

Development Visits – Summary report

Round 1 Visits

This report is based on Development Visits to 10 partnerships. Each partnership discussed the intended outcomes and vision for their partnership.

The **Main Successes** described by the partnerships were in the following areas:

Capacity to lead and facilitate the partnership

- Good **management structure** in place which enables effective collaborative working and can be adapted to develop new initiatives
- A **partnership management group** has been formed to ensure the meetings are run as efficiently as possible making the best use of time.
- The partnership meets once a half term and a **steering group** has been formed of the Chair, a HT and the facilitator to ensure meetings are highly focused and have a clear agenda
- Appointment of **additional capacity from an administrative officer / facilitator**. This means activities agreed by members of the partnership are coordinated effectively. Data is collected by the facilitator. The facilitator helps build capacity, apply for additional funds and ensure all activities are well publicised and run effectively. Avoids greater demands on headteachers
- **Overstaffing** in two schools to help provide capacity for partnership working and CPD
- **Teaching school** being a driving force providing ideas for support/development
- The group has employed a **clerk to minute the meetings**

Using funding for partnership projects

- **Fund a project** across the partnership
- **Funding** is felt to have allowed the schools to be able to develop a deeper and closer working relationship based on an agreed priority. All schools are invited to bid for the support they recognise as a priority. There is a menu of available CPD and coaching. Schools have to match funding (small schools are financially supported by the partnership)
- The partnership recognises the challenges of small schools and creates opportunities for all schools to access and participate in activities arranged by the partnership which sometimes means **subsidising activities**
- Use of grant to **fund specific projects**
- **Grant has helped to support better transition** between primary and secondary – allowing staff to be released and a conference organised for years 6 and 7

Activities to help schools understand each other's strengths and areas for development

- Headteachers have shared current strengths and areas for development. There will be an **annual audit** initiated and monitored by a lead headteacher. Outcomes/actions to be developed as a result of the audit, led by leaders and headteachers across the partnership
- Headteachers have **shared current strengths and areas for development**. At the start of the year, headteachers gave a presentation on what their priorities were
- **Memorandum of Understanding** with all schools signed up, and attendance at cluster meetings has been good throughout the year
- **Peer to peer reviews** being undertaken in schools. The role of Improvement Champions was seen to be a significant success of the peer review training, with both champions being strategically deployed to good effect. Peer review at secondary and primary is holding schools to account within the partnership - the leadership feel this is strength. Diarised that the lead reviewer of the Peer review will undertake a monitoring visit to check on progress 5 to 6 months after the review. Following Peer review, bespoke training has been organised for all partnership schools on a common issue
- The Partnership run an **annual headteacher conference** to look at training needs/moderation support/school-to-school support needs. This is valued by all partners and is collectively viewed as one of the biggest successes of the work that the headteachers have done in collaboration
- A biennial **conference for teachers and support staff** is held with all schools and their staff members. This is highly valued and has enabled all staff to benefit from hearing from key note speakers as well as providing training opportunities
- DHTs from across the partnership schools now have an annual day together in the summer term. This meeting is used by the **DHTs for general networking**, but is also now developing into a more focussed planning meeting based on school needs
- **Sharing of data** to be able to identify strengths and areas of development across the partnership and provide support where needed
- Heads have shared data and strengths and areas of development have been identified across the partnership. As a result of this **analysis**, training has taken place across the partnership with a focus on reading and handwriting to follow
- Heads have completed **learning walks** in each other's schools
- The **middle leaders meet** eg Maths, English, Science, SEN and EYFS (schools pay for cover)
- A **matrix of skills** across the partnership is being collated. As well as providing a database of available skills this will enable colleagues to share their expertise in a wider context beyond their own school

Engaging governors

- Worked hard to ensure **governors** are kept informed. Governors have met collectively and have indicated an interest in developing their work to include peer review
- Each Governing Body has identified a **partnership governor**
- **Governors receive minutes** from the partnership meetings and have their own meetings where they use these minutes to formulate their agenda

Developing trust and relationships between schools, and commitment to the partnership

- Partnership previously was based on soft activities (book weeks etc.) but now there is a **much sharper view**
- There is a **strong commitment** from all the schools to this partnership
- Strengthened HT relationships and **developed further trust** and extended to other leaders in the school
- Trust between schools, **honesty and pragmatism** is valued by the schools
- There is a view that the group are now **responsible for the outcomes of all the children** in the partnership
- The Partnership group have developed a vision for the group including terms of reference (MoU). Schools in the group have now uploaded these to their **websites**

Projects to develop knowledge, expertise, and capacity

- Cross-phase working is crucial at both ends, an **EY development network** has been set up which is strengthening the work to improve provision and continuity between the PVI and Early Years facilities
- **Cross-school and in-school moderation** has taken place in all schools
- A focus on teacher retention by offering a **structured support network**, particularly for current and future middle and senior leaders.

Key Challenges experienced during the course of the year were in the following main areas:

Commitment of all schools to the partnership

- Making sure that **all schools are involved**, particularly small schools because of their limited capacity and funding
- Multi-belonging – schools belonging to **more than one partnership**
- The memorandum of understanding has **not been signed by all**
- Still creating/promoting the positive ethos of trust within the partnership so that all engage. There is not yet an **expectation for all members of the partnership** to join in. There are schools who engage more readily and others that don't
- Retaining the **commitment of all schools** to work together for the benefit of the local area against the pulls of academy partnerships
- The level of engagement is **still variable** across the partnership
- **Schools seeing the benefits** of being part of the partnership
- Ensuring that all headteachers can see this is **impacting on standards positively**

Sustainability of funding

- **Sustainability of funding**, capacity to continue over time when budgets get tight – human capacity
- There is no **per pupil funding formula to sustain the partnership** going forward because of the MATs already paying in to their MAT
- Sustaining the partnership work that is **currently being financed by the grant**

- Link with Teaching School Alliance as there was a **significant cost** for this
- Falling school pupil numbers and funding - impact on **school budgets**
- The number of partnerships with which each school is engaged and the funding they are **paying into the various partnerships**

Sharing data between schools

- There is no compulsion for schools in the partnership **to share their data**
- There are concerns about schools using **different assessment systems**

Confidence to share needs, challenge to other schools, and feelings of accountability

- Ensuring **vulnerable schools** feel confident to share concerns and needs as soon as possible so that the partnership can be proactive to stop schools slipping, also want to support more schools to achieve outstanding
- The ability to be able to have those **'more uncomfortable' conversations** with peer Headteacher
- There is a certain amount of unease about the **accountability role** of the Peer-to-Peer Group and whilst committed to sharing data openly and supporting each other to address areas for development it is unclear how this would work at the moment
- Developing an **accountability model** that all can work within and feel comfortable with

Capacity to lead and facilitate the work of the partnership

- **Facilitator role** – finding someone who understands the needs of the partnership and has enough of a general knowledge of education and schools to be able to work in this role effectively
- The group has looked at how to implement school-to-school support and has provided this but the challenge is **capacity across the partnership**
- Capacity issue for the **Improvement Champions** to follow up on all the Peer Reviews
- Someone to **coordinate** the governors coming together
- **Balancing time needed** to be allocated to partnership working against day-to-day issues in school

Engagement between primary and secondary

- Develop further the **collaboration with secondary schools**

Support for vulnerable schools

- What happens when a school within the partnership **starts to decline** - when and who intervenes?
- There is concern about what might happen to either a member school or the group as a whole if a **school falls into difficulties**
- The group are concerned about their capacity to support schools who are experiencing **significant difficulties**
- Next phase of work will be the challenge: partnering the schools within the partnership into **sub-groups** to allow for closer support networks to be created

Next Steps that the partnerships identified were as follows:

Develop capacity in schools at all levels

- The Partnership will look to see if they can train up TAs within the partnership to offer speech and language services across schools
- Looking at opportunities to support schools with recruitment and retention
- Further development of the role of middle leaders, particularly of the Foundation Subjects
- Consider formalising the support for new headteachers/schools in the locality. The partnership will also now consider whether this could extend to acting headteachers
- Keeping succession planning high on the agenda at all levels
- Establishing a partnership pupil schools' council
- Greater involvement of the secondary school within the partnership e.g. through Peer Review, middle leaders and governors

Create links with and learn from others e.g. TSAs

- Seeking out how the TSAs can support the Partnership as well as how the Partnership can support the work of the TSA
- Looking at what the local TSAs could offer to the partnership
- Linking with other clusters and the work they are undertaking
- To work with and learn from other clusters who have developed successful models of support, self-evaluation and improvement.

Work with governors

- Training governors for peer review work, considering how to get wider engagement from governors
- Consider setting up a governor cluster set of meetings to look at school-to-school support needs specifically in relation to governance in the locality
- Create Governor partnerships to have a sustainable model of collaboration and offer this in new headships – ensure potential heads are aware of the partnership
- Governor being involved in follow up monitoring visit from the Peer Review

Support data and intelligence sharing

- Using FFT Collaborate as a vehicle to support data sharing across all the schools, this would include discussing how best to use the additional SEC days which may include scrutinising data
- The partnership is designing a tool to help schools with predictions for outcomes in 2017 onwards and agree data protocols
- Committing to sharing intelligence on schools with the SECs locally so that support can be sourced more quickly when this is needed

Strengthen partnership tools and processes

- Roll out Peer Review and have a coordinated programme working in triads
- Create an expectations “pack” for each school in partnership
- Revisit the Memorandum of Understanding to ensure that it is fit for purpose now and in the future

Develop plans to support schools across the partnership

- Forming sub groups within the partnership to allow for school-to-school support to take place effectively
- Deciding how to use the Standards and Excellence days for the benefit of the partnership

Evaluate impact

- Analysing the impact on outcomes of being part of the partnership
- Supporting schools to achieve an outstanding judgement at the next inspection

Plan for the future

- The partnership looking to have a meeting with the Regional Schools Commissioner or one of his team to discuss the specifics of academy trust status.

The main **Lessons Learned** that the partnerships highlighted were as follows:

Help schools commit to the vision and purpose, and enable all to contribute

- Crucial that everyone buys into the core purpose of the partnership and thereby the priority for the work of the partnership must allow for all schools to participate
- Openness and clarity about the vision, values and ambition of the partnership
- Taking time to make the right decisions so that all the schools are committed to the partnership and schools have confidence that the ‘journey’ they are on is the right one
- Expectation that all contribute, but that this may not be possible in equal parts from all, due to circumstance and vulnerability of schools

Create ways that schools can learn from each other

- The cluster have learnt that the sharing of “problems” at meetings and through contact with each other leads to solving issues informally through best practice, and this has helped all schools to grow. Teachers from all schools have been sharing their good practice. They have been empowered. Opportunities have been seen by teachers and they are now more willing to offer to do something to train and support others

Establish appropriate governance

- Steering group formed
- Setting up a small steering group has been effective in making decisions on behalf of the partnership

Develop trust

- The importance of relationships and trust. Open and honest discussions exist at all levels within the partnership group