

# magazine

ISSUE 01/ NOVEMBER 2017



A Vision for  
the Future:

Preparing children  
for an evolving and  
fast-changing world.

**CULTURAL  
AWARENESS &  
UNDERSTANDING:**

Kibworth Primary School

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**SKILLS FOR  
LEARNING & LIFE:**

Allenton Community  
Primary School

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**A CHILD-CENTRED  
CURRICULUM:**

Ash Lea School

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**BUILDING  
A CULTURE OF  
ASPIRATION:**

The Flying High  
Academy, Ladybrook.

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**+ MUCH MORE!**



05



11



26

## CONTENTS

- 02** Welcome**16** Skills for Learning and Life: Allenton Community Primary School**31** Inspiring Leaders Programmes and Dates
- 03** Who are Inspiring Leaders?**21** A Child-Centred Curriculum: Ash Lea School**32** Research Digest
- 05** A Vision for the Future: Preparing Children for an Evolving and Fast-Changing World**26** Building a Culture of Aspiration: The Flying High Academy, Ladybrook**36** MAT Leaders Network Update
- 11** Cultural Awareness and Understanding: Kibworth Primary School

# A Vision for the Future



welcome

We are delighted to introduce the first Inspiring Leaders magazine. This magazine aims to bring together best practice from across our partnership, sharing perspectives from within and beyond education and drawing upon the latest research. We hope that this magazine will act as a vehicle to bring us all closer together, sharing approaches to address the challenges we face in our system.

The theme for this edition is **'A vision for the future: preparing children for an evolving and fast-changing world'**.

Thriving in today's fast changing world requires the development of a breadth of skills, which provides foundations for learning through literacy and numeracy, alongside a broad and balanced curriculum that develops essential life skills such as resilience teamwork, critical thinking, communication, perseverance, and creativity. Good leaders know their schools inside out, allowing

them to lead and develop a curriculum which is personalised to the context of the community the school serves. Their vision for the direction of the school is clearly articulated throughout the organisation, enabling and empowering others to deliver on a set of defined and agreed objectives which drives the school forward.

This magazine will showcase some of the best practice from schools across our Inspiring Leaders partnership and demonstrate how effective leadership is helping to foster these practices. We hope you find the magazine useful and helpful in developing strong leadership in an ever-changing world.

Chris Wheatley (Flying High Partnership)

Dawn Wigley (Ash Lea School)

Paul Stone (Discovery School's Academy Trust)

Andy Burns (The Redhill Academy Trust)

Rebecca Meredith (Transform Trust)

# Who are Inspiring Leaders?

Inspiring Leaders not for profit organisation led by Flying High Partnership and consisting of five outstanding Teaching Schools, a Special School and three delivery partners spread across the East Midlands and Yorkshire who came together through a shared passion and commitment to develop the inspirational school leaders of tomorrow. Over the past five years, we have trained over 1300 leaders via our high quality, school-led programmes which utilises the skills, knowledge and experiences of existing, influential school leaders from across our partnership.

All lead partner schools are outstanding teaching school alliances and trusts in their own right and have a proven commitment and track record of developing effective leadership. The NPQ programmes are central to our approach to school improvement, allowing us to develop leadership capacity, identify talent and build effective networks.

## Director level partners



### Affinity Teaching School Alliance

Affinity Teaching School Alliance is a partnership of over 50 schools in Leicestershire, Leicester City and Northamptonshire, led by Kibworth CE primary school.

Affinity Teaching School forms part the Discovery Schools Academy Trust (DSAT), a growing primary multi-academy trust.



### Ash Lea Special School

Ash Lea School is a Special School in south Nottinghamshire which caters for the educational needs of children and young people (age range 3 to 19) that experience complex learning difficulties and brings a wealth of leadership expertise.

“ ALL LEAD PARTNER SCHOOLS ARE OUTSTANDING TEACHING SCHOOL ALLIANCES IN THEIR OWN RIGHT ”



### The Flying High Partnership

The Flying High Partnership consists of the Candleby Lane Teaching School Alliance and Flying High Trust. The teaching school alliance consists of 54 primary schools across Nottinghamshire, led by Cotgrave Candleby Lane School. The Flying High Trust is a growing partnership of 18 primary schools. The Flying High partnership acts as the lead for Inspiring Leaders, as both the employer and base for the central team.



### Redhill Teaching School Alliance

The Redhill Alliance is a cross-phase collaboration led by a number of outstanding institutions, consisting of nearly 40 schools. The Redhill Trust is a growing multi academy trust of secondary and primary schools.



### Transform Teaching School Alliance

Transform TSA includes 53 schools with a diverse membership of primary and special schools in Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, Derby and Derbyshire. The Transform trust is a growing multi academy trust predominantly based in Nottingham City.

## Delivery partners



### **Ebor Academy Trust**

Ebor Academy Trust is a mixed multi-academy trust comprising of over 20 small village and large urban primary and secondary schools across York and north east Yorkshire. Ebor lead an Inspiring Leaders delivery hub based in Yorkshire.



### **Synergy Teaching School Alliance**

Synergy Teaching School, leads an alliance of over 35 nursery, infant, primary, secondary and special schools, which are collectively known as the 4Derbyshire Alliance, as they span the length and breadth of Derbyshire.



### **Leicester Teaching School Alliance (LeTS)**

LeTS is part of the Rushey Mead Educational Trust, based at Rushey Mead Academy in Leicester. It consists of 15 primary and secondary schools across Leicester City.





# A Vision for the Future:

## Preparing children for an evolving and fast-changing world

There is no doubt that the world is rapidly changing; in the past twenty years the internet, social media and the smart phone have revolutionised life as we know it. Jobs, too, are changing, and look set to change beyond recognition as artificial intelligence and automation gradually take over the execution of routine work. With the accelerating pace of social and technological change, the World Economic Forum estimates that 65% of children today will end up in careers that don't even exist yet. It is up to school leaders to anticipate the future and to consider how education and the curriculum should respond to the needs of a changing world. This a complex issue and one with many facets. This article considers the impact of a changing society and economy and how schools can respond, and includes the advice and insights of entrepreneurs and experts on the topic.

### **Technology**

One of the first things that schools will need to do over the coming years is embrace technology more whole-heartedly. A common view is that

pupils already get too much technology outside of school, therefore it is better for children if, during school hours at least, they experience only limited exposure. 'Technology free' time certainly has its place and is important, but the facts aren't going away: technology is now a part of life. It is becoming entwined with more and more everyday tasks, and it will be an essential element of nearly every job in the future. What schools need to be doing is educating children on how to use technology effectively, appropriately, and wisely. Claire Williams, Deputy team leader of the Williams Racing Team, explains, "As the world changes so must our system. We must equip students with the skills they will need in the future. Technology is moving at an alarming rate, and we need to prepare the next generation for that."

Technology could revolutionise education if we let it, as it has so much to offer, and it is vital that technology is harnessed and used as a tool to support learning. According to SEND expert and former CEO of NASEN, Lorraine Petersen, "it is our job to teach and

support students in using technology appropriately, which will help prepare them for work. Technology can also be an excellent supportive tool, especially for SEN, with software on offer that can help SEN pupils to overcome obstacles to their education, for example, voice recognition software.” Indeed, there is so much potential to use technology to improve education for the better. It could also open up a world of virtual learning; pupils could have lessons outside of conventional school hours using online resources and videos, and be supported in taking a more independent approach to their learning.

**AS THE WORLD CHANGES SO MUST  
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THE FUTURE.**



Technology is also, without a doubt, taking on a more central role than ever in the workplace, and pupils need to be prepared for this through their school curriculum. Pupils need to become competent users of ICT and technology, and also need to learn skills such as coding, in order to be effectively prepared for the 21st century workplace. According to Claire Williams, there is strong evidence that many schools are getting on the right track, “initiatives like Girls Who Code and Digital Classrooms put technology in young people’s hands earlier. That has to be the blueprint if we are to equip young people with the right technical skills.” However, schools must become more consistent in their approach, and aim to introduce pupils as early as possible to new technologies; “I think it’s really important that students are introduced to these early so that they can find their passion and follow it”, says Claire.

Some teachers are hesitant about using technology in the classroom because children are doing things with it which they do not understand, and when its use by children is deregulated it can cause all sorts of problems (cyber-bullying, unsuitable content etc).



However, this in fact highlights that pupils need to be taught how to be discerning and wise consumers of technology by their teachers; a long overdue task in many schools, and vital in the world of today.

It is becoming more evident that schools must support and educate pupils to develop a healthy relationship with the technology in their lives.

Research shows that social media in particular has really affected the lives of children in recent years, with the likes of Instagram and Snapchat not only putting pressure on pupils to be constantly in contact with their peers, but also showing a 'highlight reel' of other people's lives which can feel impossible to live up to. This is having a detrimental effect on self-esteem and confidence, which can lead to all sorts of problems for children as they grow up, and with children owning their first Smartphone at the age 10 on average, this is not only a problem for pupils at secondary school.

**“ IT IS VITAL FOR SCHOOLS TO BUILD SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-CONFIDENCE IN PUPILS THROUGH A WELL-ROUNDED EDUCATION, NOT JUST A FOCUS ON ACADEMIA. CHILDREN NEED TO BE ENCOURAGED TO BE HAPPY WITH WHO THEY ARE.**

Stuart Conroy, the CEO of Activ8 and a Sunday Times 'Fast Track' Award winner, tells us "schools have a responsibility to address the problems caused by social media, and to combat them by helping children to understand that the images they see on social media of perfect appearances and seemingly perfect lives are not the reality." This could be done through PSHE lessons which discuss the chasm between appearances and reality on social media, as well as a broader emphasis in schools generally on helping children to develop a healthy perception

of themselves, based on the building of good levels of self-esteem and self-confidence. According to Stuart, "it is vital for schools to build self-esteem and self-confidence in pupils through a well-rounded education, not just a focus on academia. Children need to be encouraged to be happy with who they are."

Pupils and parents should also be educated in the importance of 'switching off' at night, as research shows that many school children can still be playing on Smartphones and devices, and communicating with others, long past a suitable bed time (some even into the early hours). This can interfere with the quality of children's sleep, leading to detrimental effects both on their wellbeing and on their learning.

### **STEM**

As well as making sure pupils are familiar and adept at using technology, and using it wisely, it is becoming more important than ever that more pupils are enthused and encouraged to engage in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), in order to be prepared for the job market of the future. Looking towards the careers of the future, the number of jobs available in the STEM field is growing all the time, and is set to keep on rising. At the moment there is a distinct lack of STEM graduates to keep up with the demand for STEM professionals, and research undertaken by UKCES has found that 43% of STEM vacancies are hard to fill due to a skills shortage, compared to 24% of other vacancies. This needs to change to give our pupils the best chance of success in the economy of the future. Schools not only face the challenge of inspiring more children in the field of STEM, but also face the challenge of an evident gender gap; females currently make up only 9% of practitioners in the STEM field in the UK which is one of the lowest figures in Europe.

Claire Williams stresses the importance of engaging all children in STEM from a young age, and this must include encouraging both genders equally, "if the boundaries are never set, then they never become boundaries and that should be nurtured from an early age." Ways of encouraging younger children



could include exposing them to role models early on, who demonstrate that STEM is an exciting option and a path that they could follow in the future, and also making sure that a good proportion of these role models are female. This could come through learning about inspirational figures within the STEM field in lessons, or through visitors and speakers. "We imitate our heroes" says Stuart, "and those working in the STEM field, especially the 9% of females, must be championed. It's about making it clear that the opportunity is available to follow a career in STEM and that it is an option."

**IF THE BOUNDARIES ARE NEVER SET, THEN THEY NEVER BECOME BOUNDARIES AND THAT SHOULD BE NURTURED FROM AN EARLY AGE.** ”

### Soft Skills

Another vital part of preparing young people for their future will be by helping them to develop the skills which employers most value. Retention of facts measured through traditional exams may be the simplest thing to measure, but there is a growing consensus amongst employers that formal knowledge is no longer enough to prepare young people for the workforce; it is skills and attitudes which are most important. The skills that now need to be cultivated for the future must be the things that machines cannot do; they must be decidedly human skills, also known as 'soft' skills. They include attributes such as creativity, adaptability, critical thinking, social communication, collaboration, and problem-solving.

Stuart shares that academic qualifications are not his first priority when looking for employees, "more important than academic qualifications, I am looking for individuals with the right skills and attitudes; these include confidence, ambition, the ability to adapt and problem solve, and the drive to work hard". Jason Beaumont, former CEO of

Confetti Media, co-founder of Notts TV and trustee of a Flying High Academy Trust in Nottinghamshire, says something similar, and adds that he also looks for "experiences which add value, whether it be work experience or even the commitment demonstrated by competing in a sport; something which sets the candidate apart". According to the APPG (All-Party Parliamentary Group for Education) 'only 37% of businesses consider basic literacy and numeracy to be an important factor in recruiting school and college leavers, compared to 89% who count attitudes towards work/character amongst the most important factors', and The Association of School and College Lecturers (ASCL) described "a desire for young people to arrive in the workforce better equipped with attributes which allow them to move more quickly into mastery of new situations."

If skills and attitudes are becoming more important to many employers than academic qualifications, schools need to respond. At the moment, the emphasis of the education system is on exams and results. Whilst qualifications and literacy and numeracy matter enormously, it is clear that this narrow focus must be widened to give our pupils the best chance of success in their futures. Soft skills are great way to prepare children for the future because they are valuable in every job and career. They can be cultivated through a less traditional approach to education; creative tasks, group tasks and independent learning can all help to build them. Schools can do this by playing more emphasis on setting active, creative and collaborative tasks in the classroom, in order to help children build these soft skills from an early age.

**“ WELLBING NEEDS TO BE MADE MORE CENTRAL, SCHOOLS CAN HELP YOUNG PEOPLE TO DEVELOP GOOD, LIFELONG HABITS. EMOTIONAL WELLBEING WILL SET YOUNG PEOPLE UP FOR SUCCESS LATER IN LIFE.** ”

## A Broad Curriculum

The most effective way for young people to develop soft skills is through being exposed to a broad curriculum, not just focussed on academic subjects, but including creative subjects that encourage collaboration, such as drama and music.

Jason says “creative subjects are often undervalued in the education system. However, they are vital as they foster creativity and teamwork skills as well as interpersonal skills. Added to this, the creative industries currently employ 1 in 11 graduates, so creative subjects actually help to prepare many young people directly for their future career.” Creativity can be encouraged in schools by being truly valued in the curriculum. Schools must be careful not to make some subjects seem more important than others, and to make sure creative subjects have a protected place in the curriculum. The confidence gained by pupils in these subjects can also be transferred to other parts of the curriculum, leading them to take more independent and innovative approaches to tasks set across the board, and to take more ownership of their learning.

## Health and Wellbeing

It is also the case that the more we can educate and support young people with their physical and emotional health and wellbeing at school, the more prepared they will be to look after themselves and cope as adults. Jason says, “wellbeing needs to be made more central, schools can help young people to develop good, lifelong habits. Emotional wellbeing will set young people up for success later in life.” Lorraine emphasises the importance of including subjects such as PE and PSHE within the curriculum which support student’s health and wellbeing; “if students are physically and emotionally healthy they are in a better place to learn and more likely to succeed.”

Physical education helps pupils to become physically healthy which supports their success in every other aspect of life. It is also important for setting up healthy exercise habits which children will hopefully maintain into adulthood, and encourages participation in sport which helps pupils develop soft skills such as determination, commitment, and

working as part of a team. PSHE lessons on emotional health and wellbeing are also an invaluable addition to the curriculum as they can help pupils to deal with emotional difficulties, and can also inform them of what to do should they find themselves struggling; in this way pupil’s mental health can be supported and protected. Subjects such as RE and citizenship are also vital, as they encourage understanding and tolerance in our young people, preparing them to be respectful and responsible citizens of the world.

Schools can help young people to build a solid foundation of emotional wellbeing, and with recent research showing that rates of anxiety and depression are increasing in childhood, especially for girls, it is clearly more important than ever that schools make sure they do not neglect this area. Stuart says, “the focus within schools cannot be purely academic, there is a strong need, now more than ever, to focus on life skills to cope with the 21st century.”

**IF STUDENTS ARE PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY THEY ARE IN A BETTER PLACE TO LEARN AND MORE LIKELY TO SUCCEED. ”**

Many thanks to the following people for their contributions to this article ...



Stuart Conroy



Claire Williams



Jason Beaumont



Lorraine Petersen



## Key Learning Points

**Preparing children to understand and work with the technology of the future** – children need to become familiar with technology from an early age and taught how to navigate and use technology effectively in order to prepare them for the use of technology in future careers.

**Teaching children to be wise and discerning users of technology** – it is becoming evident that schools need to work with children to help them to learn to use technology wisely and appropriately, in a way that enhances their life rather than having a detrimental effect.

**Encouraging interest and enthusiasm for STEM** - sparking excitement in children around STEM and providing children with role models in STEM will encourage more pupils to pursue STEM subjects, which will be good for them (in terms of preparing for and finding employment), and good for the economy.

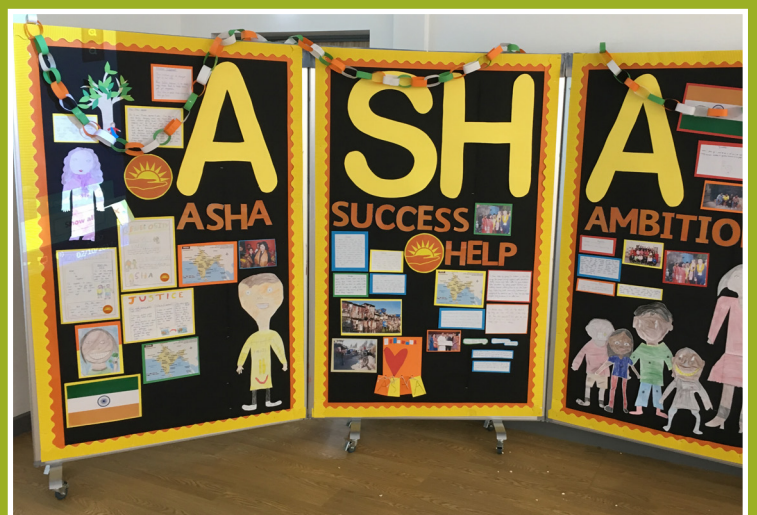
**Providing opportunities for children to develop soft skills** - as employers become more interested in attitudes and skills over academic qualifications, schools need to help children develop the attributes which employers will be looking for.

**Offering a broad curriculum, including creative subjects** - offering a broad curriculum supports the development of soft skills and the all-round development of the whole child.

**Supporting children with healthy physical and emotional development** – this will enable children to be in the optimal state to learn, and will help them succeed and be happy in life beyond school.




# CULTURAL AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING: KIBWORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL



Developing cultural awareness and understanding in our pupils has become more important than ever in preparing them for the world of the 21st century. The world is becoming smaller and technology means that working with people from across the globe is becoming much more common. A recent report by think tank Demos showed that 68% of young people believe that international experience and global outlook are essential for their personal goals. Schools now need to prepare children not only to be a part of their own community, but to be global citizens too. Paramount to this is developing understanding of different countries and cultures from an early age.

Kibworth Primary School is an excellent example of a school helping its pupils to create and sustain global connections, and to see themselves as responsible citizens of the world, from the very beginning of their time at primary school onwards. The school have received the 'Primary International School Award' for their work, awarded by the British Council. Criteria for the award include having an international ethos embedded throughout the school, making sure a majority of pupils within the school are impacted by and involved in international work, and having year-round international activity within the school.

Kibworth is a Church of England school in Leicestershire and is part of the Discovery Schools Academy Trust, a partnership of 14 schools. Central to the school's success is its link with ASHA, a charity group based in New Delhi. ASHA work to improve the lives of people living in the slums of the city. The charity works within communities to provide sustainable healthcare, educational opportunities and environmental improvement. Kibworth focuses particularly on the slum of Seelampur, and fundraises to help support the work of ASHA in that community, as well as making real connections with the people living there. Working with ASHA has provided an invaluable opportunity for the pupils of Kibworth to increase their cultural awareness and understanding.

 **THE LINK WITH ASHA PROVIDES A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO BROADEN THE CHILDREN'S HORIZONS, TO HELP THEM TO CONSIDER LIFE BEYOND THEIR OWN COMMUNITY.**

Executive headteacher, David Briggs, sees this project as particularly important for his school, given that it is a Church of England school, mainly made up of white British children, who may not be otherwise exposed to different cultures; "the link with ASHA provides a unique opportunity to broaden the children's horizons, to help them to consider life beyond their own community".

David was initially motivated to create a link with ASHA when he realised how similar the values of the charity are to the values he wanted to foster in the school community. These values include compassion, gratitude, hope, generosity, optimism and joy; themes which are evident the moment you step into the school, through the colourful inspiring quotes, displays and decorations which line the hallways. According to David, working with ASHA has offered the perfect opportunity to really bring the values of the school to life and has opened up discussion and exploration of what those values look like in practice, "pupils are able to see the impact that the school values can have when acted upon for the good of others". He hopes that this will inspire the pupils to live out those values during their school life and beyond, encouraged by the work of ASHA and those who volunteer for the charity.

A key event within the school each year is 'ASHA week', when pupils are taken off normal timetable for one week to immerse themselves in learning activities which expose them to what life is like in Seelampur. When we visited the school on a Monday morning in October, we were just in time for the first

assembly following this year's 'ASHA week' (which had concluded the previous Friday) finished the previous Friday. The assembly started with the children finding words to describe the leader of ASHA, Dr Kiran; descriptions include 'helpful', 'kind', 'humble', 'inspiring' and 'superhero'. ASHA week, and learning about the work of ASHA, had clearly captured the pupil's consciousness, and their evident enthusiasm showed how they had been inspired over the course of the week by Dr Kiran, the work of ASHA, and learning about life in New Delhi for those living in the slums.

**PUPILS ARE ABLE TO SEE THE IMPACT THAT THE SCHOOL VALUES CAN HAVE WHEN ACTED UPON FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS.** ”

In this year's ASHA week pupils learned about Indian culture through a variety of fun and hands on activities, which included playing Indian music (the Sitar and drumming), Indian dancing, playing Indian games and making and eating Indian food. They learned about what life is like in the slum through presentations and talks, video clips, lesson activities, and even through creating their own 'house', based on a home in Seelampur, within the school. They also made real life connections with the children of Seelampur through the sending of letters, gifts and even talking through Skype. Work with ASHA was also incorporated within the usual curriculum, for example, exploring population growth in New Delhi in Maths, reading and comprehension on texts about New Delhi and ASHA in literacy, and learning about the location and climate of India and New Delhi in geography. The week was suitably concluded with a fundraising fun run for the charity.

As a Church school, the link that Kibworth has with Seelampur through ASHA has enabled pupils to explore other religions as well as Christianity. Learning about the different people and cultures within Seelampur in Delhi has led to a natural curiosity and interest from pupils in the variety of

religious beliefs and practices. It has opened up the opportunity to explore different religious beliefs and has helped the pupils to increase their awareness and knowledge of a variety of religions including Hinduism and Islam. According to David, "people of many different religions live alongside each other in the slum, sharing everyday life as well as celebrations together. It's a great example to the pupils of how people of different religions can live alongside each other peacefully, and work together for the greater good. Pupils are also able to appreciate that many core values are shared within the different religions, as well as learning about what makes each religion unique."

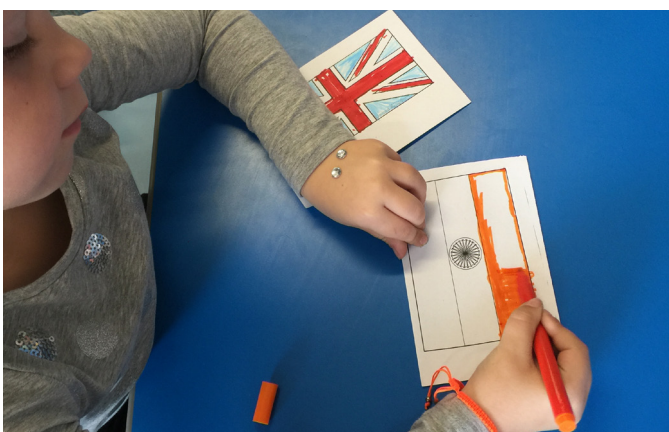


Each year, a group of people from Kibworth school and from within the Discovery Trust go out to Seelampur, to see for themselves the impact of ASHA, and to support their work. Last year 16 people went out, including teachers, teaching assistants, governors, parents and pupils. When the group return they share their first-hand experiences of Seelampur and the work of ASHA with the rest of their school. The connection with ASHA is now not only limited to Kibworth primary school, but is beginning to spread between the schools of the Discovery Trust. A scheme of work is currently being put together by Lizzie Wright, who is completing her

**“ PUPILS ARE ABLE TO APPRECIATE THAT MANY CORE VALUES ARE SHARED WITHIN THE DIFFERENT RELIGIONS, AS WELL AS LEARNING ABOUT WHAT MAKES EACH RELIGION UNIQUE.**

NPQML with Inspiring Leaders, which will mean that the lessons and activities developed around ASHA at Kibworth primary school will be available to be used by the other schools in the trust.

A central theme of Kibworth Primary School's connection with Seelampur through ASHA is summed up by the words 'same but different'. Through these words pupils are encouraged to actively look at and understand how different life is for the children living in the slum, while understanding that people all around the world can share the same basic desires and values. David reflects on the overall impact that the school's link with ASHA has had on the pupils, "It's an opportunity for pupils to learn about a different, contrasting place and culture. However, they also learn that even though the children in Seelampur live in a very different place with a very different culture, and even though they are very poor, ultimately, they are not that different from them. They have many of the same interests and concerns, hopes and aspirations. The pupils also realise how much the children in the slum value the things they own and the opportunities that they do have, which inspires them to do the same."



**IT'S AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PUPILS TO LEARN ABOUT A DIFFERENT, CONTRASTING PLACE AND CULTURE. HOWEVER, THEY ALSO LEARN THAT EVEN THOUGH THE CHILDREN IN SEELAMPUR LIVE IN A VERY DIFFERENT PLACE WITH A VERY DIFFERENT CULTURE, THEY ARE NOT THAT DIFFERENT FROM THEM.** ”



Kibworth's emphasis on cultural awareness and understanding is not limited to its work with ASHA. Another important aspect of its cultural work has been based upon pupils learning about China and having the opportunity to learn basic Mandarin (which is one of the most-spoken, and fastest-growing languages in the world!) In the academic year 2014/2015, the school welcomed and was host to three Mandarin language assistants. One of these assistants ran a Mandarin club for pupils each week throughout the academic year. The purpose of the club was to develop children's knowledge of the language as well as Chinese culture through the medium of art. The club has continued ever since and is open to year 5 pupils; in the club children have learnt some basic Mandarin along with carrying out cultural themed activities such as paper cutting and folding, Chinese painting, and learning about traditional Chinese stories.

In 2014 the school held 'China Week'; during the week all children in school were involved in a range of activities and learning all about Chinese culture and language. This included visits from external professionals who led a lion dancing assembly,

Tai Chi workshops for parents and children, fan dancing workshops and Mandarin lessons. This work on China has added another element to the school's international focus and has also given pupils opportunity to learn about another contrasting culture. Mandarin club has given pupils the opportunity to get a basic grounding in another language, which they may choose to build on in the future. The club has also made learning another language fun, and has given pupils transferable skills in language learning which they can apply to any language which they may choose to learn in the future.

Through their link with the charity ASHA and ASHA week, and through Mandarin Club and China week, the pupils of Kibworth Primary School have been able to develop greater understanding of the global world and different cultures and lifestyles, preparing them to be responsible global citizens of the 21st century. They have also experienced being a part of something bigger than just their own school or community, and have seen how they can make an impact on the wider world.



WATCH THE VIDEO NOW - <https://youtu.be/Aam8Ok4YTsl>



# Skills for Learning and Life:

## The 4 R's of Allenton Community Primary School



When Jon Fordham joined Allenton Community Primary School in 2013 as Deputy Head, the school was in special measures. Jon was promoted to head teacher not long after, and knew that a big shift in culture was needed at the school to turn things around. It was clear that morale was low, and that the atmosphere was one of resignation. Many believed that higher standards were just not possible in Allenton, a community with high levels of need and deprivation. Jon, however, believed that change was possible, and that the starting point was to foster a more optimistic, 'can do' attitude within the school, to believe that high standards were possible, and that together, they could be achieved. This was established over time with staff through an atmosphere of trust, permission to take risks, and a collaborative approach to improvement.

The most important factor in Allenton's development has been the determined focus on improving standards of teaching, learning and behaviour by making the development of key life skills a central part of the curriculum. One of Jon's first priorities as head teacher was to introduce an emphasis on 'learning to learn', also known as meta-cognition, and to explain and demonstrate to staff what this looks like in practice in the classroom. 'Learning to learn' would begin to form the foundation of all lessons within the school; Jon says, "when pupils are taught to think about how they learn, they are able to take more control over their learning; they are therefore more engaged, and learn better."

Jon introduced four key skills to the school to help facilitate learning, known as the '4 R's'. These stand for resilience, reflectiveness, resourcefulness and reciprocity. Jon has made sure that these skills

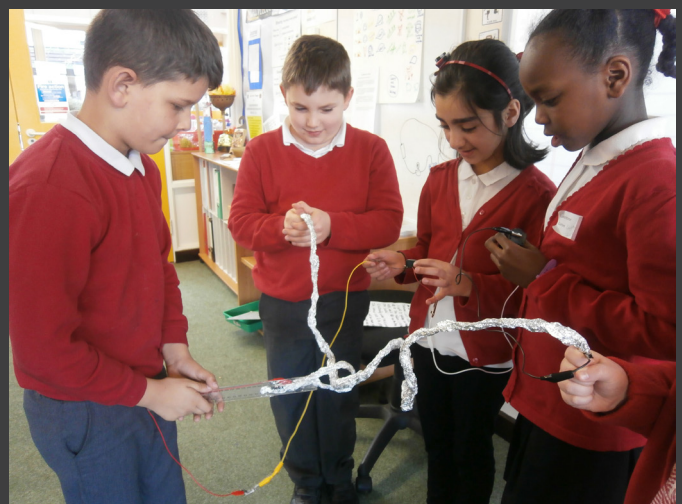
permeate everything that the school does, and they are taught and discussed explicitly in lessons alongside the National Curriculum. Jon has brought the 4 R's to life for the children through the creation of four superhero characters based on each of the skills, and tell us, "they are known within the school as the 'learning superheroes'. Every pupil is introduced to, and becomes familiar with the superheroes when they start the school in reception. The learning superheroes have proved to be an engaging and accessible way of helping the children to learn about the 4 R's, and to consider how they can put them into practice in different situations."

The 4 R's have been embedded into the curriculum of the school, and the learning superheroes can play a multitude of roles in lessons. When pupils find a task difficult, instead of giving up, they can be reminded of the importance of the superhero, Mr Resilience, which encourages them to keep persevering. Mr Reflectiveness can come into play when reading and acting upon teacher marking and feedback in order to improve a piece of work, and Mr Reciprocity can be used as a reminder to take turns when speaking, and to listen to others carefully when working in groups. Teachers can use the learning superheroes to explain what skills will be particularly important in any given lesson or situation, in a way that is easy for the pupils to understand and apply. At the beginning of each lesson an 'ASK' (Attitude, Skills and Knowledge) slide facilitates discussion on what attitudes, skills and knowledge will be valuable in the session ahead, helping pupils explicitly focus on how they can maximise their learning.

Marking policy at the school has also been designed to reflect the 4R's and increase pupil's meta-cognition skills. As a result of a research project which the school took part in, aimed at making marking more efficient and effective, Designated Improvement and Reflection Time (DIRT) has been incorporated into all lessons. DIRT allows pupils time and space to reflect on marking and feedback, whether from the teacher or peer critique, and to act upon it. DIRT tasks are set for pupils based on feedback, and their resilience increasingly grows through the everyday process of taking on board feedback and responding to it. As part of this reflective process, pupils also

consider which learning superheroes they have had to use in each lesson. Jon comments that "through this method of marking, feedback and reflection, the skills pupils have used in their learning, and the progress they have made in a lesson, becomes explicitly apparent for them. This gives pupils a sense of ownership of their learning, which encourages self-motivation, as well as a better understanding of the learning process. It also helps them to continually develop the 4 R's over time through overt and consistent practice."

**“ THE 4R'S ARE LIFE SKILLS AS WELL AS LEARNING SKILLS. MANY OF OUR CHILDREN FACE ADVERSITIES AND BARRIERS IN THEIR EVERYDAY LIVES, AND PROMOTING RESILIENCE GIVES CHILDREN A TOOL TO HELP THEM TO COPE WITH OR OVERCOME THE DIFFICULTIES THEY MAY HAVE IN THEIR DAILY LIVES.**





The 4R's are excellent skills to support learning, but their use is not just limited to lessons. Jon explains that, "the 4R's are life skills as well as learning skills. Many of our children face adversities and barriers in their everyday lives, and promoting resilience gives children a tool to help them to cope with or overcome the difficulties they may have in their daily lives." The positive impact of the 4 R's has extended to improvements in pupil behaviour, as an emphasis on resilience has helped pupils to develop the ability to stick with a difficult task where they may once have lost focus and acted out instead, and an emphasis on reciprocity encourages them to consider each other's feelings and not act in a way that negatively impacts others. When pupils do struggle with behaviour, they can be supported by teachers to use the 4 R's to reflect on their actions and consider how they can behave more positively in future.

The school's reward system is also directly linked to the learning superheroes. In assembly every week there is a 'star of the week' from each class; they are known as the week's 'graduates' and their achievements are shared with the school, and are always explicitly linked to one or more of the 4 R's. The latest OFSTED report commented that, "the school's reward system encourages pupils to develop resilience, resourcefulness, reflectiveness and reciprocity."

Opportunities to develop the 4 R's are also available as part of the broader curriculum at Allenton, and there are regular chances to use the 4 R's beyond the classroom. Enterprise projects take place regularly

**THE SCHOOL'S PRINCIPLE OF PROMOTING LIFE SKILLS IS AT THE HEART OF THE CURRICULUM. PUPILS DEVELOP RESILIENCE, RESOURCEFULNESS AND REFLECTIVENESS. THEY LEARN HOW TO WORK WELL TOGETHER.** ”

which give pupils opportunity to practice, apply, and further develop the skills in an entrepreneurial context. There are two annual projects which the whole school take part in; the maths market at Christmas and the Easter enterprise. Pupils are given a brief, and each class decides what products they want to create. Each class has to produce a business plan, where pupils research their target market, work out the costs involved, and the potential sales and profit they expect to make. They create advertising, and produce their final products ready for the event itself. For the final event the school is opened up, and parents and pupils have the opportunity to visit all the classrooms and purchase products; the winning class is the one which makes the most final profit. After the event, each class evaluates its performance, and what they could have done to improve further. Jon says, "not only do the pupils really enjoy these events, but the benefits they get from the experience are numerous; it helps them to develop and put into practice many of the soft skills which employers greatly value in the world of work."



As well as promoting entrepreneurial skills, aspiration is cultivated in a number of practical ways beyond the classroom at Allenton. The school hosts talks from people in a variety of different careers, in order to help pupils to consider their own individual career aspirations. The visitors inform the pupils all about their job, how they used the 4 R's to get there and how they use the 4 R's within their role. This in turn helps pupils to consider how they can use the 4 R's to help them to reach their own goals in life.

The school has links with Derby university, and students from the university have come into Allenton to lead sessions with pupils on subjects such as Spanish, Science, and Forensics, and Allenton pupils have visited the University to learn about the courses and careers there. Visitors have also come into the school from Rolls Royce and have worked with pupils on science projects. Jon tells us that, "the purpose of such visits is that the world of work is opened up to pupils, and they begin to understand, and even become excited about, some of the many opportunities available to them in the future."

**“ ENCOURAGING STAFF TO GET INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECTS HAS RAISED THEIR CONFIDENCE, GENERATED FRESH ENTHUSIASM FOR CONTINUAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT, AND MOST NOTABLY, HAS HAD A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING WITHIN THE SCHOOL.**

Jon is proud that the majority of the teachers at Allenton are still the same as when he first started in 2013, and that they have all been on the journey of improvement and transformation together. As well as developing pupils' resilience, Jon has also put an emphasis on staff resilience and retention, and has addressed issues with workload through initiatives such as the implementation of the new marking policy, which has reduced the workload of marking from an average of 19 hours per week to 9 hours per week. His aim was to make Allenton "a place where people want to work, and are excited about their work; an employer of choice". He has been successful in this aim, with the latest OFSTED report commenting that, "Staff enjoy working (at the school) and are proud to do so."

From the very beginning, Jon wanted to make sure that his staff felt valued and respected as professionals, and all played a key role in the process of change within the school. He also encouraged them to be professionally vulnerable, and to be able to take risks in order to improve their teaching. Continual learning, professional development and research are now essential aspects of the teaching culture at Allenton. Staff have been fully involved in the research to support new initiatives in the school, such as DIRT and peer critique, and this has even resulted in a book written by the teachers of Allenton, 'Evidence Based Teaching in Primary Education'. Jon says, "encouraging staff to get involved in the research and implementation of projects has raised their confidence, generated fresh enthusiasm for continual growth and development, and most notably, has had a significant impact on the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning within the school."

The transformation in culture at Allenton Community Primary School has resulted in exactly what Jon set out to achieve; pupils and staff alike have a pride in the school, expectations are high, and attainment, attendance and behaviour have all markedly improved. Both the data, and the latest OFSTED inspection reflect just how far the school has come, with the latest OFSTED report commenting that "the school's principle of promoting life skills is at the heart of the curriculum. Pupils develop resilience,



resourcefulness and reflectiveness. They learn how to work well together.” Jon comments that, “children and staff want to come to Allenton, and it is a happy place. We are seeing children value their education and teachers having a ‘can do’ attitude for the pupils.” Through the change in culture and the integral role of the 4 R’s in the school, there is an evident enthusiasm for learning at Allenton, as well as high expectations from staff and pupils regarding what they can achieve. Jon concludes by saying, “the most exciting thing of all is that we are witnessing the children rise to the bars that we are setting for them, and that is inspiring. The children of Allenton CAN- and they are doing!”

**THE MOST EXCITING THING OF ALL IS THAT WE ARE WITNESSING THE CHILDREN RISE TO THE BARS THAT WE ARE SETTING FOR THEM, AND THAT IS INSPIRING. THE CHILDREN OF ALLENTON CAN- AND THEY ARE DOING!**



WATCH THE VIDEO NOW - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-P6l6Mgoe8&feature=youtu.be>

# A Child-Centred Curriculum: Ash Lea School

Ash Lea is a day, community Special School in Nottinghamshire for pupils between the ages of 3 and 19 who experience complex learning difficulties. Just over three years ago, in 2014, the school decided it was going to make a dramatic change to its curriculum, moving away from the National Curriculum and designing its own child-centred curriculum instead. Rachael Gacs met with Head Teacher Dawn Wigley, and Assistant Heads, Sandra Gell and Kate Davies, to discuss the reasons for the change and how the new curriculum is preparing the pupils of Ash Lea for their futures.

Leading up to 2014, the senior leadership team at Ash Lea began to feel that the National Curriculum model alone was not necessarily meeting the individual needs of each pupil, enabling pupils to reach their full potential, or sufficiently preparing them for life beyond school. They began to discuss and explore the option of introducing a different kind of curriculum, one that was more flexible and better suited to their pupils. Dawn says, "we wanted the focus to be on doing whatever is best for the pupils, rather than following a statutory curriculum that wasn't specifically tailored to our pupils' individual, and often complex needs. The central question became 'what do our pupils really need from our curriculum?'"

Dawn and her team decided to invite Peter Imray to the school, an expert in special educational needs and co-author of 'Curricula for Teaching Children and Young People with Severe and Profound Multiple Learning Difficulties'. Peter's training introduced and explored how children with severe learning difficulties, according to research, learn in a different way to conventionally developing learners, and therefore need to be taught differently, and taught different things. This facilitated a discussion with staff on the topic of changing the curriculum and all staff were able to learn more about this from Peter and to ask any questions that they had.



**“ THE CENTRAL QUESTION  
BECAME ‘WHAT DO OUR  
PUPILS REALLY NEED FROM  
OUR CURRICULUM?’**

As a result of the INSET the whole staff were inspired by the goal of creating a bespoke curriculum for the pupils of Ash Lea which would allow each child to reach their full potential, and the desire and ambition to make this a reality began to take hold throughout the school. Many of the teachers became involved in a follow-up research project investigating the various ways in which other schools had formed their own curricula successfully, in order to prepare to do the same at Ash Lea. It was essential to Dawn and her leadership team that the new curriculum was founded on a rigorous evidence-based approach. Particular influence came from the curricula of Swiss Cottage School in Camden, the Five Acre Wood School in Kent, and the work of Penny Lacey, from Birmingham University, on personalised approaches to learning.

According to Dawn, the parents of pupils were generally very positive, and very much on board with the concept of a change in curriculum, most being more concerned about the holistic needs and practical issues facing their children than with

the attainment of National Curriculum levels. A questionnaire was sent home to parents and their responses demonstrated that skills and abilities such as independence, communication and social access were seen as the most significant priorities in their child's development and education. Dawn shares that, "regular consultation and collaboration with parents was key in developing the new curriculum; parents were involved from the off through meetings, and feedback was requested and welcomed from parents throughout the process."

It was determined that the core focus of the new curriculum should be to develop the skills pupils need to be as independent as possible when they leave school, and to begin to develop these skills as early as possible. It was also decided that instead of levels being defined purely by age, they would be defined by need and attainment instead; these levels being pre-formal, semi-formal and formal. This means pupils can access the curriculum which best fits with their own level of ability and need, with the pre-formal level for learners with profound and multiple difficulties, the semi-formal level for learners with severe learning needs, and the formal level for learners with moderate learning difficulties.

**REGULAR CONSULTATION  
AND COLLABORATION  
WITH PARENTS WAS KEY  
IN DEVELOPING THE  
NEW CURRICULUM. ”**



With the introduction of the new curriculum, learning has moved away from more traditional lessons and towards developing real life skills, based in real life contexts, the aim being to prepare pupils gradually for life beyond school in a safe and supportive atmosphere. This means there are lots of 'experiences' in the curriculum, and fewer structured 'taught' sessions. Learning is linked to practical activities and consolidated and applied in practical sessions.

Ash Lea invested heavily in staff training and CPD on play, and made the decision to adopt the Equals 'Play and Leisure' scheme of work, which the staff at Ash Lea were also involved in writing. For many of the pupils at Ash Lea, learning to 'play' is the bedrock of their education; it is a skill which many of the pupils find challenging to begin with, and it can take time to develop, but the benefits are numerous. Play and leisure offer a wide variety of learning opportunities for the pupils, through investigation, experiencing things, and 'having a go'. Play is an important vehicle for forming and developing a number of vital life skills including creativity, problem solving, communication, formulating relationships, thinking skills, and self-confidence.

For older pupils, a key part of the curriculum at Ash Lea includes the opportunity to develop life skills, independence and self-help skills through activities beyond the school walls and out in the community. These include cookery classes, trips on the bus to the library and shopping trips to the supermarket, all of which offer a multitude of opportunities to learn and develop. For example, a trip to the supermarket may include crossing a road (road safety awareness), finding a particular item, communicating with the shop staff and dealing with money. Of course, all pupils have different targets on such trips, and some need more support than others. These types of activities are a regular occurrence and Dawn explains that “they help the pupils to acquire the practical skills which they really need, and which will enable them to be as independent as possible when they eventually leave school”.

**“ WE HAVE DEVELOPED  
A ROBUST SYSTEM OF  
ASSESSMENT AND RECORDING SO  
THAT PUPIL PROGRESS CAN BE  
TRACKED AND MONITORED  
REALLY EFFECTIVELY.**

One of the fascinating things about the change in curriculum at Ash Lea is how progress is monitored and evidenced without the use of National Curriculum levels; Dawn says, “we have developed a robust system of assessment and recording so that pupil progress can be tracked and monitored really effectively.” No longer limited by the National Curriculum, pupil targets can now cover a much broader range of areas and can be much more personalised to each child’s individual situation and need. Often targets are related to emotional wellbeing, personal skills and personal development.

Targets are set in collaboration with parents and all those who work with the child and know them best, and there are progress meetings twice



a year. Training has been provided for staff on structured conversations with parents through the ‘Achievement for All’ programme, focussed on the use of a clear framework for developing an open, on-going dialogue with parents about their child’s progress. ‘Achievement for All’ has helped to make sure that meetings are as productive as possible, and really get to the bottom of what everybody wants to achieve, and what is most important for the child. Dawn explains that “getting everyone together to set targets allows us to make sure that everyone is in agreement that the targets are set at the right level, have the right amount of challenge and aspiration, and are absolutely what the child needs.” The fact that parents are involved with the setting of targets means that they are engaged and involved in the process, and can support the achievement of the target at home, including contributing evidence.





An innovative way that progress is evidenced at Ash Lea is through an app called 'Evidence for Learning'. Evidence for Learning provides a way of capturing evidence of progress through photographs and film; this could be a photo of a piece of work, or a recording of a pupil completing an activity. A comment can then be added by the teacher. Evidence for Learning is a very effective tool for collecting and recording evidence, and makes it easy to capture, store and share progress with parents. All staff are trained to use Evidence for Learning, and it is now one of the principle ways of evidencing progress at the school. Staff CPD and INSET days focussed on target setting, and reviewing, have also supported the quality of the tracking of progress throughout the school.

Another integral component of preparing the pupils of Ash Lea for their future comes through

the school's focus on transition, which starts in year 9 and continues until their final year; according to Dawn "it is so important to get transition right, and to think about it early, as for many of our pupils it is a huge and daunting step, therefore it is vital to make sure that both pupils and parents are as supported and prepared as possible." In year 9, a 'transition plan' is started; the transition plan is based on the pupil's current goal for their future (which may change over time). It takes into account what the pupil needs to reach their goal in order to support them to have everything in place by the time they need it, whether this be qualifications for entry requirements, work experience, or being able to catch a bus independently.

**IT IS SO IMPORTANT TO  
GET TRANSITION RIGHT,  
AND TO THINK  
ABOUT IT EARLY** ”

Post 18 evenings also take place each year which parents and pupils can attend; a variety of different providers, from colleges to residential care, come into the school, as well as ex parents and pupils, to demonstrate a range of options for the future. The school also keep and share a database of what leavers do after school to inform parents and pupils. At the start of a pupil's final year, there is a leaver's meeting where parents, teachers, and everyone who works closely with the pupil discuss exactly what needs to happen during their final year so that the pupil is fully prepared to leave the school and move on to the next stage of their life. Throughout the final year, transition is central to everything, and meetings take place regularly to ensure as smooth and successful a transition as possible.

Transition is also supported at Ash Lea through the creation of 'Wikis', which are secure websites which pupils can develop all about themselves. These are private websites that can be shared with certain, selected individuals. Through text, photographs, audio, and video, pupils can build up what is effectively an online scrapbook about their

life, aspirations, interests, skills and needs. It is in some ways like a CV, but much wider, and much more fun; it is a medium through which pupils can express themselves creatively and tell their story. Kate Davies, the school's expert on Wikis, tells us "this information builds up a detailed picture of the pupil which can then be used to inform others during transition. Wikis can provide an invaluable 'first step' to building new relationships. Whatever the pupil's next step is, their new teachers, employers or carers can get to know a lot about a pupil through their Wiki, and gain valuable insight into the pupil's skills, personality and needs which may otherwise take time to become fully apparent." Ash Lea is not afraid of a challenge or of embracing new, innovative practice, and as a result continues to grow and develop as a school. As well as a new

curriculum, Dawn and the governors of Ash Lea, after several years of campaigning, have secured £2 million for an extension which is currently being built to further help the school meet the many different and complex needs of its pupils. Through the determination and courage of Dawn, the senior leadership team, and the rest of the staff to do what is best for their pupils no matter what it takes, the young people of Ash Lea are now receiving an education that meets their needs in a much more practical way, and is directly preparing them for their future beyond school.



## Learning Points

**Is your curriculum providing what your pupils really need?** While most schools will remain within the National Curriculum, there are still considerations of how pupils' needs can be further met, and their skills further developed, through a wider range of learning experiences, not only limited to the parameters of the National Curriculum.

**Regular Training and CPD** – Keeping on top of the latest research and innovation in education and continuing professional development is key to keeping staff enthused, as well as continually learning, developing and improving teaching and learning. Encouraging staff to take an interest in, and even contribute towards research will bring fresh perspectives and innovative practice to your school, enabling growth, development and progress.

**Looking at the practice of other schools** – No school is an island! Take advantage of the opportunity to learn from the best practice of similar schools regionally and nationally for inspiration and ideas, and avoid re-inventing the wheel!

**Communication and collaboration with parents** – Communication with parents enables them to feel involved and be engaged in their child's education, particularly through times of change. When parents' opinions are listened to and valued, everybody can work together in the best interests of the child.

Keeping on top of current technology to support practice – Technology has so much to offer in terms of supporting learning and assessment, and there are many apps designed to help make learning more accessible for pupils who have special educational needs. Choose wisely and with a focus on the specific needs of your pupils and curriculum.

**A focus on transition** – Key to helping pupils prepare for their future is preparing them for their next step in life. Thinking about the next step in plenty of time enables pupils to be supported to make informed decisions about their future, and to be fully equipped with the skills and qualifications that they need in order to succeed.

# Building a Culture of Aspiration: The Journey of Improvement at the Flying High Academy



The Flying High Academy in Ladybrook, Mansfield, has been on a fascinating journey over the past five years. From an Ofsted inspection which judged the school as 'inadequate' in all areas in 2012, it has been transformed into a 'good' school with 'outstanding' features, including outstanding leadership and behaviour. Here, Rachael Gacs speaks to the executive headteacher, Tony Warsop, about how such a turnaround was possible, what steps were taken to achieve this success, and the school's dedication to building its pupils' resilience and supporting their wellbeing.

The Flying High Academy joined the Flying High Trust Partnership, a trust made up of schools across Nottinghamshire, in 2014. Formerly Rosebrook primary school, the school serves a community that faces a number of challenges and experiences some of the highest levels of deprivation in Mansfield. Unemployment is above average, as is the number of families in receipt of benefits and free school meals.

The Ofsted inspection in 2012 captured a school that was facing significant challenges of its own. According to OFSTED, some of the biggest issues facing the school at this time were behavioural issues, poor relationships with parents, and a lack of high expectations and aspiration for pupils within lessons and beyond. Children who needed school to make a big difference to their lives and life chances were instead achieving poor outcomes across the board. Something had to change.

“ALLOWING THE PUPILS AND PARENTS TO BE HEARD, AND REALLY LISTENING TO AND ACKNOWLEDGING THEIR CONCERNS, WAS VERY IMPORTANT TO BEGIN WITH.

Tony Warsop joined the school just months after the inspection, on a secondment for two days each week from Candleby Lane Primary School (a National Support School), and bringing with him a strong background in pastoral provision from his role as Director of Children at Candleby. Not long after – in 2014 - he became substantive Headteacher of Flying High Academy as the school joined the Flying High Trust.

With such an overwhelming task ahead, Tony had to start by setting in motion a cultural shift. He pinpoints in particular the importance of creating an environment of trust, as he felt trust between the staff and pupils had broken down at the school to an alarming extent. This began with very practical steps, such as removing security chains from cupboards and the decision to leave classroom doors unlocked to demonstrate trust. It also meant ensuring that the school's leadership was visible in the school community and wider community, constantly communicating with children and parents, and gradually building relationships based on trust and respect; "developing relationships was the foundation of dealing with poor behaviour. Allowing the pupils and parents to be heard, and really listening to and acknowledging their concerns, was very important to begin with."

A parent forum was established (which is now held once a month), which offered an opportunity to discuss new school policies with parents and to listen to their input or concerns. Tony also invested in a lot of CPD based on communication to help his staff to deal with parents diplomatically and effectively. Staff presence out in the playground at the start and end of each day was also central to fostering positive relationships. “We began to see staff and parents talking again” said Tony, “and that built a level of understanding and a shared sense of wanting to do the best for children. No one was defensive or pointing the finger anymore when things went wrong. There was much more in the way of ‘active listening’ on the part of staff and a communication grew from there. The foundation of trust allowed us to immediately focus on each and every child and to do what was right for them.”

**“ EACH CHILD IS AN INDIVIDUAL, WITH THEIR OWN INDIVIDUAL NEEDS AND CIRCUMSTANCES, AND THE SCHOOL TAILORS ITS ARRANGEMENTS FOR EACH CHILD ACCORDINGLY.**

Once a more positive atmosphere of trust became established, behaviour policy was re-modelled to also be more positive. The emphasis of the behaviour policy went from one where there was an onus on sanctions and shaming of poor behaviour, to one fundamentally based on celebration and rewarding of good behaviour. Nurture groups (differentiated curriculum delivered in small groups of high adult: child ratios) were formed for the core of pupils who find it hardest to behave, allowing them to receive bespoke provision, while allowing the other children to learn without disruption or distraction. Tony comments that his approach to behaviour is “to treat everybody the same by treating everybody differently. Each child is an individual, with their own individual needs and circumstances, and the school

tailors its arrangements for each child accordingly.” Fundamentally, the school’s behaviour management is based on building strong and caring relationships with pupils. Tony talks a lot about supporting the pupils through love, and this means a consistent effort to understand their circumstances and help them with their problems. This includes making sure appropriate support is offered to them and their families from the pastoral team, and signposting other agencies where necessary. Tony tells us that “the emphasis is on talking problems through with the child, discussing with them their behaviour, how it effects them and others, and what the consequences should be. Often it is the child themselves who suggests a suitable consequence for their behaviour.” This approach to behaviour management has been supported with CPD for staff provided by Tony and the Flying High Trust, especially focussed on de-escalation, high-expectations, and reinforcement of positive behaviour.

For pupils struggling to deal with difficulties in their lives which are beyond the help of the pastoral team alone, the school has used its Pupil Premium funding to employ a counsellor for specialist intervention, who comes in for one day each week. Staff and parents can make referrals through the SENco team, and children are given the support they need for as long as they need it. This support also includes a ‘drop in’ session at lunchtime. The counsellor has been involved in staff CPD training, and staff can also access the counsellor if they need to. Tony sees the counsellor as an invaluable asset to the school in terms of supporting mental health and wellbeing and helping to support the children to develop resilience, even in difficult circumstances.

Tony tells us that another of the most vital aspects of improving behaviour and standards at the school was brought about through progress in teaching and learning. A changed focus from activity driven lessons to learning focussed lessons helped to improve the quality of pupils’ learning and progress, as well as increasing their levels of engagement; “this increased engagement meant fewer instances of disruptive behaviour”. This was achieved through extensive CPD as well as through



a revised lesson planning format with an emphasis on learning outcomes and success criteria. Through the change, Tony provided regular feedback and support around planning and practice, working with teachers through a 'developmental culture rather than a judgemental culture' to improve the levels of learning and challenge within lessons.

## OUR SCHOOL VALUES ARE CENTRAL TO EVERYTHING WE DO; WE LIVE AND BREATHE OUR VALUES “

A further element in improving the school was to develop its ethos and values, and the recent Ofsted inspection demonstrates how far the school has come in this area; the report comments on the academy's 'tangible ethos of respect and care'. Tony explains that, "our school values are central to everything we do; we live and breathe our values". These values are respect, responsibility, perseverance, aspiration, pride, fun, confidence

and creativity, and Tony has made sure that they are woven into all aspects of school life. Pupils are taught to engage with and really understand what the values mean and look like in practice.

A clear example of how the school's values are embedded into school life is evident in the behaviour management policy; it's key emphasis is on rewarding behaviour which demonstrates the school values. The values are also known as 'pledges', and the school's reward system is based around earning 'pledge points', so that each achievement and reward links back directly to one of the values. The school creates a lot of celebration around achieving the values – this includes positive mentions in assembly each week, a pledge point honour role, and 'Headteacher's stars' for 'wow moments' of exemplary behaviour and attitudes which fall in line with the 8 pledges; these are placed on the wall outside the Headteacher's office. Golden letters and postcards are also sent home to a minimum of two pupils in each class each half term in recognition of positive behaviour in line with the values.

**“ PUPIL VOICE HELPS THE CHILDREN TO DEVELOP CONFIDENCE, RESPONSIBILITY AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE. IT ALSO HELPS THEM TO TAKE OWNERSHIP AND PRIDE IN THEMSELVES AND IN THE SCHOOL.**

A strong culture of Pupil Voice has also been developed within the school, and this has had a substantial impact as it has encouraged pupils to take responsibility for, and ownership of, their own behaviour. Pupil Voice is taken extremely seriously, with each class holding its own class council weekly. The roles of chair and vice-chair are taken on by different pupils within the class each week to make sure that everybody gets a chance to lead. The class first focus on things which are going well, and then raise any issues that they have; these issues are discussed as a group, and solutions are suggested. Any issues that they cannot solve as a class are then raised at the School Council meeting, which is chaired by the School Council representatives in year 6 each week. All issues raised must link back to one of the school's 8 pledges, so that the school values are always kept in mind, and remain central to everything. Tony tell us about the impact of pupil voice on the children; “pupil voice helps the children to develop confidence, responsibility and emotional intelligence. It also helps them to take ownership and pride in themselves and in the school.”

Flying High Academy was particularly praised by Ofsted for its success in supporting and developing the wellbeing and resilience of its pupils. The school ethos and values and the development of pupil voice have been a significant part of this, but resilience has also been nurtured in other ways. Tony comments that “children who are happy are ready to learn”. One of the ways in which Tony and

the staff at Flying High Academy try to ensure happy children is through helping to create an environment which encourages the celebration of difference and diversity, something which Tony felt was missing when he first came to the school in 2012. This has been a core focus of PSHE lessons, where each year group has been given an area of diversity to concentrate on, such as disability, race, gender or sexuality. Displays created by the pupils on the theme of diversity are on show throughout the school, with thoughtful messages which reflect a mature level of understanding.

Tony explains that the PSHE lessons have helped to foster an atmosphere of respect and inclusion of all within the school community. Resilience has also been developed in the pupils by fostering a learning environment where there is no fear of failure, and where mistakes are seen as a normal part of the learning process. This attitude is encouraged in lessons, and the concept of ‘growth mindset’ is discussed in PSHE lessons. It is also modelled by staff ‘giving things a go’ in areas where they are not completely confident; Tony gives the example of trying to play piano in assembly, even if he does make some mistakes!

**CHILDREN WHO ARE HAPPY ARE READY TO LEARN** ”

To help to raise aspirations, an annual careers day has been introduced at the school to get pupils thinking at an early stage about some of the different career options available to them in future. The day is a real event, which involves pupils and teachers dressing up, and welcoming visitors from the local community to the school who hold a variety of different jobs. Pupils prepare questions in advance and interview the visitors about their jobs, as well as listening to talks. Tony remarks that “this day inspires pupils to see that they can be anything that they want to be, and to work hard so that no doors are closed to them.”

This message of high expectations and aspiration is integral to everything which Tony and his staff have achieved at Flying High Academy, and pupils are more than living up to the high expectations which the school has for them. In an environment where they feel supported and cared for, they are able to 'look back with pride and forward with confidence', just as their school motto states.

They truly are flying high!



WATCH THE VIDEO : <https://youtu.be/XDrP5BnYDVA>

## Learning Points

**Build positive relationships based on trust and mutual respect** - building relationships with pupils and parents is the foundation of creating a positive atmosphere and community.

**Communicate with parents and listen carefully to their views and concerns** - listening to parents will allow for open and productive dialogue, and will ensure that they feel that their views and input are valued by the school.

**Use positive behaviour management** - having high expectations of behaviour and focussing on positive behaviour raises children's self-esteem, makes for a happier classroom, and is proven to be more effective.

**Make sure the pupils know you care about them as individuals** - pupils are more likely to respond positively when they feel they are listened to, understood and cared about.

**Consider investing in a school counsellor** - there are limits to what can be achieved in exceptional circumstances without the help of a professional counsellor. A counsellor will support the mental health and wellbeing of pupils who need it most. Could this service be shared with other schools to reduce costs?

**Plan lessons with clear learning outcomes and success criteria, for valuable and engaging lessons** - learning outcomes and success criteria

will focus pupils on what they want to achieve in the lesson and motivate them to meet a particular target/goal. This makes it more likely that they will maximise their efforts, and concentrate on the task at hand.

**Actively engage pupils with the school values** - the more the school values permeate school life and the school community, the more they will truly influence the pupils' attitudes, outlook and behaviour.

**Use the power of Pupil Voice** - pupil voice is an excellent tool for empowering pupils and helping them to feel valued, while enabling them to take responsibility and ownership of their own behaviour and the school environment.




**Promote the celebration of difference and diversity** - helping pupils to understand and celebrate difference and diversity is very important, will make for a happier school community and should help to prevent bullying.

**Encourage an environment where there is no fear of failure and role-model this approach** - resilience is an important part of the learning process, and encouraging pupils to not give up, even when there are set-backs, will help them continue to strive to achieve their full potential.

**Raise aspiration through the exploration of different careers** - thinking about their future, even from an early age, can help children to develop ambition and drive to achieve their goals.

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## 'A vision for the future: preparing children for an evolving and fast-changing world' – research digest – December 2017

### Language as a wellbeing indicator

The Early Intervention Foundation has published (27 September 2017) a report – 'Language as a child wellbeing indicator' – which considers the importance of early language acquisition in enabling young children to manage emotions and communicate feelings, as well as establishing and maintaining relationships and learning to read and write. The UK prevalence rate for early language difficulties is between 5% and 8% of all children, and over 20% for those growing up in low-income households. This high prevalence among disadvantaged children is thought to contribute to the achievement gap that exists by the time children enter school and continues until they leave. The authors propose that this fundamental link between language and other learning and social and emotional outcomes makes early language development a primary indicator of child wellbeing.

Further details can be found: <http://www.eif.org.uk/publication/language-as-a-child-wellbeing-indicator/>



### One in four girls is depressed at age 14

The University College London (UCL) Institute of Education Centre for Longitudinal Studies, has published (20 September 2017) information about research undertaken by researchers from the UCL Institute of Education and the University of Liverpool, who analysed information on more than 10,000 children born in 2000-01 who are taking part in the Millennium Cohort Study. At ages 3, 5, 7, 11 and 14, parents reported on their children's mental health, and when they reached 14 the children themselves were asked questions about their depressive symptoms. The key findings from the analysis are summarised below (source: Centre for Longitudinal Studies):

- Average levels of emotional symptoms, such as feeling depressed and anxious, increased from early childhood through to mid-adolescence.
- From ages 3 to 11, similar proportions of girls and boys suffered from emotional problems as reported by their parents, but between age 11 and 14 years prevalence in boys stays the same (around 12%) but for girls it increased from 12% to 18%.
- At age 14, when children reported their own symptoms, 24% of girls and 9% of boys were suffering from high symptoms of depression.
- 14-year-olds from poorer socio-economic backgrounds were more likely to report greater symptoms compared to those from better-off families.

Further details can be found: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/news-events/news-pub/sep-2017/one-in-four-girls-depressed-age-14-study-reveals>

## New 'Rise Above for Schools' programme

Public Health England has announced (13 September 2017) a new evidence-based programme for schools, which aims to support teachers in helping build crucial life-skills for young people to boost their resilience and improve their mental health and wellbeing. PHE has developed a series of new resources for secondary school teachers to use in their lesson plans as part of the Rise Above for Schools programme. The Personal, Social, Health and Economic lesson plans have been accredited by the PSHE Association and piloted with teachers, ensuring they are robust and of the highest quality. The resources cover issues such as (source: PHE):

- bullying and cyberbullying
- alcohol use and smoking
- positive relationships and friendships
- exam stress
- online stress and social media
- body image in a digital world



Further information can be found:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/phe-launches-rise-above-for-schools-programme>

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## World Mental Health Day 2017

The YoungMinds charity published (12 September 2017) resources for this year's World Mental Health Day, which was held on Tuesday 10 October. Schools can sign up for free resources, including a free #HelloYellow kit, a mental health assembly plan, and some fun activities to combine fundraising and wellbeing.

Further details, including how to sign up for the free resources, can be found: <https://youngminds.org.uk/get-involved/how-to-fundraise/helloyellow/>

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## Developing soft skills

The Prince's Trust, supported by HSBC, has published (30 August 2017) its 'Results for Life' report, which looks at how much value is placed on soft skills and how much support young people are given to develop these skills at school and at work. The report is based on a national survey of 2,224 11-19 year olds, 2,675 workers and 1,000 teachers, conducted online between 13 and 29 July 2017. The survey asked respondents about their experiences of developing soft skills, such as team work, communication and resilience, and to share their thoughts on the impact these skills could make to a young person's self-confidence and future prospects. Some of the key findings from the report are summarised below (source: Prince's Trust):

- The report suggests that more needs to be done to ensure young people leave education with the confidence and skills they need to thrive in the workplace:
- Soft skills are considered by young people, teachers and workers to be as important to achieving success in life as good grades
- 43 per cent of young people don't feel prepared to enter the workforce, with 43 per cent of those who feel this way believing their soft skills are not good enough
- 72 per cent of workers felt they didn't have all the soft skills to do well in their role when they first started working
- The research shows that the transition from primary to secondary school can really knock a young person's confidence, and that many students feel they would benefit from additional support at this time:
- 44 per cent of young people found their confidence dropped when they moved to secondary school.

- 37 per cent of young people did not feel there was enough support available at their school to help them cope with the challenges of moving up to secondary school
- The research shows that teachers think the development of soft skills is crucial to helping students to succeed both in education and in later working life:
- 92 per cent of teachers think that supporting students to develop soft skills can help to improve their overall academic performance
- 45 per cent of teachers think that a lack of soft skills is one of the most likely factors to hold students back in life
- 91 per cent think schools should be doing more to help to develop soft skills
- According to the research, people who are in work believe that a lack of soft skills often makes the transition from education to the workplace difficult:
- 72 per cent of workers said they did not have all the soft skills required to do well when they first started working
- 64 per cent of workers who felt they lacked skills when they entered the workforce stated that this meant they struggled to find a job when they were starting out
- 43 per cent of workers think that employers are not doing enough to upskill new recruits coming into their industry

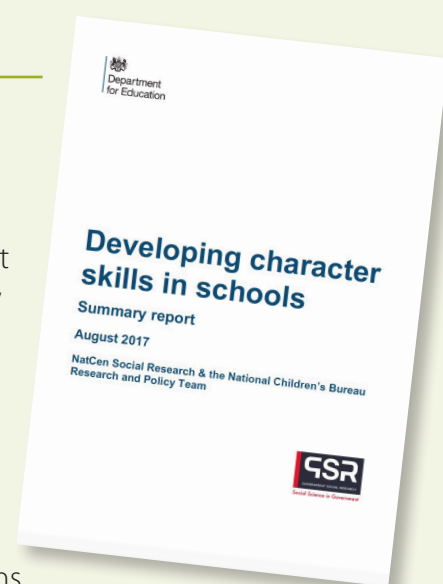
Further details can be found: <https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/about-the-trust/research-policies-reports/education-report-2017>

## Developing character skills in schools

The Department for Education has published (3 August 2017) a survey and case studies with schools on activities to support pupils' development of character skills. The key findings from the report are summarised below (source: DfE):

- Almost all (97%) schools sought to promote desirable character traits among their students.
- Case study settings viewed their role as being to:
- Encourage pupils to understand, value and demonstrate the positive behaviour traits that would make them well-rounded, grounded citizens.
- Support the development of the skills required to function in and contribute to society.
- Support social and emotional development, in order for pupils to better understand themselves and work on their weaknesses.
- Instil pupils with a moral compass and skills in understanding and interacting with other people.
- Schools primarily aimed to develop character in order to promote good citizenship (97%) and academic attainment (84%).
- Across all school types, the character traits most highly prioritised were honesty, integrity and respect for others (a high priority for 94% of schools).
- Secondary schools were more likely than primary schools to link character education to employability (86% vs. 46%).
- Most schools used school-wide, cross-curricular approaches to develop character. Almost all (97%) had a mission statement or set of core values intended to contribute to character education.
- Just fewer than one in six (17%) schools had a formalised plan or policy in place for character education.

Further details can be found: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/developing-character-skills-in-schools>



## Emotional health, wellbeing and character in schools

The Fair Education Alliance has published (14 June 2017) a report – ‘Reflections on emotional health, wellbeing and character in schools’ – which identifies some of the reasons why emotional health remains a significant issue in the education system, where there is existing good practice, and provides support for school staff and policy makers to take action. The report follows the FEA’s survey of 500 school staff about social and emotional health in education, which found that (source: FEA):

- Insufficient time (71%) and a lack of available budget (59%) were cited as the biggest barriers to addressing social and emotional wellbeing in schools.
- 94% thought it was very important to identify children who require specialist support for wellbeing or social and emotional development.
- Having clear next steps for pupil development (83%) and being easy to use (70%) were identified as being the key priorities for social and emotional wellbeing measurements.

The report draws together a number of think-pieces from academics in the field and colleagues from key organisations, to consider: why emotional health, wellbeing and character is important; prioritising social and emotional health in teacher education; what schools need to consider; and what does it look like in practice. The report also provides a number of case studies demonstrating good practice.

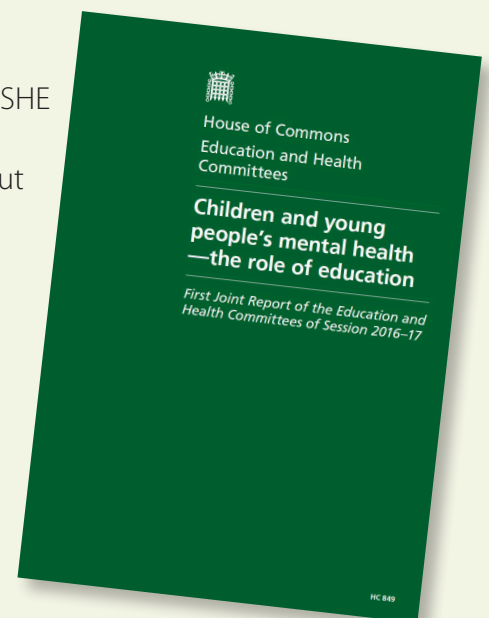
Further information can be found: <http://www.faireducation.org.uk/news-and-features/wellbeing-report>

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## Children and young people’s mental health

The House of Commons Education and Health Committees have published (2 May 2017) their joint report – ‘Children and young people’s mental health – the role of education’ – which is the result of the joint committees’ recent inquiry on this issue. The committees received approximately 240 pieces of written evidence and heard oral evidence from representatives of both the education and mental health sectors. The report makes the following recommendations of most interest to schools (source: Education and Health Committees):

- The promotion of well-being cannot be confined to the provision of PSHE classes. To achieve the whole school approach, senior leadership must embed well-being throughout their provision and culture.
- Government and schools must be conscious of the stress and anxiety that they are placing on pupils and ensure that sufficient time is allowed for activities which develop life-long skills for well-being.
- Recommend that schools should include education on social media as part of PSHE, including educating children on how to assess and manage the risks of social media and providing them with the skills and ability to make wiser and more informed choices about their use of social media.
- Welcome the Government’s commitment to making PSHE a compulsory part of the curriculum.
- Welcome the inclusion of the personal development and well-being criteria in the Ofsted inspection framework.



Further details can be found: <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmhealth/849/849.pdf>



## East Midlands MAT Leaders' Network launches for a second year in 2017/18

The first session of this year's Inspiring Leaders MAT Leaders network took place on 28th September and was hosted by Trent Academies Trust and their Chair, Andrew Pickin. After a very positive first year for the network in 2016/17, it was encouraging to see so many MAT CEOs, Executive Leaders and other MAT leaders enrol for another year of high quality networking and professional development. The aim of the network is to encourage colleagues to develop positive collaborative relationships and the sharing of practice between MATs, to ensure that MATs are learning from experts within and beyond the sector, and to provide regular updates on research and policy. There is also an onus on providing affordable and regular development opportunities for MAT leaders. There will be five networking sessions across the 2017/18 academic year.

This first session focused on one of the key issues of the moment: recruitment, retention and creating a 'talent-powered' culture: ensuring your MAT becomes an 'employer of choice'. Speakers included Michael Pain, Director of Forum Education; Anne Hudson, Director of HR at Woodard Academies Trust; and Karen Wespieser, Head of Impact at the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER).

Anne had been invited to talk about developing and implementing a strategy for recruitment and retention within her multi-academy trust; and Karen had been invited to discuss NFER's research on teacher dynamics and retention in multi-academy trusts.

Colleagues heard how the education system is currently facing a 'perfect storm' in terms of recruitment, with the overall pool of graduates likely to fall over the coming years, and with more graduate vacancies in the wider job market meaning greater competition for schools to attract the best candidates. In addition, the number of pupils is expected to grow by 13% between 2015 and 2024, mainly in the secondary sector. Some EBacc subjects face particular challenges in attracting and retaining the best candidates; and teachers' pay is likely to continue to lag behind that of other sectors over the next few years.

Michael Pain challenged MATs to think carefully about how they establish their reputations as 'employers of choice' in an increasingly competitive recruitment market, asking colleagues to consider whether their trust board or leadership team has the issue of recruitment and retention firmly on their radar and do they have a strategy for becoming an 'employer of choice' over the next five years? All boards must have this as a priority given that it is the quality of teachers that has by far the most influence on the quality of pupils' learning and, therefore, schools' success.

**Michael explained how being an employer of choice depends on a number of activities and actions on behalf of the organisation, including:**

**1. A strong sense of purpose or 'why'** – Many MATs describe themselves in terms of 'what they do' or 'how they do it', yet few MATs define themselves publicly in terms of their 'why' – why do they do what they do? This is important, as this generation of graduates want to be 'change agents' and are very attracted to organisations that are clearly focused on making a tangible difference to society. Michael asked, are multi-academy trusts developing a sufficiently compelling and well-articulated vision that speaks to their sense of purpose and the legacy they could potentially create as educationalists? Some MAT visions are noble but very vague, they do not spell out in compelling terms the difference that the MAT is setting out to make to children and young people's lives or, indeed, the employees' role in making that difference. Too many visions either reflect government targets and measures or are well-meaning but very abstract. Michael challenged MATs to be clearer, more specific, and bolder in developing their visions – putting the role of employees at the heart of their vision to make a difference.

**2. Opportunities for professional development and career progression** – Research by LKMco and Pearson shows that professional development and career progression opportunities are important to younger teachers, and new teachers need to be able to move through the ranks if they are to see a long-term future for themselves in schools. The most loyal employees in organisations are more likely to agree that there is a lot of support available to those wishing to take on leadership roles or stretch opportunities. Michael argued that leadership comes in many forms, not simply through job titles and promotions, and that MATs should be looking at how they can audit and make the most of people's talents at all levels in order to support their wider development and engagement. MATs should be clearly articulating – through examples and case studies - a commitment to promoting talent, an investment in career development, and the importance of professional development.

**3. Varied opportunities to lead, learn and connect** – Professional development opportunities on their own may not be enough to attract 'generation Y' into jobs, they will now be looking for opportunities to change jobs and if organisations can offer these opportunities from within they stand more chance of holding on to these staff. MATs have great opportunities to enable staff to move around between roles, not just for promotions but also to gain other development opportunities. In organisations that retain staff, there is more likely to be free flowing communication, a culture of mutual support and tolerance, active encouragement of ideas, and a strong commitment to equality and inclusiveness. There are excellent examples of professional networks that are developing within MATs and many MATs, teaching school alliances (TSAs) and other school partnerships have the infrastructure to offer secondments, networks and other stretch opportunities across a group. Michael challenged colleagues to consider whether they are providing these opportunities with their trusts and how well these are being marketed and communicated to prospective employees.

**4. Access to mentors and coaches** – research suggests that 'generation Y' employees (those born between the early 1980s and mid-1990s) are looking for leaders who are able to coach and mentor and who are fair, supportive and knowledgeable. Potential coaches and mentors within MATs could include colleagues with

similar roles in other schools, trustees with experience in other sectors, specialist leaders of education, other colleagues within the school, and members of the MAT's wider networks. Michael challenged colleagues to consider whether there is a coaching and mentoring culture at all levels within their trusts and, again, how well this is being articulated through marketing and communications.

**5. Valued and respected employees** – whilst financial rewards are a consideration, other ways in which organisations can demonstrate value and respect for employees include wellbeing initiatives, flexible working, workload culture and recognition and celebration. Building a wellbeing culture in your organisation might include a range of measures, such as undertaking wellbeing questionnaires, providing affordable initiatives (health screening, counselling, etc), health/staff absence insurance, creating a wellbeing committee, giving a member of the SLT responsibility for championing staff wellbeing, and providing regular reports on staff wellbeing to the governing body. We know that workload is a key issue when it comes attracting teachers into the profession. However, MATs are in a strong position to address this through, for example, sharing resources and work schemes. Michael suggested that MATs should also put on their websites that they are committed to implementing the recommendations of the DfE workload review group reports. Michael also challenged colleagues to consider how well their MATs are articulating the 'how' in terms of their approach to talent management, developing a coaching and mentoring culture, opportunities for progression, and commitment to supporting staff with a manageable workload.

The next edition of the Inspiring Leaders magazine will focus in depth on some of these strategies and how schools and academy trusts are putting them into practice.

**This year's remaining sessions of the MAT Leader network will cover the following:**

- **30 November 2017** – The evolution of school improvement models within MATs (hosted by Diverse Academies Learning Partnership, Kelham Hall, Newark)
- **1 February 2018** – Visioning and futures-thinking: ensuring our organisations are ambitious in preparing children for an evolving society (hosted in Leicestershire venue TBC)
- **19 April 2018** – Successful performance management of diverse teams of executives and professionals (hosted by The Redhill Academy, Arnold)
- **18 June 2018** – Peer review: MATs' role in supporting and challenging one another for mutual improvement (venue TBC)

For more information on how your MAT can be involved in the network, please email [MATnetwork@inspiringleaderstoday.com](mailto:MATnetwork@inspiringleaderstoday.com)



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