

Peer Review Case Study - Tiptree and Stanway Consortium

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Context of the Partnership

1. 24 schools in the partnership, across South and West Colchester, Tiptree and other schools West of Colchester
2. includes small village schools with under 100 pupils to large schools with over 400 pupils
3. there is a mix of church and community schools, one academy and one infant / junior pairing
4. the consortium has existed for 20 years, although some members have joined more recently - the most recent within the last 12 months
5. 10 heads were trained in peer review in summer 2016. The consortium has almost completed the first cycle of review, with all 24 school being or about to be reviewed. The 10 heads who attended the initial training led the first few reviews and those who were not trained were involved in 'shadowing' these reviews in order to learn about the process. The consortium then commissioned updated training for all heads and improvement partners at the end of the first cycle, to inform the review of the strategy.
6. The Partnership commissioned a whole day training for all Headteachers and existing and new Improvement champions

Key issue/s that your partnership identified to overcome?

1. The consortium was very supportive, but there was a need to hold each other formally to account
2. With the reduction in regular LA involvement and oversight, we need to know each other's schools better in order to target support, know where there is best practice etc

What did the partnership learn from undertaking the peer review? What did you find out that you didn't already know? And how did you respond to this?

1. We have a better understanding of each other's schools - the team, leadership styles, curriculum and strengths / challenges. We have simultaneously been sharing more outcome data across the consortium, so peer review helps to put the data in context. The data being shared is the statutory data for EY, KS1 and KS2 for individual schools and collectively for the consortium. This data is also captured in the Partnership Evaluation and Development Tool. So peer review helps to give the background to some of this headline data.
2. Improvement champions have a collective overview of where there is best practice. A whole other network for senior leaders has been developed, promoting school to school collaboration.
3. All staff, not just heads, now see the consortium as collaborative and supportive. School improvement champions report that their workshop sessions have been well-received. A common theme is that teachers welcome the opportunity to input their ideas, rather than someone coming in from the outside and suggesting solutions. Heads report that staff see this as a supportive model of school improvement because it is done with not to the school.

What was the impact and benefits of peer review?

'Peer review is to OFSTED what lesson study is to lesson observation' Consortium Headteacher March 2018.
'As a result of the school improvement strategies shared by the consortium and selected by the school, XXXX School has made good progress.' OFSTED November 2017

- For the Partnership - peer review has increased collaboration between schools. Not only have we learned more about each other's schools, but we also know more about each other as school leaders through working together in review teams. It has been a vehicle for sharing good practice and staff development.
- For individual school leaders - heads report that peer review has been a very good professional development. It is seen as a 'safe' space to explore and address a problem. The process has been supportive, has allowed them to moderate judgements about their own school and has given new perspectives on some of the challenges they are facing.

- For the staff involved in the process - the workshops and staff meetings led by the school improvement champions have been well-received; staff welcome the opportunity to have dedicated time to reflect on priorities and share ideas. Using the teachers' experience and knowledge to build the action plan has raised levels of engagement. There are several examples of staff growing through the process and taking more responsibility for outcomes.
- Improvement champions - this group has seen the most impact. They learn from each other, see approaches and processes in each other's schools and reflect on their own context. This has increased opportunities for collaboration beyond the review process. They are a self-driven and motivated high impact group of middle leaders.

This is an extract from one of our school's peer reviews that was carried out in April. It highlights the impact of the first peer review:

'Review of the action points from the previous Peer Review has shown good progress towards creating an enquiry-based culture. Geography and History have both moved forward significantly, since the last review, as part of the wider curriculum development towards more child lead and enquiry-based learning. There is a focus on themes that engage the pupils and greater connection, where appropriate, between the two subjects. In Science leadership has been strong with a focus on the development of enquiry skills and increased opportunities for investigations. Staff are more confident in teaching this subject and pupil work reflects these developments. The subject leader has compiled monitoring against six strands of skills to ensure coverage and balance in the curriculum area'

- On school improvement/outcomes of peer review - schools report that the action plan holds staff to account. Peer review has resulted in clear targets for school improvement. Schools are working more collaboratively to share practice. Where time has been built in to reflect on outcomes, the momentum for improvement has been sustained. Specific eg of impact are cited for writing, feedback and planning. One OFSTED report from January 2018 states: *'The school is part of a large local consortium of schools, which has provided opportunities for a small staff such as this to work with colleagues elsewhere. This has supported teachers to make accurate assessment judgements as well as improving their practice.'*

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

1. Develop protocols and a robust mechanism for feeding back outcomes to the management group and making best use of the skills and knowledge of the improvement champion network.
2. Refine and review the paperwork so this is consistent and schools are accountable for completing and reviewing their action plans
3. Consider how we can be flexible with timings and personnel involved in a review to better suit the needs of the school.
4. Many schools are about to embark on the Governor Peer to Peer programme.