and documents on a forum. To provide focus participants were asked to answer two questions.

1. How does an 'outstanding' differentiated lesson differ from a 'good' differentiated lesson?
2. In terms of coaching, what strategies do you feel would be the best to support someone to move from having 'good' to 'outstanding' differentiation in their lessons?

Answers to the questions were based on their thoughts and what they had read in other uploaded examples.

Deadlines were set to always be manageable for the middle leaders with plenty of time to complete every part of the process. At this stage middle leaders spent between one and one and a half hours locating, uploading, reflecting and answering the forum discussion – without incurring any expense of re-locating teachers to a school and the time expense of travelling, helping to deliver objective 1.

The decision was then made to meet face-to-face for an afternoon: this was a joint decision by the three school leads as we felt that the process had reached its potential without a face-to-face meeting. To help prepare for the session participants were asked to reflect on the information they had interacted with thus far in the process. In addition the overall lead amalgamated all the information that had been shared on the forum to create two draft pro-forma. The first was a draft for a lesson observation pro forma for observing differentiation and the second was a draft for a coaching booklet on how to support someone to improve their ability to differentiate in the classroom (see appendix two and three).

As participants from the different schools did not know each other there was a brief meet and greet (appendix eight). They were then split into two groups. The groups were asked to look at the draft pro forma and ensure that they were all comfortable with the words used and the meanings of each category. Both groups then conducted a lesson observation of a mixed ability year 8 history class and discussed where they would place the lesson in terms of differentiation.

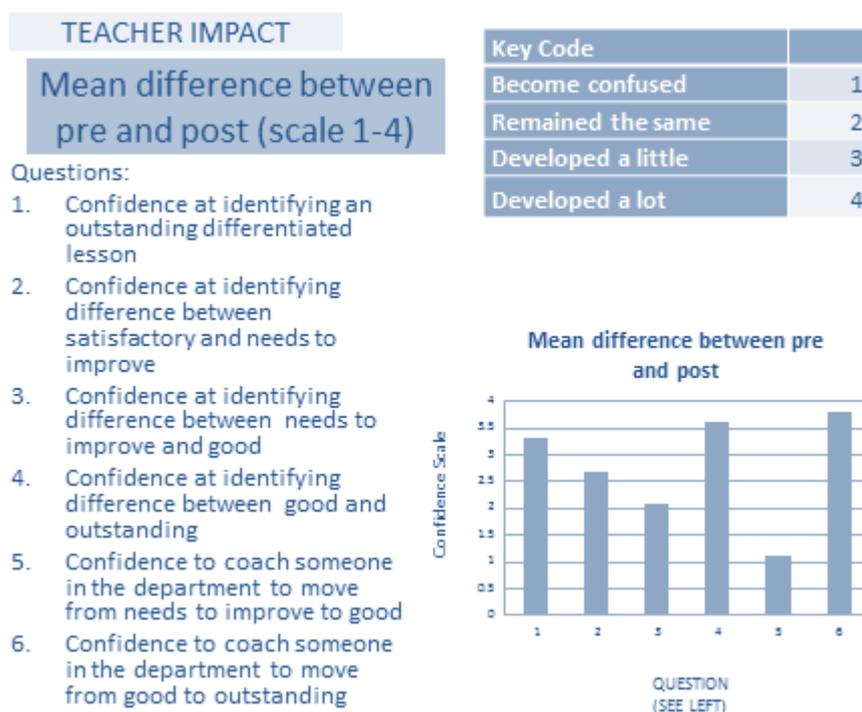
Time was allowed to iron out issues with the draft pro-forma, involving changing keywords, removing some categories and, in some instances, replacing them with others.

Participants were then asked to read through the draft pro forma for coaching strategies and again there was time for discussing strengths and weaknesses within the document and the necessary changes were made.

## Impact on capability of teachers and learning of pupils

The teacher questionnaire completed after the work showed success in all areas, with some areas showing some significant improvement. As can be seen in figure 5 there was an improvement in perceived confidence in assessing differentiation and coaching teachers on this issue. The greatest impact was in perceived confidence to identify ‘good’ and ‘outstanding’ differentiated lessons. However, the middle leaders were less confident in terms of assessing differentiation in ‘requires improvement’ and ‘inadequate’ lessons. This is an area that needs further exploration. The overall trend was echoed in terms of coaching other teachers, with the perceived confidence to do this much higher when working with teachers that were ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ than with those that needed to improve.

Figure 5: Results from teacher questionnaire



A baseline of students’ perception was also taken at the beginning of the piece of research. The brief for this was that the middle leaders should decide on a member of staff in their department who may require support with differentiation.

One class from this teacher was given a simple questionnaire asking students to express their feeling on being able to understand pieces of work, some, all or none (appendix nine). Table 6 illustrates these findings.

**Table 6: Student perception of how they can access the work**

	<b>Mean difference between pre and post questionnaire</b>
Do you feel challenged in your lessons?	+ 1.0
I always know how to complete tasks	+2.6
I find the work too difficult	-2.8
I find the work too easy	-0.2

The most significant differences can be seen in students' scores in respect of knowing how to complete tasks and finding work too difficult. Feedback from the middle manager involved in the process revealed that the particular strategies that had been discussed in the forum and then printed on the coaching pro forma had had a direct influence. In particular, the guidance on using success criteria and using key terminology were seen as having an impact. The minus scores for 'I find the work too difficult' and 'I find the work too easy' indicate that a smaller proportion of students saw these issues as problems and that lessons were better calibrated to where students were at in their learning. In the case of 'I find the work too easy' the small reduction reflects the fact that the original score was low and there was, therefore, little ability to show impact in this area.

## **Impact on the alliance and alliance partners**

The project helped to move the alliance along in terms of its shared approach to teaching and learning. The alliance was in its infancy at the start of the project but the project has allowed teachers to meet and share resources for the first time. In particular the areas consistent with Hargreaves's maturity matrix (2012) that have been developed are as follows:

**Joint practice development:** the alliance now has experience of joint development through creating standardised observation pro forma and this lays a foundation for being able to complete further cross-alliance observations with departments in alliance schools using the same pro forma to conduct observations.

**Mentoring and coaching:** this project has developed sharing capabilities for the theory behind effective coaching and mentoring. Although the participants involved were not coaching each other there was an element of sharing resources to do this effectively within their own schools.

**High social capital:** this project has provided a platform for more social capital work to take place. The project has demonstrated the benefit in sharing resource and working

together as this, at least, improves the perceived effectiveness of teaching and learning from a staff perspective to the student perspective.

**Evaluation and challenge:** the ability to evaluate one's own pedagogy in comparison with other departments within the alliance has been demonstrated through this project. Sharing resources (in this instance observation pro forma) provided a platform and dialogue to challenge existing pedagogy and evaluate one's own practice and helping others to improve.

## Teaching school alliance leadership learning

The importance of having a nominated lead person in each of the schools who can support colleagues to implement the agreed approach, methodology and deadlines was vital. This was the single most important factor to the success of the project. Prior to the launch of the project the overall lead met with two representatives from the strategic partners schools. Both these individuals were from the SLT and therefore could make decisions for their school. The initial meeting led by the overall lead set out the aims and objectives of the project but critically did not guide how the project would take place. The decision on how the project would manifest itself was a collective decision and reflected the needs of all the schools. This ensured support from all nominated leads with the goals and benefit of the project being clear and shared. It was important for each nominated school lead to understand the rationale for each section of the project.

The value of this was seen at one point when there was a slight issue in communication. One middle leader misread the information and uploaded incorrect documents. To address this the overall lead liaised with the nominated leaders and made it explicitly clear that those involved in the project should liaise with these individuals. This allowed some more in-house face-to-face support which could address issues such as understanding instructions and no future errors were experienced.

The overall lead would regularly update the nominated lead people about why things were happening if it wasn't already clear. In this way a clear leadership system emerged and the middle leaders involved knew whom they should approach if they required support within their school.

Another reason for the success of this project was the strong sense of motivation that came from everyone's input being evident in the final outcome. All colleagues invested time, sharing and amalgamating resources and could see how their efforts produced a combined outcome.

Having the strategic leadership parties in other schools fully bought into the rationale for the cycle was important and avoided the risk of the project stagnating.

They were able to hold individuals accountable which the overall lead, as a member of staff in a separate school, had less of an authority to do so.

Finding a suitable time for all colleagues from all the schools to meet proved difficult but not impossible because of the different timetables within the schools. To address the challenge in the short term we negotiated a time that worked well for all. In the long-term strategies are now in place to develop a consistent timetable across the alliance to allow more whole alliance work.

The next logical cycle of this research would be to continue the model with a new group and a new goal. This would also involve moving the location of the MLE to a more centralised area (on the alliance website) and updating the technologies to make it more user-friendly.

## Appendices

Appendices one, two and three are included in this case study. The following appendices are available on the alliance website<sup>13</sup>.

Appendix four: Screenshot of the MLE pages dedicated to the theme 3 project

Appendix five: Screenshot of the page where participants uploaded documents

Appendix six: Example of the forum discussion

Appendix seven: First e-mail sent out to middle managers

Appendix eight: Order for the day for the face-to-face meeting

Appendix nine: Analysis of participants' reflection of each process within the intervention

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<sup>13</sup> [www.nrta.co.uk/](http://www.nrta.co.uk/)

## Appendix one: Pre-questionnaire: questionnaire given to teacher at the beginning of the project

Please read this before completing questionnaire:

In this questionnaire differentiated refers to strategies used by the teacher to differentiate work by input to support all students in progressing.

This questionnaire refers to an amended version of the current Ofsted grading criteria 1- Outstanding 2- Good 3- Need to improve and 4 – Unsatisfactory.

Please read each question carefully and indicate your current perception on a scale of 1 – 5 (1 being very confident and 5 being very unconfident). You will be given a second questionnaire at the end of the first cycle (roughly 5 weeks) asking you to reflect on progress you have made, if any.

Name:

Position:

School:

1	How confident are you that you can identify what makes an outstanding differentiated lesson?	1	2	3	4	5
2	How confident are you that you know the difference between an unsatisfactory and need to improve differentiated lesson?	1	2	3	4	5
3	How confident are you that you know the difference between a need to improve and a good differentiated lesson?	1	2	3	4	5
4	How confident are you that you know the difference between a good and outstanding differentiated lesson?	1	2	3	4	5
5	How confident are you that you could support / coach a member of staff in your department to improve differentiation from unsatisfactory or need to improve to good?	1	2	3	4	5
6	How confident are you that you could support / coach a member of staff in your department to improve differentiation from good to outstanding?	1	2	3	4	5
7	State up to 5 differentiation techniques that you consider to be commonly used					
8	Rank the techniques that you have mentioned above in order of importance by placing numbers 1-5 next to each technique (1 being most important).					

Information from this questionnaire will only be used for training and research purposes within the New River TSA. An anonymous version will be shared with the Isos Partnership.

## Appendix two: Draft pro-forma for differentiation

Differentiation	Outstanding	Good	Requires improvement
<b>Learning objectives</b>	Appropriately pitched for all students. Learning objectives are accessible and challenging for all students	Lesson objectives are appropriate for most students	Lesson objectives are appropriate for some students
<b>Seating</b>	Seating / grouping has been thought out carefully to maximise peer learning and support for all	Seating / grouping has been thought out and has some impact on peer learning amongst some groups of students	Seating / grouping does little or nothing to enhance learning
<b>Support for lower ability students</b>	Clear activities / support can be seen (additional sheets when necessary) that support the development of lower ability students - when appropriate this targets key words	Tailored support is evident, but this does not result in all students being able to participate fully in every task	Little evidence of tailored support
<b>Stretch and challenge</b>	Clear planning and delivery of challenge for all students	Some planning for challenge but planning does not always allow students to progress	Little planning for challenge
<b>Available teaching support is used effectively</b>	Excellent communication between TA and teacher with effective appropriate use of TA	Shows some relationship / communication with the teacher and use is somewhat effective	Lacking any communication between teachers and TA. Use of TA is not effective
<b>Motivation / engagement</b>	All students are motivated and engaged throughout the lesson	Over 90 per cent of students are motivated and engaged throughout the lesson	75 per cent or less students are motivated or engaged in the lesson

<b>Success criteria</b>	Success criteria are clear and accessible to all students	Success criteria is evident but not accessible to all students	Success criteria not used effectively
<b>Group tasks (when applicable)</b>	Roles assigned based on knowledge of class to allow all student to engage and progress	Roles assigned but participation of all students is not evident	No roles are given in tasks
<b>Homework (when applicable)</b>	Clear thought given to support all students accessing homework	Some support given but a few students not able to fully access homework	No support given

## Appendix three: Draft pro-forma for coaching

There is no expectation that all the different strategies below are seen, rather it is a guide for things to look out for when assessing differentiation.

Coaching strategies for effective differentiation:

All of the activities below should be assessed in terms of their effectiveness. This is best done by conducting baseline assessments prior to their implementation and then again once completed and assessing the impact.

<b>Technique</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>Video footage</b> - to analyse differentiated strategies	This can be used with teachers to identify effective differentiation along as well as identifying areas where differentiation is weak or could be improved.  The video could be of the teacher requiring support or could be done by a separate teacher and used as an activity to identify and analyse differentiation strategies.
<b>Learning walks</b> with suggestions of good practice	Suggestion for teachers to go and observe other teachers to see examples of differentiation strategies. Suggesting particular teachers that are effective at differentiating to be observed with feedback where strategies can be shared and discussed.
<b>Informal observations</b> - looking at outstanding practice	

Technique	Explanation
<b>Planning and sharing resources</b>	Pair or team planning can be effective as it shows how to effectively differentiate and gives examples of effective differentiation strategies. This could be achieved by planning with the supported teacher or by pairing them with another member of staff.
<b>Teaching and learning forums</b> - a good way to network	Suggesting staff members to attend the teaching and learning forums which often have session on differentiation. This will be another way of increasing knowledge of differentiation strategies.
<b>Book scrutiny</b> - looking at the pupils comments and work progress etc.	<p>This can be done with teachers who require support as an exercise to identify that there is a problem, ie that some students are not progressing as well as they should as demonstrated by incomplete work in the book.</p> <p>This can also be used as a way to identify which classes require more support and as a way to identify best practice.</p>
<b>Developing students ability to reflect on learning</b>	Introducing activities for students in the department where they are comfortable reflecting on their learning. This would allow a head of department (HoD) to identify on a regular basis where support is needed i.e. which classes are accessing work and which classes are having difficulty. This could take place as open door policy or it could be structured where the HoD organises students to complete at the end of a period of time.
Challenging current strategies being used <b>which are less effective</b>	This could take place after an observation / book scrutiny and would be very clear in terms of what the issues are and why they are ineffective.
Monitoring effectiveness <b>Implementation of strategies and measuring their effect on different groups of pupils, including pupil feedback</b>	Taking measurements (eg book scrutiny or student questionnaire) to identify the current level of practice and implementing some of the strategies above and identify how well this has worked. Other members of staff could be included at any stage of this process.
Comparing strategies	If classes are taught across subjects then teachers could discuss with other teachers who teach the same class

Technique	Explanation
with other teachers	strategies that work for them. This could be particularly useful with specific students who differentiating for may be difficult
Research	The New River TSA runs a research project which supports teachers to carry out small scale enquiries. Teachers could be encouraged to join this and focus on differentiation. This would allow them to become up-to-date with current theory on the topic and equip them to analyse their own work and implement strategies to improve their own practice.
Finding relevant information	Support teachers in locating relevant information such as statements and other support material. At the time teachers are unaware that eg head of year have valuable information about each student that can support the differentiation of particular students
Knowing how to use relevant information	Once staff members have gathered all the relevant information do they know how to effectively use it eg including the data on a seating plan that they will have with them in each lesson.
Advanced skills teacher (AST) / lead practioners	Using the schools' AST or lead practioners as mentors and pairing them with teachers with the focus of differentiation.

# Portswood Teaching School Alliance

## Context

The Portswood Teaching School Alliance (PTSA) is a cohort 1 teaching school and is a collegiate professional alliance that is open to all schools. Current members are primarily from Southampton and have the aim of developing cross phase learning from nursery to university. In the first year of being a teaching school much work was done to build high social capital (Hargreaves, 2012) and provide a range of support that would cater for local priorities. The organisation of the alliance was therefore not based upon the 'Big 6' but instead upon local need. Hence the alliance is split into seven subgroups namely: assessment, curriculum, early years, inclusion, professional development of teaching and learning, school improvement and secondary.

Each group is comprised of leaders and practitioners and feeds into a steering group which acts as the strategic lead for the alliance. The LA is an active participant in the alliance resulting in school to school support being at the forefront of alliance work. This includes deployment of NLEs, SLEs and our own lead practitioner role which provides teacher-to-teacher support much as the former AST model did. The alliance runs its own School Direct programme, has over 80 teachers on its NQT programme and also runs a second year teacher programme. ITP and OTP courses are delivered termly and a number of twilight support groups also run including to support the new curriculum. Support is provided for research work with the intention of developing more of a research based culture in the schools.

## What did the project set out to achieve?

The PTSA is using the development of coaching as a lever for school improvement. The success of Portswood Primary School in using coaching for improvements in teaching and learning has been shared across the city for a number of years. This was centred upon having a lead coach in the school who concentrated upon creating an ethos where coaching was the foundation for high quality teaching. In 2010 during the initial NSS work Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) observed:

The role of the professional tutor within your own school, and with the partner school, brings a relentless focus on maintaining and improving the quality of teaching and learning. In both schools I observed outstanding lessons taught by teachers who, evidence demonstrates, have improved their teaching under his tutelage

HMI, June 2010

The question was, could this success also work in other schools? Through NSS work the coaching model was introduced into three schools and, along with other interventions,

had significant impact upon standards in supported schools (average rise of 19 per cent at L4+ across the three main supported schools).

In each of these cases the Portswood Primary School lead coach was prominent in the supported schools so the question remained, could it work across a number of schools where the culture would need to be developed by the staff and leaders of the school itself?

In this project PTSA provided a package of coaching training for fourteen primaries and one secondary school in Southampton (leading to the coaching of in excess of 100 teachers) and over the past three years the creation of coaching roles has increased rapidly within the city, particularly at assistant head level. This research sought to capture the impact of these initiatives and also analyse how the coaching model evolved. All schools received launch training from Portswood Primary School and a programme of support to embed the coaching culture (see appendix one). The schools were working on different time frames with some having received support from Portswood as a part of NSS work four years ago while others joined the research project soon after it began, aware of the success of the model and actively requesting the training. Data was collected through questionnaires completed by the lead coaches and the heads of the school (appendix two) as well as through interviews, coaching support group meetings and increasingly through Ofsted and LA reports on the impact of the coaching.

An aspect of the impact has been the use of 'parrot on the shoulder' in-class coaching that provides real time feedback during the session. At times this feedback may be 'directing', particularly if the teacher lacks experience. For more skilled and experienced teachers the feedback is more questioning-based and helps the teacher reflect. This borrows from the work of Schon (1983). Teachers are normally encouraged to reflect on action – after the lesson. In these coaching sessions the teachers reflect in action – during the lesson.

'Parrot on the shoulder' is precise and dynamic and can also be supported by the use of video recording which can be used in the lesson to provide immediate feedback and also after the lesson for further reflection. This method is embedded in a coaching culture. It is not a 'tips for teachers' approach because the success of real-time feedback is based upon the trusting relationship between teacher and coach.

## **Impact on schools**

All of the schools in the project were able to evidence impact upon teaching. For some schools this related to the improvement in teaching of one or more teachers but for most there was a clear cultural shift such as a junior school where Ofsted reported:

The programme of coaching for teachers is starting to improve the quality of teaching. One significant initiative has been the appointment of a member of staff to act as a coach, supported through the local school alliance, to make possible the

professional development of other teachers. The improvement is beginning to have a positive impact.

Ofsted March 12

One head, who transformed his school and was one of the first to request the coaching training, analysed the impact of the coaching in his school by writing:

It has been the development of a coaching culture that continues to be much more active in, and accepting of, the process and how it has built, developed and diversified across the school. There is now a strong culture of understanding relating to the need for consistent and constant improvement and development in teaching and learning. As such the staff as a whole are much more proactive and focused in their approach to their own development and belief in the need to be part of a continual cycle of reflection – informed by coaching (and to some degree mentoring).

head, school E

The responses of the heads often included a reference to 'culture'. Another junior school head wrote:

The culture of support has grown at a fast pace this year as a result of the deputy headteacher having a full time coaching role. He has spent a great deal of time gathering information about different coaching models and worked with the 'coaching support' network facilitated by the teaching alliance and utilised the information to design a coaching plan, based on individual needs.

head, school G

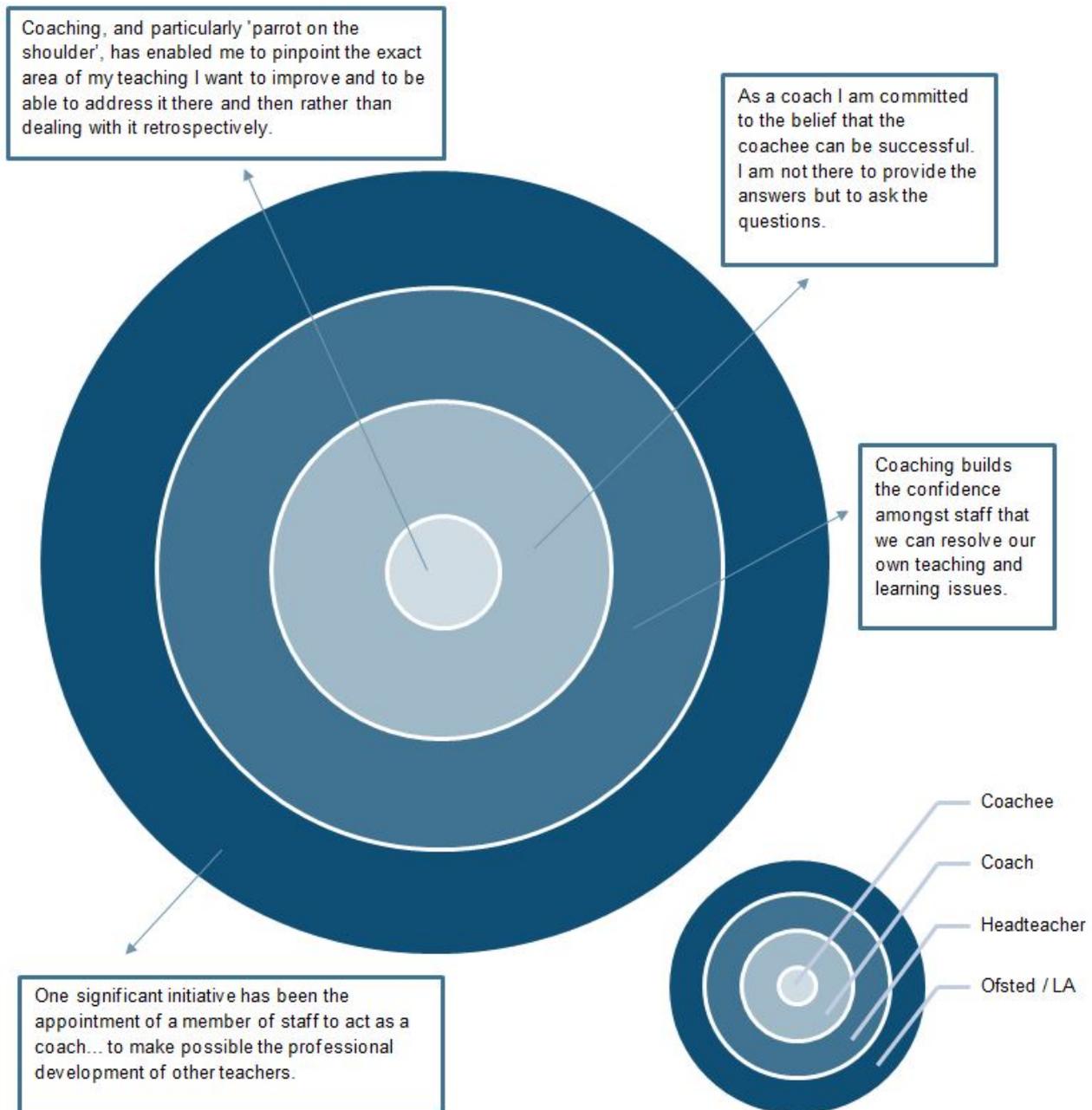
This relates to depth rather than a series of unconnected coaching events. It cannot be claimed that the improvements in these schools can be solely attributed to coaching developments but the feedback from heads, coaches and teachers paints a picture of the coaching contributing significantly to improvements in the quality of teaching. Figure 6 provides a model to represent this in the form of an 'onion'. The 'onion' represents the different layers at which the coaching model has worked beginning at the centre with the teacher, represented in the diagram by a quote from a teacher on the impact of coaching on her work:

Coaching, and particularly 'parrot on the shoulder', has enabled me to pinpoint the exact area of my teaching I want to improve and to be able to address it there and then rather than dealing with it retrospectively.

The diagram goes on to give examples for subsequent layers: coach, school and LA / Ofsted. This feedback from external agencies such as Ofsted and the LA mean a variety

of voices are recognising the impact. (See appendix three for vignette of the experience of a coach to her training).

**Figure 6: Feedback from a variety of voices**



Within the project there was only one school where the coaching support 'failed'. The word failure is in inverted commas because some of the teachers in the supported school did improve as teachers and in this sense there were individual coaching successes. However, in terms of building a culture then this support could be said to have failed. The primary reason for this was the lack of understanding of the headteacher and deputy headteacher of in-class coaching. Rather than being based upon developing the trust of the person being coached the coaching became another form of monitoring with teachers feeling threatened and not supported in the process. The leadership lacked the necessary understanding of the coaching process and the inter-personal skills that are

needed to lead to improvement. In this school there was only superficial change. Social continuity was sadly lacking and by the end of the year the head and deputy left the school. The learning here is that for coaching to be embedded there needs to be both the understanding and the commitment of the SLT. As Whitmore (2010) has warned, 'coaching is not merely a technique to be wheeled out'.

Another key impact of the project has been the capacity building across the PTSA including the creation of a support network group for coaches. One coach summarised the impact of the group thus:

The coaching group is useful because it gives coaches the chance to discuss with each other strategies for different situations. We can share successes and things that did not go so well and learn from each other. Also, there are times where we look at research or articles that help us focus on a particular area of coaching. We discuss this and link to the work that we do, thinking about how it could develop our practice. We then take this away to share with others in our school. The meetings also help our alliance to develop a consistent approach to coaching across the schools.

The group therefore aided the development of a coaching culture.

## **Impact on the alliance**

In terms of the impact upon the leadership of the project the building of high social capital has again been vital and we have seen the need to spend time making the coaching package clear, emphasising the depth and complexity of the model and also the need to ensure schools have mechanisms for monitoring the impact. If heads see coaching in a 'bubble' away from a deep cultural understanding it can be mal-administered and can impact negatively. Another aspect of key learning has been the notion of a 'tipping point'. Developing a coaching culture has not been about 'high sale' techniques and touting for business, it has been a grass roots emergence linked to a word of mouth recommendation based upon the credibility of the success at Portwood Primary School over a number of years and, more recently, the success when developed in other Southampton schools.

As the success of the coaching model was seen, more schools approached the alliance for training and support. As this initiative and other PTSA work increased, schools became more open which again built further trust.

Whole alliance meetings allowed success stories to be shared and other forums such as the primary heads conference also provided the chance to share what was on offer. The close relationship with the LA also meant that the alliance was invited onto task groups to provide school-to-school support and in some cases providing lead coaches to improve teaching as whole, not just individual teachers. Nevertheless there is still a long way to

go to develop trust with all schools that may fear that the alliance work is an attempt to somehow 'clone' the Portswood methods.

## Teaching school alliance leadership learning

In addition to the research methods already identified Robert Hill, educational consultant for NCTL, interviewed heads, coaches and a LA representative connected with the work in order to gain further insight into the leadership of cross-school pedagogy programmes. His findings are presented in the box below.

The alliance operates in the context of the LA being a key strategic partner with a high level of trust between the authority and the teaching school. The LA tracks the performance of schools, commissions packages of support from the alliance for schools that need it and assesses progress and impact.

There is also a good history of local primary schools in the Southampton area working together. The coaching leaders have built on this platform and avoided a sense that 'this is all about Portswood' by, for example, building a network of lead practitioner coaches drawn from schools across the alliance and involving other schools in the selection of the lead practitioners.

These two factors have provided a clear and stable context for strategic leadership of the coaching programme. For example, when a task group is formed to co-ordinate improvement support for a particular school, the leaders of the coaching programme are often members of the task group and so can see the coaching contribution to a school's improvement journey in the context of the other interventions that may be commissioned at the same time.

At a more operational level key characteristics of the leadership of the programme have included:

- Ensuring that the coaching model is organised and delivered systematically – this includes the process for selecting lead practitioner coaches (which involves two leaders observing their teaching practice, prior to them being interviewed) the provision of training, quality assurance and support via the coaching network.
- Working with heads of individual schools that want to use the programme to build acceptance and understanding of coaching among their staff and how it is very different from being observed formally as part of a performance management process.

- Adopting a responsive flexible approach to the requirements of schools and working lead practitioners to establish strong relationships with the head and lead coach in the school. The provision of coaching support is differentiated and tailored to match the needs of each school. By maintaining regular contact with heads the coaching leaders are able to vary the frequency or intensity of the visits, target particular year groups and address the personal development needs of particular members of staff. They are also able to adjust the focus of the programme to provide support for a school that wants to restructure its leadership team to support a coaching culture or appoint someone to lead the school's coaching team.
- Encouraging coaches to identify positives within classroom – quick wins. This helps to build confidence and create a permissive climate for coaches to tackle harder challenges.
- Insisting on professional standards with reports from coaches on each session with a teacher being delivered to heads within 24 hours.

This leadership approach has created a culture of consistent quality that in turn has generated credibility for the coaching programme. As one headteacher that had used the alliance-trained coaches put it:

If a coach came or was sent to my school and I knew that they had been trained by Portswood I would accept them.

A key leadership challenge has been how far to 'let schools go' in adapting the coaching programme to their own context – without it undermining the basic principles underpinning the model. The approach taken by the Portswood TSA leaders has been to talk with schools about what they are aiming to achieve and then exercise a quality assurance function as they implement their own within-school coaching initiatives.

These characteristics would tend to suggest that leaders of cross-school improvement projects need to be able to:

- spot the potential of an initiative and put in place the systems that will enable its impact to be replicated
- build consent and ownership among other heads and practitioners
- champion projects and, where necessary, provide reassurance
- see their work alongside other drivers of school improvement
- adapt to changing contexts as the programme develops
- demonstrate strong inter-personal skills

The leadership of the programme has become more sustainable as the project has developed. The programme was initiated and has been led by the director of teaching and learning at Portswood Primary School but he quickly 'brought on board a leader from a partner school to support the research for the project, and she has since transferred on to the Portswood staff.' The leaders themselves are not sure whether the principles are as yet sufficiently embedded and the leadership sufficiently distributed to guarantee the sustainability of the programme in the event that either or both of them were to switch to a different role or school. However, significantly one of the Portswood-trained coaches from another school felt that:

There were enough quality coaches in the schools to maintain the momentum and for someone to pick up the baton.

## Key leadership learning

The findings from the project can be summarised as follows:

- Where schools have seen a shift in culture it has been underpinned by a deeper understanding of coaching as a whole.
- Real-time feedback coaching (parrot on the shoulder) has had significant impact upon improving teachers (see impact section). It does, however, run the risk of being applied at a simplistic level as a panacea for all teaching ills. The philosophy behind the effective PTSA coaching model could suffer a 'lethal mutation' if applied by schools who do not fully understand that a technique such as 'parrot on the shoulder' should never operate superficially and is only a part of coaching as a whole. It is vital that initial training makes the theoretical basis for coaching clear and that on-going professional dialogue needs to be at the heart of effective coaching. The PTSA coaching model has acted as a basis for innovation which has then been adapted and innovated in individual settings with new roles emerging in many schools.
- A range of coaching techniques that impact upon teaching, often rapidly, are attractive to headteachers and have been employed extensively with significant effect. This has also occurred in school-to-school support with lead practitioners coaching teachers in supported schools.
- A variety of ways in which schools could engage in coaching has emerged – training, school-to-school support, network group and hubs. This has helped the coaching culture become more embedded.
- Schools are increasingly creating specific roles for coaching, often at assistant head level.

- Although the project played a part in developing a supportive culture it benefitted from the other successful alliance initiatives that showed success and developed trust (NQTs, OTP, etc.).

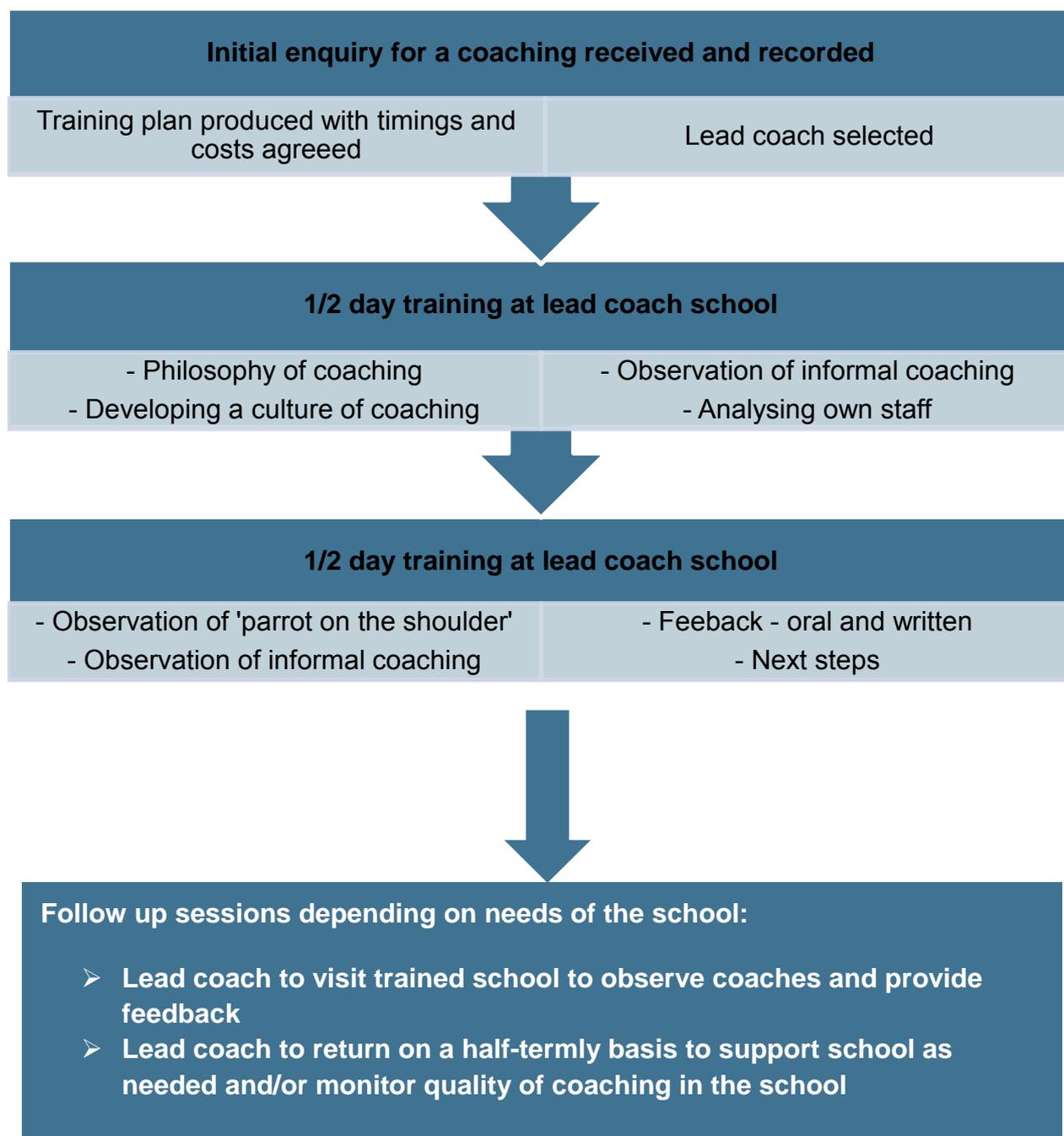
Demand for coaching support is constantly increasing and is now extending beyond Southampton and also into secondary schools and includes the emergence of a new hub of schools who requested facilitation for their own in-school coaching development. These schools are another example of taking the initiative based upon the Portswood TSA model but adapting to their own contexts. The impact of the development of ever increasing in-school coaches and the work of lead practitioners going into schools coaching individual teachers has been clear at alliance level but equally important has been the impact for individual teachers encapsulated by a recent email from a teacher, coached through this model, which read;

I just wanted to say a big thank you for all your help, coaching and support over the year. I was observed by the lead inspector yesterday morning for maths. I had my feedback after school and got an 'outstanding'. So a massive thank you.

Such recognition was commonplace in the research and marks a shift in culture leading to an improvement in teaching across these Southampton schools.

## Appendix one: Flow chart for providing a PTSA coaching package

Figure 7: Coaching package flowchart



## Appendix two: Coaching questionnaire for heads

Head: School D, autumn 2012

Question	Response
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<p>What were the reasons for appointing someone into a coaching role?</p>	<p>To build capacity for leadership in learning.</p> <p>To ensure that strengths in teaching were shared across the school.</p> <p>To ensure greater consistency in the standard of teaching across the school.</p>
<p>How was coaching explained to the staff?</p>	<p>Staff were initially asked for an area that they would like to develop – taking into account recent observation targets and whole school areas for development.</p> <p>This meant that everyone felt that their own needs were being met through the coaching. This has now moved on and everyone is now coached and expects to be coached.</p> <p>It was also introduced as a way to make sure we have a consistent teaching profile across the school that reinforces the termly raising attainment plan.</p>
<p>What did you hope to achieve through coaching?</p>	<p>I hoped to achieve a consistently good profile of teaching and the impact of teaching across the school. I also hoped to create a culture where open professional discussion through informal and planned coaching takes place between all teachers daily.</p>
<p>What are the specific areas of pedagogy you hope to improve through coaching?</p>	<p>Our focus in spring 2012 was developing effective guided groups. This linked with less teacher talk, lapping, and a variety of AfL to be able to structure flexible guided groups.</p> <p>Another focus was developing mental mathematics strategies and this has been an area my mathematics leader has developed through the project.</p> <p>A current focus of all coaching is making sure special education needs / free school meals pupils make at least good progress in all lessons.</p>
<p>What impact have you seen?</p>	<p>The teaching across the school is now much more consistent and this is evidenced through lesson observations last half term. Learning walks by SLT are referred to mathematics / literacy team leaders for addressing through coaching.</p> <p>Initial barriers to coaching with a minority of staff have been overcome.</p> <p>Every teacher now expects coaching linked to their performance management objectives. Staff are asking to be coached. I am very pleased with the capacity to improve teaching that my coaching leader</p>

	<p>has developed. Other staff who were initially coached are now coaching others and the coaching expertise has widened to other members of staff. Confidence in these staff has increased significantly and they are far more confident in recognising good features of lessons.</p> <p>Staff are more reflective on what they have done to support the learning and when being coached are thinking about the learning in order to pre-empt the coach.</p>
How have you monitored the impact of the coaching?	<p>Through regular reports from external supporting coach.</p> <p>Discussions with staff about what they see to be the impact on their own professional development and in turn impact on pupil outcomes.</p> <p>Impact seen through usual monitoring activities - learning walks, lesson observations, work sampling, pupil conferencing, data analysis.</p> <p>Meeting with coaching leader - focussing on the overview of roles and accountabilities for developing coaching.</p> <p>A further observation would be that setting appraisal targets this year was far easier as staff really had a deeper understanding about what they have to do to improve. They also clearly understood that coaching would be a part in achieving targets for this year.</p>

Graded as 1 highest to 5 lowest

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
The school has a coaching culture		x			
Staff reflect upon their teaching and seek to improve		x			
Staff are comfortable being coached in class		x			
Systems for monitoring effectiveness of coaching are effective		x			
The coaching skills of the lead coach are very good	x				
<p>Other comments:</p> <p>The grading above reflect the fact that all teaching staff understand coaching and have experience of being coached. We have established coaching across the school since March 2012 as part of the project and when plotted against the gradings at the start show good progress over time. Our next step is to develop coaching for support staff. TA coaching primarily but I would also like to work with my business manager to look at how a coaching approach could be used for the</p>					

admin team.

The impact in a relatively short time is significant for the teachers who coach, those that are coached and in turn better outcomes for pupils. Coaching has given us the structure and expertise to address inconsistencies in teaching quickly. We place a high value on the external support commissioned through PTSA. Governors are fully informed about the development of coaching. We believe we have achieved excellent value for money from the support. Thank you.

## **Appendix three: Case study of coach's reflections on what training meant at her school**

### **Coaching support received from Dr Keith Watson**

#### **18th September 2013 at Portswood Primary School**

I visited Portswood to meet Dr Keith Watson, who helped me understand the background and theory to coaching. Whilst walking around the school, I observed him having a number of professional conversations with different teachers, including an NQT and noticed how he made every conversation a coaching one. It was apparent from walking around the school that everybody, including the children, was used to him popping in and out of the classrooms. Everyone was open to coaching and this open policy was embedded throughout the school. From this visit it was agreed that I would return to Portswood and observe Keith conducting the 'parrot on the shoulder' coaching technique, which I was very keen to see in action as it was a method of coaching I was unfamiliar with. I also felt it was a method of coaching that would be useful to develop back at my school.

#### **25th September 2013 at Portswood**

I visited Portswood to observe Keith using the 'parrot on the shoulder' method of coaching with one of the year 5 teachers. It was clear that the teacher involved was very used and open to coaching. I found it useful to see when he took the opportunity to coach the teacher during the lesson so as not to inhibit the flow of the lesson.

He modelled to me, during the session, the kinds of open questions and prompts that could be used in a lesson to make the teacher think about what was happening in the lesson, where it was going next, how they were going to do something. These questions really made the teacher think and enabled him to react immediately within the lesson.

I really liked the immediate impact this style of coaching had and the reflection that was happening throughout the lesson by the teacher.

Afterwards Keith and I discussed the lesson and he showed me how to write up a session. Keith then asked me to give the teacher feedback, which made me nervous, but

we walked this through first which put me more at ease. I really enjoyed this session and could see the advantage of real-time feedback during a lesson. I was keen to try this type of coaching, build relationships with staff at my school to allow this to happen and develop written feedback. These are the targets that I set with Keith for the next session.

### **9th October 2013 at client school**

Keith visited my school to observe and coach me coaching a year 1 member of staff. I felt nervous before the session as 'parrot on the shoulder' coaching was something I had never done before. I had talked to the year 1 teacher involved before the session and she was very open and willing to take part – this was all very new to her. To put the teacher at ease, I took Keith to meet her before the session. During the session, he talked me through and helped me to formulate open questions and discussed techniques to ensure I didn't stop the flow of the session (eg give the children a question to discuss if I want to talk to the teacher). We also discussed how to ensure that note taking was effective and how the coaching session could be different if it was an NQT being coached.

After the session, I fed back to the teacher verbally and produced written feedback in a simple format as modelled by Keith at the previous session. The teacher concerned was very positive about the coaching session and felt that it had benefitted her greatly. She has asked for further coaching and support to continue to develop her practice.

I found the session very useful because it made me think about how to phrase open questions to prompt, provoke thought and impact on the teaching and learning happening in the classroom at the time. I also learnt that it is important to choose your moments carefully when coaching so as not to hinder the flow or pace of the lesson, as well as the importance that the coaching session should be focused for greatest impact. I am very keen to continue to develop this coaching style both with more experienced staff as well as NQTs. I would also like to open staff up to the idea of using video for coaching purposes and I have already discussed this possibility with one of my NQTs as he is a visual learner, although this may need to be a longer term target with some staff.

I need to share my learning with a fellow coach at my school. I am keen to attend the coaching network meetings and build up relationships with coaches from other schools in the city to share good practice and continue to develop my skills.

I need to discuss with my headteacher how I can continue to improve my coaching skills and how coaching can be developed within my school. I would welcome more support from Keith at a later date.

# Sutton Secondary Teaching School Alliance

## Teaching school alliances and context

Sutton Secondary TSA is led by Glenthorne High School. It was designated in September 2013 and is therefore in its first year. There is some history of the schools in the alliance working together through the Sutton schools' training consortium. All of the high schools in Sutton are members of the alliance as well as five primary schools in the borough and three secondary schools outside of the borough. In addition to the school, the LA and Roehampton University are strategic partners.

The alliance works on all aspects of the 'big 6' from the teaching school agenda but has a clear focus on school-to-school support and ITE; the lead school has recently been accredited as a SCITT and we seek to build on our already ambitious School Direct offer by offering a new routes and subjects.

The alliance is led by Glenthorne High School and the teaching school director. The strategic partners meet every six weeks to discuss strategy and operational management. Headteachers from all strategic partner schools have the teaching school as an agenda item at least once a year to discuss strategy and direction.

## What did the action research project set out to achieve? What did the project do?

We chose a CPD programme for second year teachers as we felt this was an area which as a group of schools there was a gap. Data from school observations suggested that progress of NQTs was rapid in terms of becoming 'good' teachers but fewer went on to make similar progress to 'outstanding' in their second year. The intended outcome was to maintain a focus on the core elements of good practice (engagement, questioning and assessment) to enable teachers to become outstanding.

The research was agreed at an alliance meeting and three schools volunteered to pilot the project and work together. The project was initially led by three assistant headteachers (AHTs) from the three schools piloting the project. It was then devolved down as the year progressed to three middle leaders (one per school) who would be organising and delivering the sessions. This created a collective working and purpose at another level within our schools

The funding provided by NCTL was used to pay for the time spent by colleagues devising the programme and subsequently the cover generated by colleagues who delivered the programme and carried out the observations of participants. In addition, we paid each of the middle leaders an honorarium of £500 for time spent writing the sessions. Finally, approximately 10 per cent of the budget has been spent on administration.

The programme involved a series of CPD sessions for the second year teachers delivered by middle leaders in our schools. The sessions involved some direct teaching and reflection on the literature and learning walks in trios (from different) schools followed by reflection on outstanding practice and improvements to make in participants own practice (see below). Three schools were involved in sending participants and in delivering the sessions.

During the year the process was changed in a number of different ways:

- First, one of the key adjustments was the shift from AHTs leading the programme to the middle leaders from different schools making the adjustments.
- Second, in the pilot sessions in the autumn term participants commented on the fact that they valued the learning walks in trios and the opportunity to reflect on the excellent practice they had seen with colleagues from different schools. They also valued the opportunity to reflect on their practice using the literature but felt the structure of the programme didn't enable this to happen. The participants' views were supported by the facilitators who felt that the break between the taught sessions and the learning walks didn't work. As a result, the middle leaders amended the programme to begin with learning walks focussed on a theme and then reflect on that theme afterwards. In addition, literature would be provided online through our teaching school website for the participants to access and reflect on prior to the learning walks.
- Third, teacher self-efficacy questionnaires were used to measure the progress participants felt they had made during the programme but this data wasn't collected effectively in the first pilot session by the middle leaders facilitating the sessions. This in turn became a priority and responsibility of the AHTs to collect and record data so this could then be tracked.
- Finally, the programme also involved data being collected from lesson observations of participants before and after the session using an observation form specifically designed for the programme. The observation data would be used to inform us if the programme had helped improve the teaching in those areas across the cohort and for each specific session; engagement, assessment and questioning. Initially during the pilot programme, the lesson observations weren't completed due to time constraints for the middle leaders delivering the sessions. For the second cohort time was made available for the middle leaders but there were issues with usage of the forms. In the final cohort, in consultation with AHTs, we dropped these in favour of general observation data.

**Initial programme:**

Session	Topic	Timing
1	Teaching in your second year Active engagement taught sessions	4-5.30
2	Learning walk in trios Reflections on active engagement Assessment taught session	1.30 – 5.30
3	Learning walk in trios Reflections on assessment Effective questioning taught session	1.30 – 5.30
4	Learning walk in trios Reflections on effective questioning What have I learnt from the programme	1.30 – 5.30

**Adjusted programme:**

Sessions	Timing and venue
Learning walk in trios Reflections on effective questioning	1-4.30 Held at Glenthorne High School
Learning walk in trios Reflections on active engagement	1.30 – 4.30 Held at Greenshaw School
Learning walk in trios Reflections on assessment	1.30 – 4.30 Held at Carshalton Boys School
Observation of an outstanding lesson Reflections and action going forward	1.30 – 4.30 Held at own school or Glenthorne High School

## Impact on capability of teachers and learning of pupils

Our assessment of changes in teaching and learning methods was through the observation form discussed in the previous section. In the final cohort, the observations were completed with the AHTs before and afterwards but it was decided the forms were an imperfect way to measure progress of participants and just ticking boxes on the forms if you saw it in the lesson didn't give a real indication of progress in teaching. As a result, we decided to share our general observation data of the teachers on the final cohort to see if progress had been made. We accept this is also subjective but it is set against Ofsted criteria despite our interpretations potentially being different. The final cohort of 12 second year teachers was judged as follows within their schools:

**Table 7: Improvement in participant Ofsted grade**

Participant	Observation 1-4	Observation 1-4	Improvement
	Overall	Overall	
1	2	1	↑
2	2	2	→
3	1	1	→
4	3	2	↑
5	2	2	→
6	2	2	→
7	2	2	→
8	3	2	↑
9	3	2	→
10	2	1	↑
11	2	1	↑
12	1	1	→

The data suggests just less than half made progress with their teaching in the year, although two were already judged as outstanding. It is evident though that it was teachers who had previously been judged as '3' who were more likely to make progress. As the programme was initially not designed to support these teachers but those already

'good' the impact of the NQT+1 programme may have been less. In addition, participating schools all have intervention strategies for teachers graded at '3' which may mean the work within schools may also have played a key factor in raising the observation grades

The feedback from participants (12) in the final cohort suggests they found the sessions useful in general and the learning walks and post session discussion were far more useful than the literature. There is little difference between the different sessions.

**Table 8: Feedback from project participants**

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Programme overall	2	8	2	
Learning walks	2	9	1	
Literature provided		7	4	1
Post session learning	3	8	1	
Questioning session	1	10	1	
Engagement session	5	6	1	
Assessment session	2	9	1	

In the free comments there was a theme in terms of impact on practice:

- Eight of the participants commented on seeing outstanding practice in other schools and being able to apply this. Two of the others who didn't comment on other schools noted the learning walks were valuable
- Nine of the participants commented that discussion with others / sharing practice / resources was really valuable to them

The self-efficacy survey results shown in table 9 below are inconclusive in terms of impact. In some areas participants have made no progress, in fact there appears to have been a decline in confidence in some areas. The data does suggest overall that participants have grown in confidence in more areas than where this isn't the case although you expect confidence to grow naturally during the year. There appears to be little difference in terms of increasing confidence in any of three areas engagement, assessment, questioning and the three questions which weren't applicable to the session which agrees with the feedback on the sessions above. On reflection the survey needed a bigger scale to enable participants to reflect bigger changes in their progress.

In addition, we should have recorded names which would have enabled us to track the changes of individuals. Going forward we will be using interviews with participants to support and triangulate the findings from the self-efficacy results.

The focus of the sessions was on engagement, assessment and questioning.

**Table 9: Teacher survey results**

	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Scale of 1-5 average before the sessions</b>	<b>Scale of 1-5 average after the sessions</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Engagement</b>	How well do you motivate all students who show a low interest in work?	3.67	3.6	-0.07
	How well do you think you motivate students who show a low level of interest in tasks?	3.55	3.8	+.25
	How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in their schoolwork?	4	4.2	+0.2
	How confident do you think students are in engaging in conversation with you and other students?	4.1	4.7	+0.6
	How much can you help your students value their learning?	3.9	3.8	-0.1
	To what extent do you cater for students learning needs?	3.58	3.6	+0.02
	To what extent are you motivated about the subject content you teach?	4.6	4.4	-0.2
	How often do you provide students with the opportunity to discuss and share their work?	4.33	4.3	-0.03
	How much can you help students to engage in their own learning?	3.82	3.6	-0.12
<b>Questioning</b>	I am confident in posing effective questions	3.33	3.6	+0.23

	To what extent does your questioning allow all learners to achieve the learning objectives in a lesson?	3.33	3.2	-0.11
	To what extent does your questioning help learners reach explanations and understanding of their own learning?	3.42	3.8	+0.38
<b>Assessment</b>	I use a wide range of assessment strategies	3.5	3.2	-0.3
	To what extent does assessment feature in your lessons?	3.67	3.8	+0.13
	How confident are you in using a range of assessment methods in the classroom?	3.75	4	+0.25
<b>Overall assessment of progress</b>	How confident are you in planning an outstanding lesson?	3.58	3.6	+0.02

Overall the impact of the sessions is unclear and without a more rigorous data set, a control group and more in-depth qualitative investigation the conclusions are provisional.

## Impact on the alliance and alliance partners

The three schools co-ordinating and leading the project were very much involved and after the pilot project the middle leaders from the different schools took the initiative to update, amend and improve the programme following initial feedback from participants and their own understanding.

In terms of the broader alliance, reports on the project were an agenda point at each TSA meeting but only two of the other schools within the alliance sent participants on the programme although more have expressed interest for this coming year. In terms of broader working in the alliance, it is a very small aspect of our work and ITE tends to dominate our alliance and draw partners in.

The project has assisted in our alliance 'maturing' in a number of ways. First, there has been JPD in terms of the CPD programme itself and the evolving of the programme through the course of the year which we anticipate will continue through this year.

Second, the process of passing the ownership and responsibility to middle leaders has developed distributed leadership and widened the knowledge of the teaching school. Finally, the fact that the evaluation and development of the project has been in the hands of middle leaders has allowed a growth in the creativity.

In broader terms it hasn't really changed how partners work together in its own right but it is part of a whole package of work the teaching school has undertaken. We have recently become accredited as a SCITT and view the NQT+1 programme as being central to the continuation of training from QTS, NQT induction and then NQT+1.

## Teaching school alliance leadership learning

The key to working across alliances is to ensure planning is conducted together, there is a clear understanding of the objectives of the session and this is communicated to schools clearly as well as participants. We amended our trial run following feedback from the participants involved and listening to feedback helped us develop the programme.

Initially by directing and leading the project personally and planning too much myself there was too little buy in and understanding. As soon as I passed the planning design and review to middle leaders delivering the sessions the project moved forward much more quickly and the shared ownership at middle leader level in schools created additional understanding of the objectives throughout schools. Essentially, directed work from senior leaders does not always work.

Leadership needs to come from middle leaders within our alliance working collaboratively under the guidance and mentoring of senior leaders. Projects should be passed down as long as there is an understanding of common aims and objectives and the structures are in place to review the impact of these effectively.

However, even if common objectives may be understood and the impact may be happening at middle leader level the priorities, capacity and time of the middle leaders mean certain things still need to be co-ordinated centrally by senior leaders who also need to take control of things such as:

- data
- timelines
- releasing colleagues
- planning timings more effectively in terms of school year

Senior leaders also need to:

- be careful with when planning things at crunch points in the year as certain things take priority in schools

- to take responsibility for certain things eg data and planning time for colleagues to complete work (observations) at crunch times

An area of learning has been the building of trust between schools especially as the more we have middle leaders working together across schools the more understanding there is of our common objectives and how we can work together to achieve these.

We will continue to run this programme.

# The Wroxham Transformative Learning Alliance

## Acknowledgements

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## Context

The Wroxham School is a one-form entry primary school with nursery in Hertfordshire. The school was designated as a teaching school in the first cohort in 2011.

The Wroxham School has a long history of collaborative practice both locally and nationally. When the school was designated as a teaching school this followed seven years of leadership and close partnership with Potters Bar primary and secondary schools and two years of national dissemination of the Cambridge Primary Review to primary colleagues and HEIs across England.

The work of the school, local network and subsequent TSA is underpinned by a strong set of principles and leadership dispositions that seek to offer an inclusive, invitational approach to professional learning (see appendix one for further explanation). *Learning without Limits* (2004) and *Creating Learning without Limits* (2012) document the Wroxham School leadership and improvement agenda that seeks to resist notions of 'fixed ability' and offer 'transformability' as a principled alternative.

The alliance is led by a small group of consultant headteachers in partnership with the headteacher at Wroxham School. All three of the consultant headteachers were previously Potters Bar heads and had worked as part of the original local network since 2004.

The school already had a growing national reputation at the time of teaching school designation. The opportunity that teaching school status provided enabled and accelerated the process of dissemination of the school's research and ideas about primary education both nationally and internationally. The head's involvement with leading educational organisations and thinkers was also enhanced by the teaching school movement. The impact of this has been that decisions taken at a micro level by the leadership of the alliance were often influenced and informed by desire to influence and impact at a macro level. The driving imperative behind the leadership of the alliance has always been to make a difference to professional learning in order that schools

become more humane places empowered by the principles of trust, co-agency and inclusion.

## **What did the research project set out to achieve? What did the project do?**

The alliance was keen to extend the work of the local network and to offer a research engaged community resource. A consultant headteacher, who had completed her Masters degree at the University of Cambridge prior to designation agreed to facilitate half-termly leadership fora following consultation with local headteachers. The teaching school funds this initiative and also provides research materials and a professional library for participating members to use. The groups began meeting in January 2012 and are thriving with regular attendance of between 12–20 headteachers. A group for deputy headteachers and senior staff has also been meeting for a similar amount of time and a new research champions group was established last year. The format of the meetings ensures that new participants are always welcomed and that democratic engagement allows everyone's voice to be heard. The consultant head's skilful preparation and scaffolding of discussion has been an important discipline.

The process of engagement with lesson study has been documented in other papers produced during the research period: a case study of the impact in one of the schools is available on the website of the Teacher Development Trust<sup>14</sup>; and a description of the process is included in appendix two. It is worth noting here, however, that direct engagement and involvement with leading thinkers in this area has ensured that the alliance's approach has always felt authentic. These leading thinkers have all visited Wroxham School, worked with alliance colleagues and engaged the leadership team in debate about the core purposes of lesson study. In addition, leading educational researchers have visited the teaching school to lead sessions contributing to the debate about pedagogy. Other visiting speakers and course leaders have been invited to Wroxham School specifically to enhance pedagogical subject knowledge including leading a session in the summer term.

The opportunity to debate the impact of lesson study internationally has been afforded to the alliance through visits by colleagues from Japan, Singapore and Thailand. Most recently, some of the school leadership team have visited Shanghai as part of the maths hubs initiative and Wroxham School will host a return visit from two Shanghai teachers in the spring. The opportunity for alliance colleagues to participate in research lesson study with the Shanghai teachers has been offered and is already fully booked.

Alongside the leadership fora another important, nurturing aspect of the alliance has been to engage with local schools and to listen. Another consultant headteacher studied

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<sup>14</sup> <http://tdtrust.org/oakmere-primary-report-on-nten-lesson-study/>

to gain a professional coaching qualification during the first year of the alliance. Her role has primarily been to seek and nurture contact with school leaders in a pastoral manner. This coaching support is funded by the teaching school.

A menu of high quality professional learning events has been provided at Wroxham School since 2011. Thousands of teachers have visited the school during this time and staff have been appointed to co-ordinate this efficiently. The learning opportunities offered at the school have been made possible because of the good will of the school staff, children and wider community. The staff team at Wroxham School are inspired by the ideas of *Learning without Limits* and recognise the unique opportunity that they have to share their pedagogical approach with others and to learn from the wider community of the alliance. This commitment to system improvement as a collective endeavour has been another crucial factor in the offer that Wroxham has continued to provide for other professionals.

The next step for the alliance is to work with a third consultant headteacher to offer an educational blog and online space for colleagues to update their knowledge of educational research.

## **Impact on capability of teachers and learning of pupils**

Professor David Hargreaves stated at the teaching schools induction event in 2011 that it was his belief that the impact of the teaching schools initiative would not be understood until at least ten years had passed. Although it is possible to draw upon qualitative, anecdotal evidence of enhanced leadership courage, there is scant robust evidence of measurable impact of the work of the alliance. However, the qualitative feedback that the alliance receives and the experience of colleagues continually returning to the alliance for professional learning, support for new teachers and ITT provision, leads Wroxham School to believe that the work they are doing is intrinsically worthwhile and helpful. If the teaching school continues to thrive until 2021 they believe that strong quantifiable evidence of impact gained through changes in leadership culture will be available. One of the imperatives for dedicating significant time to writing and publishing during 2015-16 is to add strength to the alternative story of school improvement that the school believes its alliance is beginning to illustrate.

## **Impact on the alliance and alliance partners**

- Importance of engaging with evidence and establishing room for debate amongst colleagues across the alliance about the big ideas in education (as opposed to attendance at LA events aimed at achieving compliance).
- Importance of investment in colleagues through initiatives such as pastoral support and coaching for leaders.

- Importance of providing a strong stable presence within the local community.
- Investment in communication, website, facilities, event management, and marketing has enabled a sustainable business to develop.
- ITT and NQT support continues to be an area of growth. Discussions are taking place about establishing and running Wroxham's own SCITT from 2017.
- Future sustainability is financially possible due to the significant income generated from CPD. However, the need for premises on site to support this is becoming acute.

During summer 2014, a small number of headteachers involved in the work of the alliance were interviewed by a member of the research team. The headteachers identified the following points:

- The **headteacher learning forum** was viewed as “very good professional development” and a “powerful collaborative model” by all the heads. The meetings had enabled heads from different schools and areas to come together. They had sparked reciprocal visits to learn about aspects of another school's practice (for example, teaching and learning in the foundation stage). The approach of bringing relevant research literature or articles was seen as helpful, one head described it as “dropping in a few gems”. Heads said they had used the materials and ideas discussed at the learning forum at their own staff meetings or other professional development. The learning forums had focussed on topics such as feedback, the work of John Hattie, and material from the Sutton Trust and EEF. One head said it had provided “time to reflect and time to talk” and another described how “...we need to put our heads above the day-to-day business and this helps me to do that, and look at the bigger things”.
- The **lesson study project** was described as “brilliant” and “important” by several of the heads. One head described how it had helped to move her school's practice on and provided the spur to re-organising the timetable to create more time for planning, observation and reflection, and joint preparation. The focus on children and the observational learning was seen by heads as hugely powerful to help staff learn “...and the impact is immediate, so the next day they can talk to their TA about working with a child differently”. Another head talked about it “raising the quality of teaching” and how the lesson study trios had been better than their own processes as it “provides more support and more challenge”.
- **Personal leadership support** through coaching and mentoring from one of the consultant headteachers and others was seen as a vital element of the work of the alliance for several of the heads. One head said this support from the alliance had been “...a lifesaver: I would probably have left, or carried on but without the same drive without it”. This headteacher had been able to seek support in dealing with

difficult staff issues, received the offer of an SLT member on loan, and had "...lots of advice and support, and cups of tea. Now I don't feel alone with my vision, and have a core of people saying 'yes – you're right - carry on' ". Another head described how she had been visited, and the visit had provided the opportunity for her to ask for support in a range of areas: "...it also brought me back to the reasons why I became a headteacher". A different head described the importance of this leadership support as it was "enriching", and that this mentoring and coaching had been without cost "...this was an amazing offer, that we would have paid for but we didn't need to".

The alliance also sought feedback during 2014 from headteachers that had been involved in its activities. Examples of the responses include the following:

Being a part of the alliance has meant the whole school has had strategic support in order to aid development which was impacted directly on the improved learning experiences of all our children.

headteacher

Ofsted visited last week. The inspector loved the choice challenges and circle groups and our connections with the alliance and yourself. We were 'requires improvement' and have moved to good which is encouraging. More importantly we have not gone down a road of second guessing Ofsted but instead have sought out the best practice nationally. This has inspired staff, especially the teachers' trips to Wroxham.

headteacher from another local authority

By far the biggest benefit for us has been the ability to participate in high quality training opportunities. Members of staff at all levels have had the opportunity to take advantage of a wide range of courses and development opportunities: from leadership coaching to Ofsted training, from discovering the lesson study model of improving learning and teaching to plotting a path through the new national curriculum. Staff have then been able to return to school and lead on areas of development with a high degree of confidence.

headteacher

The alliance brought together staff from a wide audience, with a wide range of experiences. In addition then, the alliance offered opportunities for longer term professional partnerships where teachers worked on projects such as the MFL projects over time. This helped develop collegiality across schools with shared learning.

headteacher

## Teaching school alliance leadership learning

The nature of the Wroxham Transformative Learning Alliance has been different to many alliances from the initial 2011 cohort. The message given by the then Secretary of State at the teaching schools induction conference in 2011 was an explicit invitation to headteachers in the room to see their school improvement role as 'pioneers... defining excellence'. It was made very clear that there was no template for teaching schools, or for alliances, but that an investment was being made in school leaders. The opportunity to exercise autonomy was given in the expectation that 'an inch of freedom' in the hands of teaching school leaders could make 'a mile of difference'. This leadership mandate provided the courage and breadth of vision that has inspired the work of the alliance from the outset. They have not spent time asking for permission or casting around for models to copy. However, in the past year it has become evident that most alliance structures in teaching schools across the country are much smaller and more cohesive, often based on a desire to work ever closer as organisations, federations, multi-academy trusts or chains. The political appetite for evidence of impact may well lead the Teaching Schools Council to demand tighter, quantitative key performance indicators related to standards and attainment of alliance schools and even to require teaching schools to become accountable for the performance of alliance schools.

The invitational, inclusive nature of the alliance has meant that tiered membership has grown. Additionally, the innovative approach that Wroxham School takes with regard to curriculum and assessment has enhanced its national and international recognition. This means that the market for courses, research groups, NQT provision, School Direct placements etc is thriving, thereby enabling the core functions of the alliance to be sustainable.

The agency of the lead headteacher was enhanced by her election to the national teaching schools council (2011 - to date), membership of the eastern region Ofsted reference group (2012) and latterly as a member of a regional commissioner headteacher board (2014). Memberships of decision making groups has meant that instead of potentially following a compliant model of leadership there has been constant opportunity to develop professional courage informed by principles.

Leadership of the alliance has been significantly supported through the opportunity to meet regularly with the regional research teams facilitated by the Isos Partnership. Meetings with other colleagues and the academic interest and skilful questioning provided by the research team has ensured that alliance leaders have stopped and considered what they are doing and why. Participation in the research has provided mentoring, an opportunity to listen deeply to the developmental stories of other alliances, space to reaffirm core purposes and to explore underlying emerging questions and hypotheses about the changing educational approach to system leadership and school improvement. It is important to have an audience and the chance to test and explore ideas with informed, trusted colleagues.

The notion of school 'improvement' was interpreted differently by the leadership of the alliance. This has become increasingly evident. The alliance has never set out to 'remediate' schools. They are more interested in building a culture of improvement that permeates the system.

The underlying need for 'permission giving' with regard to innovation has been supported through national recognition of Wroxham School. It is less risky to listen to alternative ideas when those very ideas are publicly supported by the inspection system and the Department for Education.

International recognition of *Creating Learning without Limits* (Swann et al, 2012) and the strong internet presence of Wroxham School also supports system leadership through association. Publications, articles, blogs, twitter presence, conference keynotes are all means by which the work of the school and alliance has gained recognition. McGraw Hill are currently working with the school to agree a book proposal to document the impact of the alliance, for publication in spring 2016.

The Wroxham Transformative Learning Alliance has well over a hundred schools signed up as network members. The model for a school-led system that is led by Wroxham is one of a community of ideas where collective courage is beginning to flourish. This is the success of the alliance. It is not always easy to claim quantifiable evidence of collective school improvement as this is a complex process. However, the number of teachers trained and employed by the alliance is growing steadily; thousands of teachers have attended professional learning events provided by the alliance and the deep commitment to research engagement by school leaders is impressive. Everything the alliance sets out to achieve is closely linked to improving outcomes for children and young people. This is a hugely rewarding and worthwhile collective endeavour.

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## **Appendix one: Leadership dispositions underpinning the alliance ethos**

### **Empathy**

Our own knowledge and perception may be limiting if not informed by empathy. It entails looking through the child's eyes to understand their thinking and understanding in order to help them. Empathy transforms relationships between teachers and children, enabling children to feel that they are being listened to and taken seriously. Empathy operates both in teachers' relationship to children and for each other amongst a staff group. It also involves mutual supportiveness amongst the staff group for one another since all of the other dispositions are strengthened if members of a staff group are reinforcing each other. Mutual supportiveness creates the conditions where nobody is embarrassed to ask questions, or to admit that they do not have all the answers. Staff that are able to admit to problems or ask for help are able to draw on the power of the collective.

### **Generosity**

Generosity reflects a generous view of everybody's future in the making and trust in everybody's capacity to learn. It includes open acceptance of everybody; everybody has a rightful place within the collective, so we accept collective responsibility for finding ways forward when problems arise, rather than complaining or blaming when individuals encounter stumbling blocks or barriers to their learning. It is the human face of persistence – never giving up on people, taking responsibility to keep searching for ways of creating better conditions for learning. It means a willingness to suspend judgement, to give the other the benefit of the doubt, to be ready to expand the boundaries of the collective to make it possible for everybody to be included.

### **Emotional stability**

To exploit their power to make transformational choices to the full, teachers need to be able to trust their own judgement rather than doing things because it is expected of them, or trying to please (a headteacher / Ofsted). Emotional stability creates the conditions where teachers do something because it makes sense to them, rather than having to comply with what the group is doing. It generates the strength to resist popular notions of ability and norms of practice, and nurtures the ability to take risks, to resist practices which create limits and restrict freedom to learn. Emotional stability means the readiness to both challenge and be challenged, to resist new orthodoxies, to stay close to the vision and not be knocked off course.

### **Inventiveness**

Entails the freedom / capacity to imagine and do something new. If teachers spot limits, it requires inventiveness to think of a way of overcoming them, even when drawing on their prior experience / existing repertoire. If they cannot come up with a solution from their repertoire, they need inventiveness to come up with a new idea that offers a way forward.

Abandoning ability grouping and labels requires inventiveness to create new ways of thinking about children and new practices to enable everybody's learning to flourish.

### **Openness**

If teachers' perceptions of what children are capable of assumes open-endedness, then there are no presumed limits. A willingness to embrace openness about both curriculum experience and opportunities for learning that may free children to learn means that teachers are able to avoid unwittingly creating limits through a rigid interpretation of curriculum and of opportunity to learn. Openness reflects the belief that the future is in the making in the present. Everything teachers do every day either increases or restricts opportunities for learning.

### **Persistence**

Persistence is needed to avoid giving up on people or practices. It means holding onto the view that there is always more that can be done to free children to learn, the belief that, however challenging a situation, change is always possible. It is needed for teachers to enact their own power to transform learning capacity, even in the face of challenges, it enables them to keep trying. Persistence includes personal qualities of courage and humility, knowing that we do not have all the answers that transforming learning capacity will be a struggle, committing to keep working at it.

### **Questioning and humility**

This is needed to explore the interaction between classroom conditions and children's states of mind that affect their capacity to learn. It entails the commitment to question the status quo, and to wonder 'Could I do this differently?' 'Is there a better way for this child?' 'Is there a better way for all children?'

**Source: Creating Learning without Limits (Swann et al, 2012)**

## Appendix two: Lesson study as a methodology for improving learning.

### How effective is classroom observation anyway?

What is lesson observation for? If the purpose is to ensure that the quality of learning is at the optimum level we need to explore the most effective ways of enabling this. Recently Professor Robert Coe of Durham University challenged the collective assumption that existing school improvement methodology is effective. In his inaugural professorial speech he described 'poor proxies for learning' that were often taken as indicators of a successful lesson:

#### **Poor proxies for learning** (easily observed, but not really about learning)

1. Students are busy: lots of work is done (especially written work)
2. Students are engaged, interested, motivated
3. Students are getting attention: feedback, explanations
4. Classroom is ordered, calm, under control
5. Curriculum has been 'covered' (ie presented to students in some form)
6. (At least some) students have supplied correct answers (whether or not they really understood them or could reproduce them independently)

Coe: 2013

Coe's challenge to the education world is that we need to pursue alternative approaches to school improvement. How can we know whether learning is taking place within the classroom and what can we do to enhance this process? In common with others such as Ben Goldacre (2013), Coe cuts across accepted tradition in the education world to ask questions about the validity of accepted practice. In pursuit of excellence we owe it to ourselves to explore approaches to professional learning that take account of robust research evidence and alternative methods of interrogating classrooms. The practice of lesson study may be one such method.

### **A Japanese tradition**

Lesson study is an internationally recognised approach to closely observed learning that has only recently become noticed in English education. Japanese teachers have engaged in lesson study since the end of the 19th century. The academic success of Japanese schools is well known, Japan has retained a place in the top ranking education systems internationally for many years. Lesson study is a deceptively simple process where a group of teachers work together to plan, deliver and observe a lesson with a particular focus on a small group of children.

The lesson is planned collaboratively with the focus children in mind and the observation that follows is not of the teacher but of the children, as they respond and interact within the whole class group. The follow on conversation between fellow professionals allows deep insight to develop into the learning behaviours of the studied children. These lessons are planned taught and reviewed in repeated cycles of three sessions. The professional learning insights gained are then published and widely disseminated amongst colleagues in order that others may benefit. It is an expected part of professional life for teachers in Japan to publish their findings in journals. Almost three quarters of published educational research in Japan is written by teachers. International lesson study conferences include jurisdictions such as Singapore, Hong Kong and the United States.

### **What can we learn from lesson study?**

Dr Pete Dudley, London Borough of Camden, is credited with introducing lesson study to English schools. His lesson study website describes the process thus:

Lesson study is a powerful, professional learning approach that dramatically improves learning and teaching and the practice and subject knowledge of teachers. Originating from the Chinese Confucian tradition, lesson study has 140 years of history in Japanese schools and is increasingly used in East Asia, the US and Europe. It not only produces dramatic improvements in pupil achievement and professional learning, but it is also very popular with all who experience it.

Dudley, 2013

As previously described, lesson study is a process where teaching colleagues work together over a period of time to plan, observe and review lessons for a specific group of children within a class. Usually these are children that the class teacher is puzzling about. The process enables colleagues to pool their resources to plan a lesson with the individual needs of the focus children in mind. These planned lessons are effectively 'research lessons' and the aim is to share discoveries with other colleagues through a range of means that could include seminars, articles or leading a public research lesson where a wide range of interested colleagues are invited to observe the approach. An excellent lesson study handbook (Dudley: 2012) has been produced which is downloadable and provides details about planning cycles of study and feedback.

### **The Wroxham Transformative Learning Alliance**

Our TSA was established in September 2011. We have worked hard to build a large alliance of schools and our ethos for professional learning is built upon the principles of trust, inclusion and co-agency of *Creating Learning without Limits* (Swann: 2012). In partnership with the Isos Partnership we are researching the impact that our alliance is having on 'great pedagogy' across our group of schools. This research is part of a much larger research study funded by the DfE into the impact of teaching schools.

We began using lesson study as a means to develop opportunities for colleagues within schools to have learning conversations that could extend beyond their own setting to other schools across the alliance. Last academic year, in partnership with the Teacher Development Trust (TDT), a group of alliance schools embarked on two cycles of lesson study. This study was jointly funded by the national teacher enquiry network (NTEN), the national union of teachers (NUT) and the Wroxham Transformative Alliance. The lesson study process within each school was additionally supported by the TDT and a consultant headteacher. These external facilitators enabled the alliance to gain insight into the process as it developed over a series of weeks. They were also available to schools as a point of contact in order that colleagues could engage with relevant research to support their observations and reflections. A wide variety of lesson study projects took place and it soon became clear that the potential for impact in classrooms was amazing.

### **Leadership forum**

Our school believes that engagement with research evidence has been at the root of our sustained success. As a teaching school we have consequently funded regular research discussion groups for school leaders. These groups are planned and facilitated by a consultant headteacher who works with our alliance to support research into practice. Many of the senior leaders who subsequently engaged with our Lesson Study seminars were also regular members of the leadership forum. This helped colleagues to engage in open discussion about the process of lesson study as it was developing in their schools. We have found that building a climate of trust and openness are some of the key leadership dispositions that are contributing to an effective alliance. Additionally, routine engagement with research evidence has enabled group members undertaking lesson study to have an immediate evidential resource to turn to when debating ways in which to respond to the detailed observations of children. In some cases, schools invited the consultant headteacher or a representative from TDT as external research consultants to engage in detailed conversations about how to address barriers to learning that have been identified for some children. This was an important part of the process and enabled a new perspective to be developed.

### **Stories of practice and improvement**

A wide range of lesson study practice was undertaken across a group of diverse primary and secondary schools from our alliance. One secondary girls' school chose to explore ways in which to engage a group of girls in PE (physical education) lessons. They found that through close observation of those girls who appeared disinterested that in fact they were engaging but did not always have the technique necessary and needed more practice. Additional support for these girls resulted in a significant shift in performance with one girl opting to attend a club out of school time. They also plan to study differentiation of mixed ability classes and ways of stretching girls defined as gifted and talented.

At one primary school the projects led to providing ‘taster’ sessions prior to lessons to enable focus children to participate more meaningfully throughout the lesson. In another class more choice was offered about the subject of writing, alongside a quiet time to write. Observation in another classroom led to the purchase of new resources to support children as they developed their pencil grip. This is a school that has recently been judged by Ofsted to be ‘good’. Increased teacher confidence and the offer of choice for children appears to have been a vital aspect of this school’s improvement journey.

Several primary schools were so inspired by the potential for this work that they took on a range of projects across the whole school. Two of these schools have recently moved from schools causing concern to an Ofsted judgement of ‘good’. Both schools were able to demonstrate improved learning progress for some key children, as a result of greater pedagogical insight. Headteachers and teaching colleagues in all participating schools commented on the way in which the lesson study approach had contributed to an improved culture of professional learning and reflective practice. A summary of the outcomes of lesson study at one of these schools, Oakmere Primary School, can be found on the NTEN website<sup>15</sup>.

The headteacher of Oakmere Primary School gave a moving presentation at one of our alliance seminars when she documented the manner in which the collaborative, empowering approach to school improvement embodied in lesson study had caused her school to take ownership of their professional learning in a transformative manner. She cited input from Philippa Cordingley (2008) at one of our teaching school conferences in 2011 as the starting point for a new way of thinking. Oakmere’s journey of school improvement is impressive testimony to the power of collaborative endeavour such as lesson study.

Another headteacher, newly in post commented:

The lesson study approach has made me more conscious of the importance of planning in time for professional dialogue between us all. We now meet each Friday at 9am for an hour and discuss the week, or a piece of research, or an initiative etc. I felt it was important to raise the profile of such a meeting so it is not latched on to the end of a day when everyone is tired and busy. First thing in the morning, nice cup of tea and straight into pedagogical debate. Nothing better.

### **International inspiration**

Dr Pete Dudley introduced our alliance school leaders to Professor Hiroyuki Kuno from Aichi University, Japan who visited the UK earlier this year as a visiting scholar at the University of Cambridge. He attended an event at our teaching school where our year 4 class provided a research lesson in our school hall.

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.teacherdevelopmenttrust.org/blog/>

The lesson focussed on paired talk as preparation for writing. The children brought their tables and chairs into the hall and the adults sat around the edge of the room. After twenty minutes of whole group observation the teachers joined children at their tables to ask questions. Throughout the lesson Professor Kuno took photographs whilst listening carefully to pairs of children. He later used the photographs to illustrate his feedback to the adult seminar group. This proved to be a very powerful tool as the visual images provided an additional form of evidence to support the subsequent pedagogical conversation.

On another occasion, Professor Kuno visited our school for a morning and observed our year 6 class. Once again, using photographs to support his thesis, he came and spoke with the headteacher for nearly an hour about the kinds of learning behaviours he had noted amongst the children. He had observed that the children were confident in their ideas and may benefit from greater opportunities to engage in sustained dialogue across the classroom with only prompts from the teacher. Through use of notes and photographs he was able to illustrate the kind of interaction that the children were engaged in as learning partners and to suggest ways that the teacher could enhance their learning further. The quality of this conversation was unlike any feedback that any HMI, visiting LA adviser or Ofsted inspector has ever provided. He did not focus on the performance of the teacher, but concentrated on the children and drew on his research knowledge to hypothesise about ways in which individual children could be enabled to learn more effectively. It was a privilege to participate in this process and was so much more informative than a traditional observation of teaching with grading of performance. Professor Kuno's observations led us to revisit the work of Robin Alexander into dialogic teaching (Alexander: 2008).

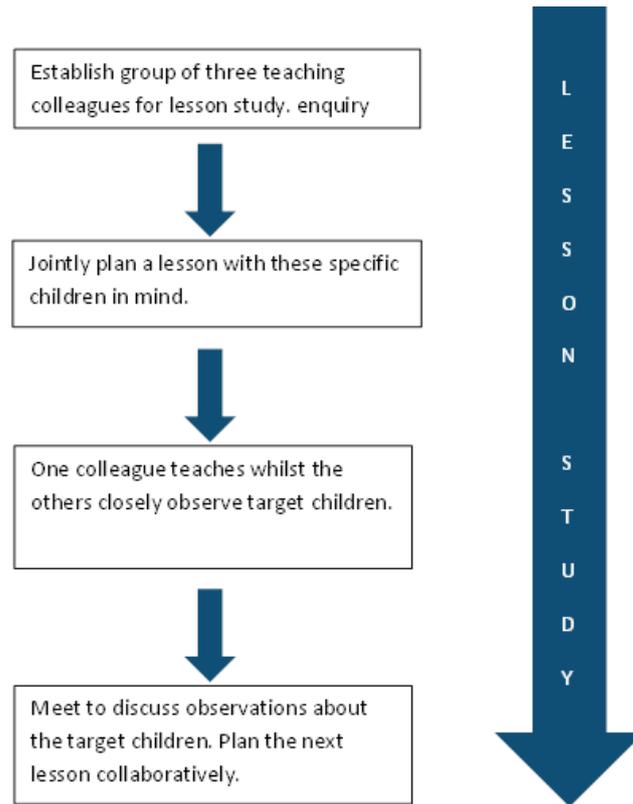
### **Contributing to accountability**

At Wroxham School we had an unexpected Ofsted call during SATs week in May 2013. In place of extensive lesson observations and monitoring we had a file with examples of lesson study write ups and summaries of actions taken to improve learning for individual children. This approach was praised by the lead inspector as evidence of team work and strong leadership to improve learning. If more Ofsted inspectors could see the benefits of this kind of work, there would be an improvement in the process of lesson observation.

### **Why does this work?**

It would appear that the detailed conversations between teaching colleagues that take place through lesson study provide the means for new ideas to become established in practice within classrooms. This is an enabling methodology for school improvement that resonates with my own research into alternative school improvement *Creating Learning without Limits* (Swann: 2012) where we found that collaborative discourse about learning enabled significant changes in practice.

**Figure 8: Lesson study flowchart**



### **National Teacher Enquiry Network**

The TDT has seized this agenda with energy and inspiration. They have established a national teacher enquiry network (NTEN) that exists to promote audit, self-review and challenge to enhance professional learning throughout schools. For schools that are interested in starting lesson study and wish to engage with other professionals across the country who are similarly inspired, the NTEN may be a good place to start.

This enlightened collaborative approach to classroom observation has the potential to make a tremendous difference in our schools. If we are successful in establishing a Royal College of Teaching (Leslie: 2013) that would promote the importance of an evidence based profession, stories of research practice could begin to dominate educational discourse in an unprecedented manner with transformative effect.

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