

Development Visits – Summary report

This report is based on Development Visits to 8 partnerships in the summer term 2016

Each partnership discussed the intended outcomes and vision for the partnership

Main Successes were in three main areas:

i) Increased commitment to the partnership and each other, and stronger collaborative working

- Commitment of the schools within the consortium to work in a deepening partnership grew during the year with a clear vision
- The memorandum of understanding was re-visited and alterations agreed by all schools and implemented leading to an **increased accountability to each other**.
- Collaborative working has had a **positive impact on staff**: leaders of the future are beginning to emerge. Opportunity to work with and impact on outcomes for **more children across the locality**
- Strengthened existing collaboration and schools have a **better understanding of each other's strengths and areas for development** – sharing of data has had an impact on this and undertaking a skills audit
- There has been an improved transition between Years 6 and 7 and greater **collaborative working between Year 6 and Year 7 staff**.

ii) Sharing of expertise and professional development opportunities, and supporting schools

- Schools within the partnerships have **shared expertise** with each other and broken into groups within the larger partnership to facilitate school to school working
- A range of **cluster and CPD activities** have taken place and developed individual skills of teachers and this has been validated by a headteacher not involved in that particular aspect of work.
- **Supporting schools at risk** of dropping to RI in an OFSTED inspection
- Supporting schools with **recruitment** – good practice developing eg passing on good candidates, recommending good supply teachers etc.
- Establishment of a support group for **Learning Support Assistants** – arose from needs analysis
- Training for **Peer review** undertaken and is being rolled out across the partnership

iii) How the partnership has organised itself, and working with the LA and TSAs

- **Sub-groups of the partnership** have been set up and formalised including a Chairs of Governing Bodies group undertaking specific projects or research
- Appointment of an **independent Chair**
- **Away day for the partnership** – actions and goals for 12 months were decided upon and agreed and how these would be communicated to the schools and their communities

- Extending the partnership to include more schools and ensure **sustainability**
- **Money allocated according to need** and through an analysis of data and the use of this is monitored by the partnership.
- Involvement of the Local Authority in brokering initial partnerships and the support between schools. The **LA facilitated meetings** where there were barriers to partnership working.
- The work of the **Teaching School Alliance** has been strengthened both within sectors and cross-phase.

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

i) Engaging schools in the partnership

- Where there have been some obstacles to the **engagement of some schools** the chair and vice chair have worked successfully to overcome these and all schools are now actively involved.
- Involvement of **Governors**
- **Changes of staffing / leadership** within a school which can lead to momentum being lost
- Academisation agenda when a partnership contains a **mix of faith and non-faith schools**
- Support for **small schools in vulnerable circumstances**

ii) How the partnership worked together

- Made mistake originally of looking at **only one aspect of school improvement** across the schools
- **Accountability and moderation** amongst colleagues is felt to be an area that needs growing and developing.
- **Changes to initial priorities** that were identified
- **Releasing of staff** to undertake partnership work

iii) Developing relationships and trust between schools

- Understanding the difference between school improvement and building a **sustainable partnership** for some schools in the wider partnership.
- **Establishing relationships and trust** between schools so that colleagues will openly exchange information/data about their schools for mutual benefit
- Establishing the **ethos and culture** of the partnership from the beginning for honesty and transparency
- **Well-being of staff**, particularly those working across more than one school

Key Lessons Learned from the partnerships

Partnerships are successful if trust and relationships are established and time needs to be planned in to get this right to build that openness, honest and transparency. One partnership

thought a launch conference could have achieved this collectively rather than engaging the schools individually. Governing Bodies needed to be engaged as a collective group.

There were lessons from some partnerships about how they operated:

- The benefits of having an **independent chair** to reduce the workload on headteachers
- Ensuring the **terms of reference** (including data sharing protocols) needed to be signed and committed to by all schools at an early stage
- Ensuring heads are **disseminating messages** to subject leaders as quickly as possible
- **Plan diary dates** and have a clear schedule for meetings in place
- Have a transparent plan for how the **money will be allocated** and outcomes expected
- **Build internal capacity** within the partnership to enable intelligence and expertise to support a vulnerable school
- **Closer monitoring** of schools experiencing particular challenges
- The potential strength of the partnership for **collective recruitment** rather than schools working independently.

Next Steps that had been identified by the partnerships...

i) Engaging other schools and individuals

- Continue the development of closer links with secondary
- Engagement of schools in the locality not involved in partnership working
- Explain the benefits of cluster working to parents and families
- Engage governors within the partnership and establish governor groups

ii) Increasing partnership capacity, and developing how the partnership operates

- Consideration of an external advisor – or additional SEC time.
- Lead Heads/ Independent Chairs of different partnerships linking up with each other
- Develop greater accountability within the model and a shared understanding of what this means in practice
- Organise a partnership conference and expect schools to sign up to the terms of reference. Share work done to date and the impact to highlight the benefits of partnership working
- Create a plan in order to be self-financing
- Re-visit the Vision and expectations of the partnership
- Data sharing eg set up FFT Collaborate to support data sharing to help identify strengths and priorities for the cluster of schools.
- Develop an approach for a secondment agreement, so that staff could be offered a professional development opportunity to work in another school within the partnership

iii) New and additional priorities for partnership work

- Look at developing an understanding of the curriculum across the Key Stages for the benefit of the children moving particularly from KS2 to KS3

- Peer review training to be disseminated across the consortium and implemented in the established triads – involvement of pupils?
- Plan school-to-school support for the coming year
- Create a central system to advertise and interview for vacancies across the schools to secure the best teachers and leaders for schools in the partnership