

Notley Family of Schools Peer Review Case Study

Name of Headteacher and School writing the case study

Jacquelyn Wragg, Independent Chair of the Notley Family of Schools

All headteachers have been consulted and offered their feedback and comments as part of the process of writing this review.

Context of the Partnership

The Notley Family of Schools is a school lead improvement partnership consisting of 8 schools

- John Ray Infant School 287 on role
- John Ray Junior School 405 on role
- Notley High School 1238 on role + 249 In the sixth form
- Notley Green Primary School 415 on role
- Rayne Primary School 269 on role
- Terling Primary School 98 on role
- White Court Primary School 603 on role
- White Notley Primary School 108 on role

How long have the schools been working together

The Notley Family of Schools has a long history of working together and collaborating on projects. Initially, through the Local Delivery Group, this was to provide support for vulnerable children and young people but later moved directly to support for school improvement and to ensure best practise in teaching and learning.

In January 2016 after a successful bid for a set up grant, the Notley Family of Schools was established with the following intended outcomes for the partnership.

1. To build trust, confidence and commitment within and across the Partnership, as observed through peer review feedback and notes or minutes of partnership meetings.
2. For all schools to be graded 'good' or better by Ofsted criteria by 2016-17
3. For the vast majority of teaching in each school to be good or better over time
4. For all cohorts and groups of pupils to make good or better progress in line with or above national averages
5. To jointly research, develop and implement current best practice models to maximise school improvement, including assessment, moderation and peer to peer school review
6. Pupils move onto their next stage of education or training as resilient, self-confident learners, as reported by our receiving schools and the views of pupils
7. To respond to issues raised by relevant local data e.g. poor speech and language in Early Years
8. To expand the partnership

All schools in the cluster are members of the Professional Learning Network (TSA) and this has ensured that there is a common focus on ITT; CPD; leadership development; teacher development and a developing interest in research. The Heads meet each half term and in addition to this have instigated an annual development day to set and agree priorities that work towards the established aims of the partnership and the next steps identified through data sharing and peer review outcomes.

Number of Peer Reviews undertaken

The partnership is coming to the end of the second cycle of peer reviews. Schools are reviewed every 4 terms allowing time for schools to act on and embed the recommendations of the previous peer review.

A total of 13 peer reviews have taken place over the last 2 years.

Key Issue/s that your partnership identified to overcome?

Before peer reviews began a working party met to discuss and agree a protocol for peer reviews (see below)

Discussions included:

- who to involve in peer review teams
- how to agree a focus for peer reviews
- the format of reviews
- what information should be made available during peer review teams
- peer review follow up.

What did the partnership learn from undertaking the peer review?

- The Peer Reviews have brought about a greater understanding of each other's schools, situations and needs. It has helped us continue to build trust and strengthen relationships between the schools in the partnership. The partnership now has a better awareness of where there is excellence amongst the schools that can be accessed. We have been able to share initiatives and good practice.
- The peer review process has been excellent CPD for senior management in our schools.

Quotes from Peer Review Reports

From Sept 2016 (The first review in our schools)

Further comments from the review team

I found the experience very positive. I hope that we were helpful with our feedback and suggestions and it will be good to have a progress report in a few months. I found the planning and structure of the day worked really well as there was a good mix of observations and activities and time to talk and reflect. Now that we have started the process I feel it will be very positive for the NFOS and will lead to us improving our schools together.

Thanks to everyone for a great day.

Response from the school

Thank you everyone for investing time and energy in our school yesterday. I know that XXX and her team will passionately drive improvements forward as well as affirming staff in the things that are going well.

Executive head

I found the planning and structure of the day worked really well as there was a good mix of observations and activities and time to talk and reflect. Now that we have started the process I feel it will be very positive for the NFOS and will lead to us improving our schools together.

Head of School

From Feb 2018 (The latest review in our schools)

Further comments from the review team

The review team observed achievement team meetings at the start of the day. These were very productive meetings with a clear focus and the discussions carried out in a very professional way.

The review team would like to congratulate the school on the improvements they have made since the last review. Staff have clearly worked very hard to embed good practise.

I was really impressed with the team at XXX Primary school and the progress that has been made over the last year. There was a strong focus on skills being taught and children were generally well behaved and on task. I feel with a greater emphasis on applying these skills the team will continue to improve the outcomes for the children in their care.

Response from the school

The peer review has been very supportive and staff have welcomed the constructive feedback which will help the school to continue to make the necessary improvements in teaching and learning. I would like to thank the whole peer review team for honest and accurate conclusions about the quality of teaching which they delivered in a professional and sensitive way.

We have some very useful recommendations which will be acted upon to ensure the children have excellent provision.

Head Teacher

What was the Impact and benefits

For the Partnership as a whole by undertaking peer review

Benefits	Impact
There is a shared knowledge and understanding of the context of the local schools.	Partnership development planning is more focused and any challenges and barriers can be understood thus making cluster meetings/training more focused. Support for new heads / heads new to the area.... within the group.
A shared sense of purpose for the quality of education in the local area.	Schools leaders support each other to improve the outcomes for children. Trust means Heads can speak openly and without fear of repercussions. Sharing opportunities through the Partnership has financial benefit and is driving improvement. Looking at the need and linking it across the Partnership. Sharing training

For individual school leaders

Benefits	Impact
Professional relationships are developed through the process.	Mutual support and development of colleagues/staff and establishments Networking for senior leaders (not only heads) Being able to lead on projects and school improvement issues following the review with support from the partnership and review team Building relationships and trust between leaders A new network of people to draw on for support, advice and best practice An understanding of the demographic and needs of pupils in our area
School leaders are able to obtain an external view of their schools and draw on the extensive experience of the peer review team	An accurate picture of certain subjects/age ranges/areas can be ascertained and next steps identified drawing on a range of professionals viewpoints Reassurance of the current situation within the school for the head teacher leading to greater confidence of the head in their self-evaluation. Advice, information and knowledge shared from experienced senior leaders, enabling ideas to be suggested and discussed from a range of viewpoints Peer reviews are excellent and cost effective CPD for all involved. Schools give of their time freely knowing this will be reciprocated. Shared ideas mean schools are not re-inventing the wheel Seeing initiatives in practice Reassurance that the school is working within a Partnership which opens up opportunities for development & training. School staff experience the school in a stronger place linked to the Partnership

On the staff of the process

School staff are able to observe practise in other schools	New ideas or strategies are seen and some can inspire further development of practise back at own schools Identification of strategies that do not have the required impact such as time consuming distance marking. CPD for senior managers taking part in the reviews Support from cluster groups working on identified areas within the school without the fear of being judged The support network offered to staff naturally following the review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g. Come and see xxx in Year 3 and see how they do it I'll put you in touch with my Year 5 teacher so you can ask how she does it The links that have developed and relationships between schools is invaluable Offering networking between the schools which has led to visits, working together, shared resources, training and advice from leaders within the team
Senior staff are able to work alongside a range of colleagues with different experiences	This can support CPD and staff development e.g. a Head working with an experienced deputy during peer review observations Staff come to the review openly, wanting advice and support as they are involved in choosing the area of focus together at the Pre review planning

	<p>meeting.</p> <p>Staff are keen to show their best practice and look for support and ideas to develop further</p> <p>Good morale boost for staff to show good practice and comment on it</p> <p>Liaising as a group leads to shared feedback and advice</p>
Senior staff are able to visit a range of settings	Not only will they learn different ways of developing teaching and learning but will also be able to offer their strengths in terms of supporting colleagues
Pathways for staff development where appropriate can be shared between partnership schools ensuring expertise is shared.	Staff can have access to development both by receiving and delivering training to a broader range of colleagues such as visiting each other's Schools to observe good practice or demonstrating an approach at a cluster meeting.

On school improvement/outcomes of peer review

School improvement priorities can be evaluated and next steps can be refined through the process	<p>Priorities are more focused and actions will lead to rapid school improvement</p> <p>Areas that are a priority within the school are developed further, enabling impact to be seen, reviewed and linked to the School Improvement Plan & SEF</p> <p>Being held to account in a supportive way through HT meetings where progress since review is discussed</p> <p>Improvement champion workshops followed up on peer review recommendations. At a recent annual meeting for governors head teachers reported the benefits the peer review process had had on raising standards of teaching. Members of the review team who had also been involved in a previous review of this school could clearly see the improvements</p> <p>Clear steps for improvement arise from the peer review and give the schools decisive proactive things to do that can make an impact straight away</p> <p>Evidence for inspections (OFSTED) regarding the capacity to drive improvement and sustain that improvement</p> <p>Peer reviews can focus on the needs of the school identified in the School Improvement Plan or SEF</p> <p>Provides evidence of progress towards areas of identified need which can be shared with governors, SECs and OFSTED</p> <p>Recognition of improvements in pupils' outcomes throughout the school</p> <p>The opportunity for the school to welcome, share and show improvements</p>
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We have also involved our LA School Effectiveness Partner in the quality assurance of our reviews. They identified several strengths of our partnership peer reviews:

Strengths:

- The pre review meeting honed a specific focus which drove the whole process. The Independent Chair was effective in reminding the team of this purpose throughout the day and this meant time was not spent on other lines of enquiry (however interesting) which were not the remit.
- The team quickly established trust with the school. The SLs are to be commended for their openness and willingness to listen to and discuss the review's findings throughout the day. They demonstrated that they are passionate about improving outcomes.(Cross reference partnership aims)
- The professional and high quality of discussion by the review team members was evident as they wrestled with issues of challenge and support from the outcomes of their observations and findings. They took in to account the school experience and were willing to adapt their findings in light of new information.
- The skill set of the review team was well balanced in terms of relevant teaching experience and leadership. Each member brought an insightful perspective. Positives were looked for as well as areas for development. The DHT in particular played a key role this time.
- The Improvement Champions joined the review feedback which meant they had a good first hand understanding of the key actions. The focus and date of the workshop was agreed. They then had time to arrange and plan the workshop.

- The Review was a positive step forward in terms of the accountability agenda- it was clear that schools are thought to be responsible for their own improvement and that of others in this Review. There was an open dialogue which will lead to improved transition and provision for students in the NFOS.
- The Independent Chair remains key to the success of the NFOS peer review process. Her organisation and skills especially in giving feedback allow for mutual respect and partnership to be fostered. The report was quickly written so impact was not lost.

What is your partnership going to do next based on the learning/impact of the Peer Review?

As a partnership we have used the Development Tool to assess our current peer review practise and plan ways in which we can make the partnership reviews better

Quality of Challenge	Current Position	Next Steps
Peer Review Process and Completion	<p>Established Peer Review cycle completed, documentation in place and shared at partnership level and with Governing Body</p> <p>An annual schedule of peer reviews is in place and is part of established practice.</p> <p>Data and evidence used in the peer review shows breadth and depth and is taken into account in making professional judgements on the performance of the school.</p> <p>The peer review concludes with a process that enables the reviewed staff to collectively work on improvement priorities identified in the peer review and to agree actions for improvement</p> <p>Follow up meetings with the peer review team take place in the subsequent two terms and focus on agreed areas of improvement, change in practice and impact on outcomes of the peer review.</p> <p>Exemplary A peer review cycle is completed within the year and demonstrates a focus on school performance, an agreement on a specific improvement priority area, indication of a change in practice and impact on outcomes. All paper work is completed.</p> <p>Peer reviews involve a wide range of stakeholders and middle leaders and teachers are now engaging in peer review within and between schools.</p> <p>The impact of the actions agreed following a peer review is shared with the partnership at an agreed future date</p>	<p>Exemplary Use of data and evidence in all peer reviews shows breadth and depth</p> <p>Outcomes are used by the partnership to agree shared areas for development and to ensure effective practice is shared</p> <p>External scrutiny is welcomed in peer review</p> <p>Partnership to partnership peer review takes place focused on agreed partnership priorities</p> <p>The partnership is active in reviewing the work of other partnerships</p>
Peer review user quality	<p>Established The reviewed school report that the review was comprehensive in depth and breadth, leading to rigorous and challenging discussions and impact on outcomes.</p> <p>The reviews are conducted in an atmosphere of transparency and trust within the trio/partnership, and adhere to the</p>	<p>Exemplary Effective practice is also validated and celebrated and shared</p> <p>The peer review forms the core of the school approach to self-improvement.</p>

	<p>agreed partnership Memorandum of Understanding</p> <p>The review team also report benefits for themselves and their school.</p> <p>All peer reviews across the partnership are reported to be of both quality and value</p> <p>Exemplary: The peer reviews are welcomed in the school who report robust conversations focused on evidence and improvement.</p>	
<p>Accuracy</p>	<p>Established</p> <p>There is a clear triangulation across a range of indicators in the peer review E.g. Ofsted, RAISE / ASP, LA review, external moderations, SIAMS, lessons observations, work scrutiny, pupil/parent surveys, learning walks.</p> <p>The outcome of peer review is shared as part of the evidence for an OFSTED inspection and where appropriate a member of the review team is available to provide evidence.</p> <p>There is a process of QA in place which involves the school being reviewed and the review team in providing feedback on the quality of the review, and this feeds into a cycle of continuous improvement of peer review.</p> <p>The outcomes of the QA exercise facilitated by the LA have informed the partnership and processes are in place to share effective practice in peer review and to address areas for improvement and development in how peer reviews are conducted</p> <p>Exemplary</p> <p>There is a well understood process of QA in place which allows for the regular internal QA of every peer review and provides the opportunity for the external QA of a sample of peer reviews each year.</p>	<p>Exemplary</p> <p>There is moderation of judgments, evaluation of impact, scrutiny of the process and validation of outcomes within and also beyond the partnership including with other partnerships and at County level.</p> <p>The outcomes of the QA process are shared within and between partnerships and feed into a cycle of continuous improvement of peer review across the partnership</p>
<p>Impact</p>	<p>Established</p> <p>Peer review identifies and captures in writing the agreed improvement actions. Peer reviews are incorporated into school improvement planning and there is evidence of improved outcomes and impact.</p> <p>The impact of peer review is monitored at partnership level</p>	<p>Exemplary</p> <p>Where the implementation of actions needs support, this is forthcoming from the partnership or from elsewhere in the County dependent on capacity.</p> <p>The Partnership holds the schools to account for the impact of peer review which is a regular standing item on all partnership meetings.</p> <p>There is an agreed approach to the brokerage and implementation of school to school support following peer review</p>

Appendix 1 :

PEER TO PEER REVIEW

A protocol for school to school support for improvement

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

Vision:

To be a sustainable partnership of schools that delivers the strongest outcomes – both academically and holistically for all its pupils.

The power of collective capacity is that it enables ordinary people to accomplish extra-ordinary things. One is that knowledge about effective practice becomes more widely available and accessible on a daily basis. The second reason is more powerful still – working together generates commitment. Moral purpose, when it stares you in the face through students and your peers working together to make lives and society better, is palpable, indeed virtually irresistible. (Fullan, M 2010 – All Systems Go (Corwin))

Values:

Value	Attributes
TRUST	<i>Sharing the same mission; being willing to give and receive support and challenge; distributing leadership across schools;</i>
OWNERSHIP	<i>Joint accountability for all schools within the cluster achieving well</i>
ASPIRATION	<i>High expectations for all pupils, with a belief that all can achieve</i>
OPENNESS	<i>'Open door'; sharing all relevant information and data</i>
PERSEVERENCE	<i>Steadfast commitment to pursue, adapt and deliver agreed strategies</i>

Peer Reviews

1. Introduction

Peer review has been used in a range of educational contexts as a strategy for enhancing self-evaluation through external reference.

The common denominator in all models is that peers come together and spend time in each other's contexts to review practice, share expertise, recommend strategies for development and support each other to achieve continuous improvement.¹

Trust between schools is an essential feature of the process. Participating schools will need to have the confidence to share honest self-evaluation with their peers and in turn will find that the experience builds trust between colleagues who gain respect for each other.

“Every school can learn something from their peers.”

As a family of schools we bring together very different types of school and contexts which enable us to draw richness from the diversity of experience and expertise in order to build leadership capacity for further school improvement leading to greater pupil outcomes.

The peer review process ensures that the benefits are reciprocal. Each school gains from the insights of others, contributes expertise to support their peers and takes away models of practice that influence change on their own school.

The Peer Review Process

Each school identifies a theme or area of their development that it wishes to review through the process. The group spend a day in each of the schools conducting the review, during which they may tour the school, visit classes, meet with staff, review documentation as appropriate to the theme. At the end of the day, peers provide feedback to the host head teacher.

Following a review an 'improvement champions workshop' will take place to discuss the review process, feedback experiences of the processes and ways it could be improved in the future and identify further support that may be required. Peer reviews will take place annually, allowing for the opportunity to demonstrate progress towards previously identified priorities.

Setting up a Peer Review

1. Establish a Peer Review team for each school

- Consider schools that offer contrasts and are not in direct competition for pupils
- Consider schools that have demonstrated experience or expertise in an area that a host school has identified as a priority for development. This may lead to changes in peer review teams following the planning meeting.
- Schools new to the process might initially work with one who has
- Peer review may not be appropriate for all schools at the particular point in their improvement journey
- Wherever possible a member of the review team should be paired with a staff member from the host school.

2. Prepare for the review

- Commit time to meet together to plan the peer review
- Agree the focus for the review in each school (see 3. below)
- Consider how you want to organise each day and who else to involve
- Agree any information to provide in advance, for example data or policies relating to the focus of the visit
- Establish agreement regarding confidentiality
- Set a date for the review, the feedback to school staff meeting and a follow up action planning meeting
- Plan a schedule for the review day, allowing time for an initial input by the host Headteacher and sufficient time for discussion at the end of the visit
- Establish your expectations regarding the reports to be produced (See 5. below)

3. Identify the theme for review

- Each school identifies their own theme, this might derive from the school SEF, SIP/SDP or from a recent inspection as appropriate.
- The School Effectiveness + programme provides schools in the cluster with a consistent approach to identifying priorities for improvement
- The theme is likely to be one which features within the school's priorities
- Headteachers need to be prepared to be honest in the self-evaluation and to present their peers with an accurate picture

4. Conduct the visits

- Circulate a detailed plan for the day in advance.
- The host school may provide a brief introduction on the day, to reinforce the focus and provide contextual information
- The host is responsible for briefing staff and students and ensuring they understand the context of the visitors who will be in the school and classes
- Host Headteachers should avoid 'showcasing' or micro-managing the visit

- Arrange the day to allow maximum flexibility for appreciative enquiry and opportunities for peers to gain as many perspectives as possible
- Headteachers may choose to be accompanied by an 'expert' from the school, for example if the theme of the peer review is KS1 then the KS1 Leader might accompany the Headteacher to the host school

5. Reporting on the visit

- A verbal report on the visit and the key observations should be made at the end of each day
- The review day will include a summary meeting at the end of the day for all staff to feedback the findings of the review.
- There is no expectation to give individual feedback to individual teachers.
- Improvement champions will attend the summary meeting
- A short written report may be provided either produced by the visitors or by the host following verbal feedback from the visitors
- Headteachers need to be both supportive and challenging in their reflections, offering practical suggestions and balancing the celebration of positive features with notes on areas for development
- The host Headteacher is responsible for planning and implementing any actions arising from the visit
- The report and its contents remain confidential between the peers and are shared within the host school at the host Headteacher's discretion
- The report may comment on the observations relating to theme but it is also useful to comment on the peer review process itself

6. Following up

- Visitors should remember to thank those involved in the visits
- It is useful for Headteachers to discuss the outcomes of the peer review with their governors
- Within two weeks of a review a follow up 'work shop' will take place in order to prioritise actions that will move improvement forward. The review team are not expected to attend this workshop.
- Improvement champions will deliver a workshop during the staff meeting following the review. The purpose of the workshop is to create a next steps plan
- Head teachers will report progress towards the recommendations of the peer review at the next NFOS heads meeting
- Peer reviews will take place annually. The next pre-review should comment on progress towards priorities identified during the previous review but these are not expected to form part of the new review. The conversation will be facilitated by the facilitator. At this meeting host head teachers can discuss any further support they may need, particularly support that can be resourced from the Notley Family of Schools or PLN.

7. Developing the model

- Head teachers with previous experience of peer to peer support will be involved in the first reviews, passing their experience onto colleagues so they can then be involved in further reviews
- The independent chair of the Notley Family of Schools will facilitate each review so that discussions retain focus and rigour, keep the review process running to plan and to time, ensure reports are written in a timely fashion.