



National College for
Teaching & Leadership

Teaching schools: first among equals?

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Berwick**

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Forewords

A view from higher education

School improvement has never been short on innovation. From curriculum reform to assessment for learning, from data-based targeted interventions to collaborative teacher development, schools have been engaged with innovation for a generation and more. But what has been lacking is a framework for implementing and embedding successful practice. The development of teaching schools potentially provides such a framework.

The concept of teaching schools depends on four conditions being met: firstly, identifying best practices in teaching and learning; secondly, providing a structure in which to share these practices – and not just knowledge about good practice; thirdly, ensuring that teachers and school leaders have the skills and confidence to share and deploy best practices, and, fourthly, a climate in which there is a practical and moral incentive to share best practices between schools.

None of these conditions is automatic, and, indeed, in most school systems few are found. It turns out that London Challenge provided an ideal context in which they could flourish. The political and educational imperatives for London-wide improvement encouraged thinking about how to improve outcomes not in one school or one cluster of schools but across some 400 secondary schools and, later, 2,000 primary schools. In this context, the insight and commitment of Sir George Berwick in elaborating the concept of teaching schools should not be underestimated. Sir George had been a successful headteacher in Bromley for over a decade before London Challenge, and his work on school-to-school support as a major thread in London underpins the later dissemination of teaching schools as engines of improvement. This account offers a clear picture of the emergence of teaching school alliances as part of the new educational landscape and identifies some of the issues that will determine their future.

As schools become increasingly autonomous, there are fears that schools will turn inwards, becoming protective of the secrets of success or defensive about shortcomings and weaknesses. The concept of the teaching school, and even more of the teaching school alliance is a counter-balance: a reminder that collaboration and co-operation are essential if best practices are to be shared, and an opportunity for groups of schools, working with partners such as universities to embed improvement for all.

Chris Husbands
Director, Institute of Education, London

A view from the Teaching Schools Council

Teaching Schools: first among equals? provides an excellent reminder of the power and promise of teaching schools and other partnerships, and of the immense potential of a school-led system.

Their growth supports a network of committed and dedicated professionals (both teaching and support staff), who all subscribe to the belief that every child should be able to fulfil their potential. The examples provided give an insight into the strong moral purpose that permeates our profession. It is clear to see the growing belief that the child in your neighbouring school is as important as the child in your own.

At a time when school leaders are faced with a myriad of complex challenges and when the natural reaction might be to 'batten down the hatches', the story that First Among Equals tells serves to renew our energy and boost our enthusiasm. The work described is both innovative and inspirational but by no means unusual ... and it is this that is the strength of our emerging school-led system.

Vicky Beer

Executive principal, Ashton on Mersey School

Summary

Teaching schools are the fulfilment of a vision.

When, in 2010, the coalition government announced the designation of 500 teaching school alliances in England by 2014-15, it formalised an initiative that had been evolving, largely unheralded, for several years. The white paper, *The importance of teaching* (HM Government, 2010), set out the government's intention:

We intend to create a national network of teaching schools. These will be outstanding schools which will take a leading responsibility for providing and quality assuring initial teacher training in their area. We will also fund them to offer professional development for teachers and leaders... We intend there to be a national network of such schools and our priority is that they should be of the highest quality.

HM Government, 2010:23

Teaching schools are seen as the transformative leaders of groups of 25 or more schools that choose to be allied to them. Together with strategic partners – other high-quality schools, higher education institutions (HEI) and other organisations – teaching schools are expected to identify, demonstrate and disseminate best practice through their role in initial teacher training, the professional development of teachers, leadership development, succession planning, school-to-school support, and research and development (R&D), so as ultimately to improve outcomes for children.

Teaching schools and their alliances are part of a changing and increasingly diverse educational landscape. The system has seen the emergence and proliferation of groups of schools in federations, academy chains (Hill et al, 2012) and co-operatives of maintained and autonomous schools; system-leading schools such as national support schools (NSSs) (Hill & Matthews, 2008; 2010); free schools, university technical colleges (UTCs) and studio schools, and independent schools. Teaching schools may be found within and outside such groups. National and local leaders of education (NLEs and LLEs) designated by the National College together with specialist leaders of education (SLEs) add powerfully to the resource for school improvement. 'The times,' as Bob Dylan sang, 'they are changing.'

Although teaching schools are expected to reflect excellence in the education system in England, they are emphatically not intended as elitist 'lone rangers'. They are the designated leaders of school alliances in which building knowledge and social capital and sharing leadership across partners are important ingredients of success (Carter & Sharpe, 2006; Hargreaves, 2011). The collective expertise of strategic partners and other members of each teaching school alliance exceeds the capacity of any individual school, however great that is. These partnerships and their wider school alliances are what make teaching schools different from their ancestors: the 'normal' schools, 'laboratory' and 'demonstration' schools that sprang up in the USA and elsewhere. The success of the teaching schools policy is likely to rest as much on the quality of the partnerships and the trust, co-operation and communication that are as essential to buy-in from other schools as on the quality of the teaching schools themselves.

Teaching schools have started to make their mark on the system.

- By the summer of 2012, nearly 1 in 10 schools nationally, representing 1 in 8 pupils, had joined one of almost 200 teaching school alliances.
- The first 100 teaching schools delivered well over 10,000 initial teacher training placements last year. Well over one-third of all School Direct places will be delivered by alliances next year.
- 21 of the first 33 licences awarded by the National College to deliver leadership development have gone to teaching schools and the first cohort of National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) students have begun their training.

More than two-thirds of teaching schools are delivering the highly successful Outstanding Teacher Programme (OTP) developed by Ravens Wood School as part of London Challenge.

By December 2012, approximately 2,000 SLEs had been designated to provide school-to-school support.

In this paper, we consider the antecedents, role and early development, and future of teaching schools as agents of change in our evolving pattern of schooling. The story is in three parts.

Part 1: Evolution traces the concept of teaching schools from their roots in teacher and clinical training to their position in the school system as leaders of alliances and key schools in established chains.

Part 2: Implementation illustrates how teaching school alliances are approaching the organisation and delivery of six key strands of activity required of them.

Part 3: Projection considers the future of teaching school alliances in a changing educational landscape and discusses some of the challenges they face.

The authors¹ acknowledge the support and suggestions of staff of the National College, particularly Toby Greany, Di Barnes and John Stephens and their colleagues, Andy Coleman and Kate Bear. We thank Professor Chris Husbands and Vicky Beer for contributing the Forewords and appreciate the comments of the Teaching Schools Council and other school leaders. This portrayal of teaching schools would not have been possible without the dynamic work of the first two hundred teaching school alliances, examples of which are illustrated throughout this portrait. Peter Matthews is particularly grateful for the opportunity to visit many of the teaching schools concerned. The reader is advised that all the schools described here have subsequently moved on in the scope of their work, such is the momentum of teaching school development.

¹ The authors are visiting professors at the Institute of Education, University of London.

Challenges for the system

If teaching schools are to make a sustained contribution to the improvement of teaching and learning, we need to consider:

Challenge 1. How to identify, disseminate and incorporate the most effective forms of teaching and learning into the practice of all schools and teachers.

Challenge 2. How to maximise the methods, contributions and findings of evaluation and research so as to inform and guide practice.

Challenge 3. How and by whom teaching schools will be identified, accredited and their quality assured in an increasingly self-regulating system.

Challenge 4. How to develop a culture within and beyond teaching school alliances in which member institutions share performance data, challenge each other, identify the priorities for improvement and provide help and expertise where it is needed.

Challenge 5. How schools as well as teachers can build their capacity for authentic peer review, endorsing successful practice and identifying priorities and strategies for improvement.

Challenge 6. How governors, trustees and other appropriate authorities can play a better informed and more effective role in monitoring, challenging and managing the performance of the alliance and its leaders; planning and managing leadership succession, and anticipating and mitigating risks to the school and alliance.

Challenge 7. How Ofsted can identify and report on the effects of membership of a teaching school alliance, federation, chain or other partnership when inspecting a member school.

Challenge 8. How teaching school alliances and their partners can identify and redress potential deficits in the supply of teachers and reservoir of leaders in their regions, reducing in particular the risks of staff changes to smaller, less popular and more isolated schools.

Challenge 9. Which models of teaching school alliances are most effective in fostering and sustaining the high performance of their members to the benefit of children and young people.

Challenge 10. How best to consolidate the vision of teaching schools as lasting and influential centres of excellence in an autonomous school system.

Part 1: Evolution: the origins, emergence and establishment of teaching schools and their alliances

The modern concept of teaching schools

The vision of teaching schools as we have them now was first articulated by one of the authors of this report, Dr George Berwick, then headteacher of Ravens Wood School in Bromley.² The concept evolved over several years during which time Berwick and his school demonstrated how excellence could be sustained, teaching improved, leadership developed and other schools supported through purposeful partnerships for sharing expertise. In 2007, his idea of teaching schools as ‘deliberate and successful learning communities, akin to teaching hospitals’ was articulated as follows:

Teaching schools are highly effective providers of education. The well-being, development and success of every child matter to them. They are experienced in training new teachers and growing new leaders. Teaching schools are committed to networking and partnerships. They are likely to be local or national support schools, assisting schools in shifting from weak to strong, from good to outstanding, and seeking constantly to reduce the attainment gap.

What distinguishes them is their strategic approach to staff development as a mechanism for sustaining excellence. Leaders are role models. Knowledge and skills are constantly enriched and shared among staff. There are clear views of what constitutes good and excellent teaching and what is needed to transform good to outstanding. Mentoring is highly developed and coaching is all-pervading. Their models of internal staff development and knowledge transfer have been validated through having been tested in other schools and adopted or adapted by them.

Teaching schools provide a facility for other schools to develop their approaches in a supportive environment, providing leadership and pedagogical consultancy. They undertake research, increasingly having links with universities. They share their practice freely with other schools and work collaboratively with other schools to meet the challenges of scaling up and sustainability. As part of local and national learning networks, they are also strongly committed to leadership succession planning. They both contribute to and benefit from their links with schools abroad, often on several continents, and aim to be world class at what they do.

Teaching schools are convinced that their wider engagement as system-leading schools is of mutual benefit, essential to sustaining excellence in providing for their own students as well as helping improve the learning of others. This is their compelling purpose.

Berwick & Matthews, 2007:2

The vision of teaching schools has been influenced by philosophy and practice applied to the challenges of school effectiveness and improvement. Philosophically, the principles of system leadership provide a rationale for the new professionalism which makes the altruism required of system leaders and their schools conceivable. These principles include moral purpose, the other three ‘capitals’ – knowledge, social and organisational (Berwick, 2010a) and a culture of confidence, trust and courage in which joint practice development can become the big driver for change (see, for example, Fullan, 2003; Higham et al, 2009; Hargreaves, 2012).

² Sir George Berwick is Executive Principal of Ravens Wood Academy and Chief Executive Officer of Challenge Partners, a national co-operative of mutually supportive schools.

In terms of policy and practice, there are three main influences:

- the concept of teaching hospitals, medical training and clinical excellence
- the development of highly effective schools that play a major part in teacher education and professional development
- successful school improvement initiatives, particularly involving school partnerships

In this first part, we consider how these strands have contributed to the emergence of teaching schools.

Medical training and clinical excellence

Modelling teaching schools on teaching hospitals is an idea whose time has come. What started as a proposal to the Cabinet Office (Berwick, 2004) became a pilot in London from 2005, followed by participation by some schools in Greater Manchester and elsewhere before becoming a government policy commitment in 2010:

We will develop a national network of Teaching Schools on the model of teaching hospitals to lead the training and professional development of teachers and head teachers

HM Government, 2010:9 [our emphasis]

There are clear parallels between the concept of teaching schools in England and teaching hospitals. Teaching hospitals have a strong commitment to training and research, alongside and through the medical services they provide. They are the centres for vocational (ie clinical) training of medical professionals, working very closely with the university medical schools that provide pre-clinical training and support research. Some of the training is undertaken through placements in other medical environments, such as other partners in the hospital trust and training practices.

Developments in medical practice are more evidence-based than in teaching. In medicine, the pinnacles of an expert's career are both to take on the most challenging cases and to train the next generation of specialists in a leading teaching hospital. Teaching is far less evidence-based, with only the most compelling research – such as developments in formative assessment (Black & Wiliam, 1998) or knowledge of the impact of different aspects of teaching and other factors on learning (Hattie, 2009) – making a difference in those schools that seek out and apply such knowledge. Schools have only recently begun to take real strategic responsibility for training the next generation of teachers.

Many prospective patients would see treatment at a teaching hospital as an advantage, just as parents seek out good schools. This is because patients perceive that teaching hospitals are centres of clinical excellence, with access to leading-edge research and highly trained staff from whom they can expect to receive the best medical attention. Teaching hospitals aim to sustain excellence in their provision. They generate knowledge both generally across the field of medicine and in a range of specialisms, in which they draw from research, practical experience and world knowledge. So being treated in a teaching hospital carries an expectation of receiving the best service commensurate with the state of knowledge and the resources available. To sustain excellence, the teaching hospital has to sustain its commitment to knowledge-building, training and the quality of its service, and keep these complementary endeavours in balance.

Teaching hospitals export qualified practitioners so as to supply the health service with a large proportion of the health professionals it needs. They carry their expertise to another provider, enriching knowledge and practice and contributing to improvement. Often, they stay in contact with their teaching hospital, becoming part of a network through which expertise is shared. As a result, there are many hospitals that have one or more areas of recognised excellence. Teaching hospitals thus provide not only initial medical training but advanced skills training, leading – for those who follow this path – to consultant level in a minimum of eight years.

Medical education is not immune to change. Traditional medical training started with pre-clinical studies of anatomy, physiology, pathology and so on before embarking on clinical studies. More integrated, systems-based or problem-based approaches to medical education are replacing the traditional approach in some UK medical schools. For some years, concern has been voiced that traditional medical education is centred on the absorption of facts at the expense of applications.

Back in 1913, Sir William Osler is reported to have said (concerning the education of medical students) that:

There is too great a reliance on lectures and on students' capability of memorising a growing number of items of knowledge.

Sir William Osler [source: Wikipedia]

Since then, a growing interest in problem-based learning resulted in its introduction at McMaster University in Canada in the 1960s, many other medical schools in North America and worldwide in the 1970s, and the medical schools of Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow in the 1990s (Wood, 2005). Over 80 per cent of medical schools in the USA have some problem-based learning in their programmes today. It is noticeable that policy trends in curriculum and pedagogy in medicine and schools seem to be pointing in opposite directions, with some ambivalence since academy schools, like medical schools and teaching hospitals, have considerable freedom in how they teach. Teaching hospitals, however, are not insulated from accountability measures. The parallels with teaching schools have been explored further by de Botton et al (2012).

Like teaching hospitals, teaching schools are visualised as centres of educational excellence and therefore ideally qualified for the initial training and professional development of teachers. They combine not only the advantages of experience, in many cases, as training schools but may also have been: beacon schools, which demonstrated excellence in their practice; specialist schools, which aim for excellence in their specialism; and schools with advanced skills teachers.

Centres of excellence in teaching: historical precedents and international examples

The modern teaching school has ancestral roots in policies found in many countries, over the years, to establish centres of excellence in teaching. Their primary purpose has been to provide model training for new teachers. These schools were and are known by terms such as demonstration schools, laboratory schools, model schools, normal schools, university or campus schools and so on. A demonstration school was to be found 120 years ago in Froebel College, which is now an integral part of Roehampton University; another was Moray House, Edinburgh, which opened a 'normal school' as early as 1848.

The laboratory schools movement in the USA was strongly associated with John Dewey (1859–1952) and his students and advocates. Dewey was a philosopher, pragmatist and proponent of experiential education, an alternative to the excesses of child-centred education on the one hand and didacticism on the other. He ran one of the first laboratory schools in association with the University of Chicago to demonstrate experiential education.

The laboratory school movement grew across the country. Distinguishing features of these schools incorporated most or all of the following:

- exemplary practice
- research and innovation
- a resource for teacher training
- professional development
- wider influence

One of Dewey's students, Corrine A Seeds, typifies the transmission and further development of Dewey's ideas. She led the Los Angeles Normal School (which began in 1882) through the 1930s, during which time the school became an outstanding example of progressive education. It moved to the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) campus in 1947. The school currently serves 450 students ranging in age from 4 to 12 and their families. The school claims to be:

... a driving force for improving public education through its educational research, demonstration classrooms, teacher education and training, outreach programmes and research-based teaching practices. Lab school classrooms serve as laboratories for exploring innovative ideas about teaching, learning and child development. Results of the school's research are shared through collaborations with educators from other schools, through conferences, workshops and site visits, and in print publications and other media. Through this mix of strategies, UCLA Lab School teaching practices and research outcomes have been shared with schools around the globe.

UCLA, 2011 [online]

Similar core characteristics are illustrated, for example, by University High School, Illinois, a laboratory school which was founded in the early days of the State University. University High is a comprehensive secondary school that provides for research and teacher training in the College of Education of Illinois State University. Its mission statement aims are to:

- provide a school in which excellence in education theory and practice can be observed, studied and practised by teacher candidates and other pre-service school professionals
- provide an environment in which research and development activities may be conducted
- provide a high-quality academic programme for pupils
- promote effective, high-quality education throughout the teaching profession and
- aid other educators in the process of improving the quality of education in their schools

University High School, 2011:10

The concept of teaching schools resonates to some extent with laboratory schools, inasmuch as both types of school are high-quality providers centrally concerned with teacher education and development. Both also have an interest in knowledge-building through research and development although the difference is that in teaching schools, the research is generated by the school and its partners rather than by academics who – in the case of university schools in the USA – use the schools as their laboratories. Two of the biggest differences between laboratory or demonstration schools and teaching schools in England are the school alliances and school-to-school support functions expected of the latter.

Demonstration schools can be found in other countries ranging from Canada in the north to Thailand and Australia in the southern hemisphere. For example, one of the demonstration school groups in New South Wales, Australia, is closely linked with the University of Sydney. The North Sydney demonstration schools provide practice placements for trainee teachers, visits by Masters students and a scholarly reading group which meets regularly to discuss research articles.

University training schools are also 'used widely in Finland as a means of training teachers in practice' (HM Government, 2010). The British government has announced plans to invite some of the best higher education providers of initial teacher training (ITT) to establish university technical colleges (UTCs) as demonstration centres for new techniques with a focus on ITT. The University of Birmingham was among the first to respond. The parallels with normal or laboratory schools in the US are clear.

There are strong similarities between the work of laboratory schools and the former training schools, of which around 230 were established in England after 2000. Training schools were centres of excellence for teacher training and professional development. They were discontinued after the change of government in 2010, to be replaced by teaching schools, which met more exacting criteria for designation and which were given a wider remit. Carmel College, a former training school in the north-east of England, brought a rich menu of ITT provision to its new role as a teaching school.

Illustration 1: Carmel College, Darlington: a training school that became a teaching school

The school contributes strongly to ITT engagement with several universities as well as leading school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) provision through the Carmel Teacher Training Partnership. This is made up of 15 secondary and 10 primary schools across the north-east. The school offers a service to the area through its range of activities and the provision of different routes into teaching. The partnership trained 27 teachers on graduate programmes, the great majority emerging as good or better teachers. Carmel manages the Darlington secondary postgraduate certificate of education (PGCE) programme for Durham University (about 25 students) and contributes to the central training but in a school setting. In 2012-13 it is training its first School Direct trainees. The university feels that Carmel's role as a hub school has brought greater coherence to the programme for Darlington-based PGCE students. Carmel also offers pre-teaching courses for the area. Current and former students praise the quality of provision, support and induction they have received. For those new teachers who join the staff of the school, there is seamless progression into a wealth of professional and leadership development opportunities.

Illustration 1 reflects a balance between initial training and school-based professional development. Structured leadership development provision is enriched by opportunities to work in other schools that are only possible through strong and purposeful partnerships. It is an example of how teaching schools have moved beyond the frontiers of many international demonstration schools, especially through providing different routes into teaching, rich professional development and strong leadership development in partnership with other schools.

Improvement through schools partnering schools

The third and arguably most powerful model for teaching schools was reflected in the London Leadership Strategy. The strategy was an arm of London Challenge, a programme of school improvement that ran between 2002 and 2009, and which – among other initiatives – provided consultant headteachers to coach, support and challenge the headteachers of schools causing concern, or 'keys to success' schools as they were termed. London Challenge was about infecting the rest with what was happening in the best schools:

When the very best of what is happening now in London's schools becomes the norm: when all London's resources and communities are fully engaged in the task of raising standards – then our aim is realised.

DfES, 2003:6

A driving imperative of London Challenge was reducing the achievement gaps for pupils with low socio-economic status and for schools serving disadvantaged communities, and supporting leaders faced with tough challenges. Increasingly, the headteachers acting as consultant leaders called on colleagues, such as curriculum leaders and advanced skills teachers, to provide specialist support to their partner schools. The headteachers and their colleagues were the direct forerunners of the local, national and specialist leaders of education which are now found in schools throughout the country.

The approach was highly successful at helping schools turn themselves around, securing schools during transition to academies and growing leadership capacity across the capital. The ambition of raising the achievement of school children in London was achieved and improvement sustained.

London Challenge has continued to improve outcomes for pupils in London's primary and secondary schools at a faster rate than nationally. London's secondary schools continue to perform better than those in the rest of England... Excellent system leadership and pan-London networks of schools allow effective partnerships to be established between schools, enabling needs to be tackled quickly and progress to be accelerated.

Ofsted, 2010a:1

Results by age 16, which had been among the poorest in the country, overtook the national average and continue to forge ahead. Schools in London, and later in parts of the north-west of England and the West Midlands – where City Challenge was implemented in Greater Manchester and the Black Country – are the most improved in the country.

National leaders of education and national support schools

National leaders of education (NLEs) are outstanding headteachers or principals who use their skills and experience to support other schools. NLEs' own schools are outstanding, with consistently high levels of pupil performance or continued improvement over the last three years. They have outstanding senior and middle leaders who have demonstrated the capacity to provide significant and successful support to underperforming schools.

Their schools are designated as national support schools (NSSs) in recognition of the fact that their staff are likely to work alongside them in any support they may provide. The aim of the programme is to support schools in the most challenging circumstances. Usually, this means schools identified as being in need of significant improvement by the Department for Education (DfE), Ofsted, a teaching school or a local authority. The focus of NLE/NSS work is to assist the supported school in making significant progress.

National College, 2012a:8

There are over 700 NLEs and NSSs. They have supported over 1,500 schools, many of them schools in serious difficulties. A detailed evaluation provided strong evidence of their impact:

The successful recruitment, deployment and expansion of a cadre of schools capable of sharing their excellence with other schools and, where necessary, taking over and rescuing failing institutions, introduces a powerful lever for change into the school system.

Hill & Matthews, 2010:116

Teaching schools: from prototype to policy

London Challenge had many strands of development, but two – building leadership capacity and improving teaching and learning – were particularly relevant to the emergence of teaching schools. The pioneering Ravens Wood School introduced a range of internal measures to raise standards, build and share knowledge, and sustain excellence. Two key strands were: forensic use of data to inform teaching and intervention; and co-operative practice, involving joint lesson planning, evaluation and problem-solving. For years the school has operated an intensive programme of professional development to encourage good teachers to practise, evaluate and reflect on outstanding teaching. They began to share their approaches with other schools, which led to offering powerful professional development programmes to other schools. Ravens Wood School became the first model of a teaching school. Others followed, initially in London and then in Greater Manchester, recognised and supported by the government's City Challenge programme. These early teaching schools had all been judged 'outstanding' by Ofsted. All were providing:

- high-quality professional development for serving teachers
- high-quality placements for initial teacher education, often through the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP)
- support for other schools

Illustration 2: Ravens Wood School: teaching school pioneer

During the last 10 or more years, Ravens Wood School in Bromley has first engineered solutions to major challenges facing the school as a London school and then shared them widely with others. For example, heavy turnover of teachers in the early 2000s was further exacerbated by teachers moving on after two or three years and taking their new-found expertise with them to promoted posts elsewhere.

The school's solution to this leaching of experience was to find accelerated approaches to building and sharing knowledge through processes that included 'learning threes' – trios of teachers of different levels of experience that would find, implement and pass on solutions to pedagogical challenges, a powerful form of joint practice development.

Staff retention was assisted by providing more leadership opportunities and experience beyond the school. The school began to train its own teachers through the GTP, provide an enhanced newly qualified teacher (NQT) year, with opportunities to visit schools abroad, and develop teachers through rigorous continuing professional development (CPD). This included devising intensive programmes to help ordinary teachers to become good and good ones to appreciate what was meant by outstanding. The latter programme was also essential grounding for advanced skills teachers.

London Challenge opened many more opportunities to work with and support other schools. Soon the school was engaged with many other underperforming schools. The emphasis on effective teaching led to the school designing and running the Improving and Outstanding Teacher programmes. The latter was a 14-week programme with bursts of immersion work at Ravens Wood School. It involved reflecting on 'outstanding', observing, evaluating and feeding back on lessons, practical tasks on preparing and delivering outstanding learning and critical analysis of teaching and learning. Ravens Wood School set up a charitable trust to develop, disseminate and quality assure the programmes and train facilitators. Many teaching schools are now licensed to run the programmes.

The vision for teaching schools, road-tested by Ravens Wood School, and subsequently about 40 others in London, Greater Manchester and elsewhere, was consolidated through the incoming government's commitment to designating 500 teaching schools by 2014-15 (DfE, 2011a:12) as a major plank of national policy for improving teaching. The 'prototype' teaching schools offered real solutions to the challenge of handing greater responsibility for teacher training and development, leadership development and school improvement to the profession. It was expected that the majority of teaching schools would come from the ranks of outstanding providers that were also either training schools or NSSs:

We will develop a national network of new Teaching Schools to lead and develop sustainable approaches to teacher development across the country... These will be outstanding schools (with a track record of supporting other schools), which will take a leading responsibility for providing and quality assuring initial teacher training in their area. We will also fund them to offer professional development for teachers and leaders. Other schools will choose whether or not to take advantage of these programmes, so teaching schools will primarily be accountable to their peers. We intend there to be a national network of such schools and **our priority is that they should be of the highest quality – truly amongst the best schools in the country.**

HM Government, 2010:23 [our emphasis]

The importance of teaching also ratified the concept of specialist leaders of education (SLEs), which had also been piloted in City Challenge areas, particularly by Ashton on Mersey and Ravens Wood schools:

...as we create the national network of Teaching Schools, we will also designate 'Specialist Leaders of Education' – excellent professionals in leadership positions below the head teacher (such as deputies, bursars, heads of department) who will support others in similar positions in other schools.

HM Government, 2010:24

From policy to implementation

The National College for School Leadership (now the National College for Teaching and Leadership) was charged with responsibility for designating teaching schools, for the quality assurance of their work, and for removing designation from any school not meeting the standards. The College had played a key role in the City Challenge leadership strategies and had been party to the growth of the original teaching schools in London and Manchester that we have termed 'prototypes'. The College also had extensive expertise in designing and commissioning the NPQH and designating NLEs and NSSs.

The College's first priority was to consult the profession. It followed up the white paper (HM Government, 2010) with a web-based discussion forum which led to the first of a series of formal consultations on aspects of the teaching school model and designation process. The great majority (81 per cent) of responses from the 842 schools surveyed found the idea appealing, with 4 dominant themes emerging which centred on teaching schools:

- demonstrating clear moral purpose
- displaying an openness to learning from other schools and from good practice more broadly
- committing to promoting strong networks and acting as a hub for sharing experience between schools
- having a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of partner schools

National College, 2011a:5

Overall, there was 'considerable support for teaching schools in principle and a strong belief that such schools should work in partnership with other schools to improve the quality of provision for children' (National College, 2011a). Respondents were clear that the overall quality of the school should be the overriding consideration for designation as a teaching school.

Establishing a national network of teaching schools

The National College set out tough criteria that schools had to meet to be eligible for teaching school designation. The headteachers who were consulted approved of the model, supported by stringent criteria to give teaching schools appropriate prestige and professional credibility.

Criteria for designation as a teaching school

Teaching schools will need to demonstrate that they:

- have a clear track record of long-standing collaborative relationships with a significant number of partner schools based upon trust and mutual respect, resulting in substantial school improvement across a locality or group of maintained schools
- have been graded by Ofsted as outstanding for overall effectiveness, teaching and learning, and leadership and management
- show consistently high levels of pupil performance or continued improvement over the last three years and are above floor standards
- have outstanding senior and middle leaders who have demonstrated the capacity to:
 - make a significant and high-quality contribution to the training of teachers
 - provide highly effective professional development for teaching and/or leadership
 - provide significant and successful support to under-performing schools within a school-to-school partnership, federation or chain of schools
 - provide evidence of improvement supported by self-evaluation, coaching, mentoring, quality assurance and engagement in practitioner-led research with strong links to higher education

Criteria continued

The headteachers of teaching schools will need to demonstrate that they:

- are judged to be an outstanding serving headteacher
- have a minimum of three years' experience as a headteacher at the commencement of the designation and expect to remain in headship for at least two years after designation
- are accountable for one or more schools or academies that meet the teaching school criteria
- have the full support of their governing body and current university/HEI partner for the school to become a teaching school

National College, 2011a:2

The judgements of Ofsted inspections are an important factor. The most challenging element is for schools that are outstanding in many ways, including their leadership, but not in teaching and learning. Schools have the opportunity to request inspection if they are in this situation, and some do. Other aspiring teaching schools hesitate, perceiving that inspection requirements have also become more stringent.

The National College built the teaching school model slowly so that it could focus on quality and use the first year as a design and development year. Thus it aimed to recruit no more than 100 teaching schools in the first round. Some eligible applicants were deferred to a second cohort. After two recruitment rounds, teaching schools numbered 217 by September 2012, representing 184 alliances. The level of applications has remained healthy. Over 200 schools applied in the third round of recruitment in autumn 2012. Changes to Ofsted's inspection framework have further raised the bar, particularly for less well performing schools. Ofsted's data shows that there were 1,000 more outstanding schools in August 2012 than 5 years before. Inspection reports have recognised the teaching school role in those that have been inspected (Illustration 3).

Illustration 3: South Farnham School: the role of a teaching school at inspection

South Farnham junior school amalgamated with an infant school, gained academy status in July 2011, and was among the first 100 schools in the country to be designated a teaching school. Inspectors reported that the way the headteacher and his team have managed the extension of the pupils' age-range to incorporate pupils from a former infant school has been exemplary. In a very short space of time they have identified ways of improving provision for the younger children and have brought about rapid improvements, not just to the fabric of the school, but also to the quality of the teaching. Under the headteacher's inspired leadership the school has become a teaching school, sharing expertise to promote excellence in other schools. The staff share his vision, and are equally ambitious to contribute to the school's success. Governors are fully committed to the school and make an outstanding contribution to its work. Consequently the school is exceptionally well placed to continue building on its success.

Ofsted, 2012a:7

System leadership and four essential 'capitals': moral purpose, knowledge management, and social and organisational capital

The expectations on teaching schools are so high that it is worth considering why excellent schools step forward to take on the role. The answer is best summarised in the moral purpose that underpins 'system leadership'. System leadership in England has its origins in the role played by the profession in contributing solutions to the problem of London's underperforming schools.

Since 2002, there has been accelerating growth in the proportion of headteachers and schools that have gone out of their way to share their expertise with others in more challenging ways than represented in many of the networks, 'soft' partnerships and mentoring arrangements previously countenanced. Successive governments and the National College have done much to promote the concept and practice of system leadership, and many headteachers – particularly NLEs – have subscribed to this principle.

Teaching schools are the latest manifestation of system leadership, adding to and building on the success of the various forms of school improvement partnership, represented in recent years at the person-to-person level by consultant leaders, advanced skills teachers (ASTs), local leaders and SLEs, and at the institutional level by training schools, leading-edge schools and national support schools.

Moral purpose

The success of these partnerships owes much to the authenticity of motives. Integrity is not just a virtue; it is an essential ingredient that is demonstrated through actions that in time add up to a reservoir of **moral capital**:

Moral capital can be a major determinant of why individuals or organisations voluntarily choose to engage with each other.

Berwick, 2010b:14

Interviews with the headteachers and a cross-section of governors and staff of prospective teaching schools show a strong desire to share their success with other schools, as well as tapping their strengths, to the benefit of all pupils in an area. This dedication to the higher achievement of pupils is often referred to as **moral purpose**, which Fullan (2003) and others have defined – in the context of system leadership – as **a concern for children and young people in schools beyond your own**. Moral purpose was evident in those of the consultant (headteacher) leaders in London Challenge who not only supported an underachieving school until it turned itself around but did so again and again. Such leaders, in London, Greater Manchester, the Black County and elsewhere are now prominent as leaders of teaching schools.

Moral purpose is not confined to headteachers and principals. It runs through the best national support and teaching schools as a rich vein, from the governing body to staff at all levels. They are not only willing to share their time, skills and the aspects that make the school successful but would be uncomfortable about not sharing their practice. This was evident in Ofsted's enquiries (Matthews, 2009) into highly effective schools in very challenging circumstances. Most of those schools were not only achieving and sustaining excellence but sharing the secrets of their success in many different ways. Equally, comments from leaders of teaching schools in relation to 'meeting the needs of pupils in the wider community' and being 'committed to improving the quality of education and raising standards across the alliance [of schools]' are typical. Many are concerned about a decline in the capacity of local authorities to support school improvement and CPD and want to sustain these functions as teaching schools. The Academy at Shotton Hall is one example of the many teaching schools that reflect such aspirations (Illustration 4).

Illustration 4: The Academy at Shotton Hall: commitment of a teaching school

As an outstanding school, a newly designated academy and in a superb new building geared to its performing arts status, the academy has much already going for it. But its real strengths lie in the way it has become a major educational focal point and leader for this disadvantaged area of east County Durham as a beacon of excellent practice in how it: supports and develops its own and other staff; trains new teachers to take responsibilities; successfully supports schools needing help; provides important regional ITT links with HEIs and other providers, and has developed a network of effective working relationships with the 22 other providers of education in its alliance.

Some schools have experience as NSSs before taking on the teaching school role. Most applicants can demonstrate an authentic commitment to outreach work. Some have a mission to do so that is deeply rooted in the school's purpose and climate (Illustration 5).

Illustration 5: St Joseph's College, Stoke-on-Trent: the incentive to become a teaching school

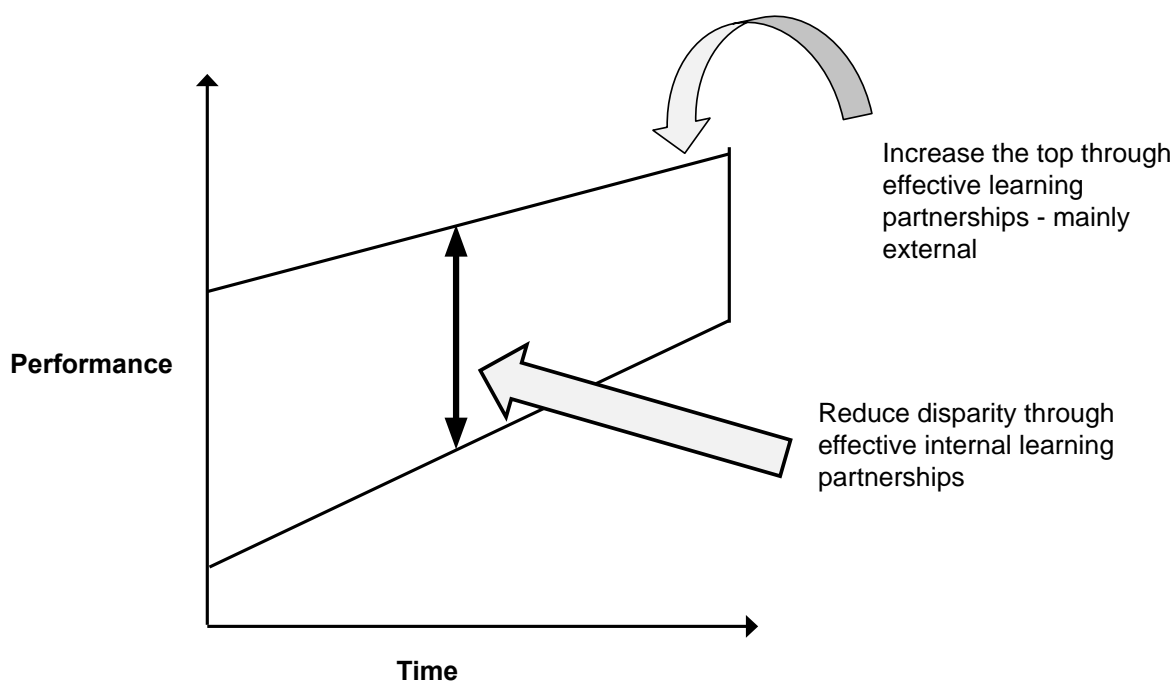
St Joseph's was the first secondary school in Stoke to be judged outstanding. The academy has an exceptional ethos which inculcates in staff and pupils alike a vocational sense that they should not only make the most of their abilities but use them in the service of others. This is explicit in the attitudes of pupils, who are engaged in endeavours ranging from teaching in other schools, both locally and in Sierra Leone, and undertaking extensive community service. Since becoming a national support school, the academy's work with other schools has fulfilled all its promise. The prime motivation for becoming a

Knowledge management

The second of the four essentials that feed high performance and school improvement concerns the accretion and sharing of knowledge. Moral, together with social and organisational capitals, are necessary prerequisites for the crucial and relentless development and application of knowledge: knowledge capital. Why is this important?

The landscape of school improvement can be visualised as one in which systemic improvement in student performance is achieved through effective knowledge management (Berwick & Matthews 2007; Berwick, 2010a). An effective knowledge management system is one that systematically shares existing knowledge and develops new knowledge between teachers, schools and other participating organisations, such as HEIs and academy sponsors. The result over time is a systemic upward convergence of performance: raising achievement and reducing the gap (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Upward convergence



Upward convergence of performance is demonstrated by a decrease in the gap between the lowest performing schools and the highest, while at the same time the highest performing schools continue to improve. The building of knowledge and upward convergence highlights the matter of each school's interface with the system of which it is a part. Teaching school alliances have an opportunity to overcome the isolation that has often been the Achilles' heel of school improvement. Already Ofsted has reported that 'substantial improvements have been achieved through effective partnerships with teaching schools' (Ofsted 2012b:19). Schools cannot operate successfully in isolation any more. They need to be part of the positive momentum that is taking education forward, contributing their expertise and absorbing the knowledge of others. They also need, like teaching hospitals, to conduct and draw from research.

One well-rehearsed criticism of the British educational research effort over many years is the lack of a mechanism for integrating that research knowledge into the system. We perceive a gap between the knowledge of what works in, say, school improvement and what actually happens in schools at large. Initiatives that have tried to bring the two aspects together have often failed because inadequate dissemination or local contextual issues have eroded the adoption of key ideas and research findings. The widespread implementation of 'Assessment for learning' (Black & William, 1998) and more recent interest in Hattie's (2009) work may be two examples of exceptions that provide some grounds for optimism.

The performance of London secondary schools between 2004 and 2011 illustrates both the success of a systemic approach to school improvement and the power of knowledge-sharing. During this period, the number of schools falling below a set of continually rising floor targets and placed in an Ofsted category of 'unsatisfactory' declined rapidly, while the number of schools performing at the highest level nationally and in an Ofsted category of 'outstanding' increased substantially. At the peak, the London Leadership Strategy, which pioneered this systemic approach and thus the development of teaching schools, leadership was rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted in over 35 per cent of London secondary schools. An overwhelming majority of these schools were actively sharing their knowledge and their school's best practice with their peers.

The strategy had a footprint of engagement with over 65 per cent of all the secondary schools in the capital. The success of the London Leadership Strategy involved sharing what was being learned about helping schools to improve themselves and moving school improvement to scale. The challenge of being a London headteacher changed, in many cases, from that of firefighter to instructional leader, from manager to coach. Teachers who previously had become disheartened with working in London began to return, regenerating the pride of being a London teacher. Parallels can be found within academy trusts and chains, in the first teaching school alliances and in those partnerships of schools that are based on mutual respect, support, sharing and a desire to improve the outcomes for children and young people.

Teaching school alliances and social capital

The success of partnerships between London schools owed much to building substantial organisational and social capital. This involved ambition, trust, openness, integrity and generosity that created a momentum for change. Teaching schools and their alliances provide ideal circumstances for generating reservoirs of organisational and social capital, the prerequisites for shared learning and accumulating and disseminating knowledge.

The government recognised that a teaching school may not be the only repository of expertise. The concept has emerged of a 'hub' school that would be able to tap into expertise in other schools:

...we will expect Teaching Schools to draw together outstanding teachers in an area who are committed to supporting other schools... as we create the national network of teaching schools, we will also designate 'Specialist Leaders of Education' – excellent professionals in leadership positions below the headteacher (such as deputies, bursars, heads of department) who will support others in similar positions in other schools.

HM Government, 2010:24

In a second consultation which finished in May 2011 (National College, 2011b:5), the reasons most commonly identified for schools to work with teaching schools included:

-
- sharing good practice
 - promoting school improvement
 - addressing leadership development and succession planning
 - recruiting high-quality teachers
 - accessing appropriate CPD

The importance of building **social capital** was also stressed:

Consultees felt that schools were more likely to work with teaching schools where there are strong existing partnerships, supported by productive interpersonal relationships **based on trust, mutual support and openness**. Schools are also more likely to join an alliance where the teaching school develops a strong reputation for excellence, understands the different contextual challenges faced by partner schools, and fulfils its promises.

National College, 2011b:5 [our emphasis]

The concept of teaching school alliances was crystallised by the 2011 Fellowship Commission, a group of NLEs who participated in a high-level Fellowship Programme aimed at broadening their system leadership experience and skills. The 2011 commission made proposals to government ministers about improving teacher training, classroom practice and leadership. Their first recommendation concerned strategic alliances to drive system improvement:

We believe that strategic alliances between teaching schools and other partners – including other schools, universities, local authorities – are essential to our vision of teaching schools. Such alliances would broker targeted support in response to local needs in order to raise standards. They could also help co-ordinate NLE work, ITT placements and professional development programmes. They could also engage schools that might otherwise feel disengaged from teaching schools. Such alliances are essential to the programme.

National College, 2011c: 5

Teaching school alliances do not always evolve around the teaching school. In a number of cases, the ‘alliance’ – in the sense of a formal partnership of schools commonly pursuing several of the aspects associated with teaching school strands – came first. These partnerships see it as beneficial for one or more of their number to acquire teaching school designation. This unlocks the door to National College support, funding and programmes. An example is Balcarras School, which is a member of the Gloucestershire Association of Secondary Headteachers (GASH), a registered charitable company providing a range of CPD and leadership development programmes for secondary schools in the local authority. Teaching schools within existing federations and academy chains are further examples.

Similar organisations exist in other parts of the country ranging from Bradford, where Feversham College, a Muslim girls’ school, is the key teaching school, to Southend where Westcliff High School for Girls is the key. The Southend Education Trust (SET) is a strong existing consortium of all 53 schools in this small local authority, a registered charity with a turnover of over £5m a year. The trust provides a wide range of CPD for member schools. SET wanted to be at the heart of a teaching school alliance and sought a school that could lead it. Westcliff High School for Girls fitted the requirement. Already a training school, committed to innovation in teaching and learning and the power of coaching, the school had overcome the negative attitudes of other schools towards a selective school. It is seen as altruistic and genuinely wanting to share its skills with others to the benefit of schools in Southend. Lead schools can be of any type and size, as in the following example of an infant school (Illustration 6).

Illustration 6: Turnfurlong Infant School: key to the Buckinghamshire Teaching School Partnership

Turnfurlong is a large infant school and the single teaching school in a wide strategic partnership that included at the outset five primary schools, a federated special school (0–19 years), three secondary schools, one of which is a grammar school, and Brunel University. The school partners had a history of collaboration as a cluster of schools and felt a compelling need to have a teaching school and form a teaching school alliance. Turnfurlong was the school that best met the teaching school criteria, having leadership strength and three outstanding inspection reports as well as strong local authority endorsement. The alliance is going from strength to strength having attracted 13 other schools, and is well advanced in delivering strands such as School Direct ITT and leadership development.

Organisationally, many teaching school alliances are developing in the way that was envisaged and providing greater substance and purpose than most of the precursor networks and partnerships to which they often belonged. Leadership of strands of the teaching school remit is becoming well distributed, particularly where there are other outstanding schools that can take a lead. Alliance boards have been formed quickly and include representatives of the main partners.

In some instances, alliances and other partnerships have natural overlaps; their shared interests lead to joint working. One example is the Thames Valley Schools Partnership, which is dedicated to leadership development and licensed to provide a range of National College programmes up to and including NPQH. Partners include Buckinghamshire Teaching School Alliance and Milton Keynes Teaching School Alliance, the Slough Learning Partnership, and other aspiring teaching schools and alliances in Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and further afield, reaching to Slough and west London. Challenge Partners, a large co-operative partnership, has a national reach (Illustration 7).

Illustration 7: Challenge Partners: an entity spanning 15 teaching schools

Probably the most extensive collection of alliances is represented within Challenge Partners, a national, collaborative, research-focused group of schools which aims to:

- increase students' performance at a higher rate than the national average
- increase the number of partner schools that are outstanding and meet the teaching schools criteria
- improve the Ofsted rating and National College school-to-school work designations at a higher rate than nationally
- develop internationally the concept of effective collaborative learning between schools and contribute to national research and policy-making

By November 2012, Challenge Partners consisted of 181 partner schools including the 17 senior partner or hub schools, 15 of which are teaching schools. The size of the partnership continues to increase rapidly. Some existing chains have shown interest in joining this co-operative venture in which, like the John Lewis Partnership, every member is a shareholder.

Organisational capital

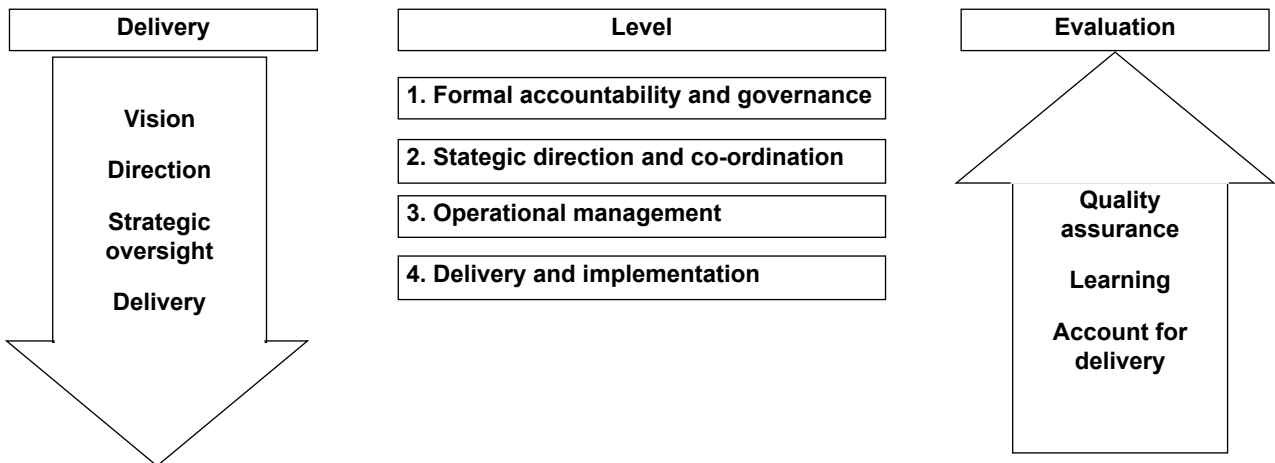
Teaching schools and their alliances have to deliver results across six areas of activity or strands. The management of this work across an alliance that might contain 25 or more schools requires considerable **organisation capital**. Initially, at least, the key ingredient of organisational capital is effective project management.

The key players in any teaching school alliance are the lead teaching school(s) and strategic partners. Unless parts of a formal federation or chain, these players are likely to be individual, autonomous bodies, each having its own governance arrangements. The cross-cutting dimension of a teaching school alliance requires an organisational structure that both serves the needs of the alliance members and delivers the teaching school remit.

The National College has postulated four levels of governance (Figure 2). Its *National teaching schools handbook* (National College, 2012a) outlines possible arrangements and key roles for each of these functions.

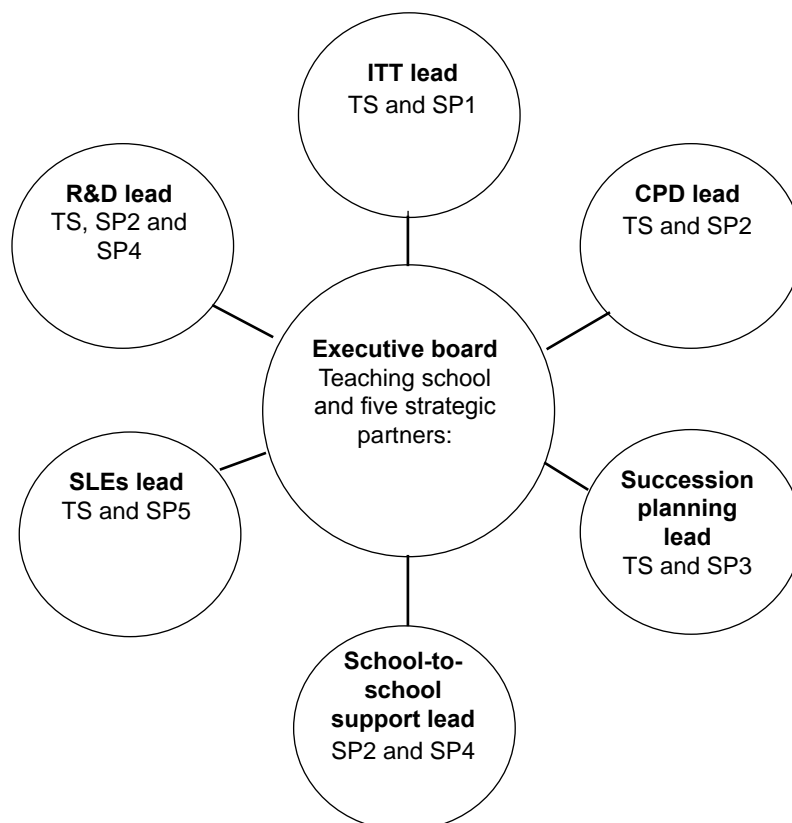
The first teaching schools have in the main been quick to set up the second level, usually in the form of an executive or strategic partnership board, with an operational board or several delivery committees to lead the individual strands. In general they are supportive, and content for their heads and principals to take the necessary steps. Many teaching school alliances have taken early steps to appoint administrative staff or a project director to co-ordinate the work.

Figure 2: Levels of governance



Organisational structure can be represented in different ways, in linear, radial (Figure 3) or more complex models. In most of the examples seen to date, there is little involvement of governing bodies.

Figure 3: Radial organisational structure: schematic example involving a teaching school (TS) and five strategic partners (SP1-5)



Commentary

In tracing the emergence of teaching schools, their parallels with teaching hospitals and the bold concept of teaching school alliances, we have arrived at the first of three steps in rationalising the architecture of the teaching school alliance model. This rests on a foundation of four essentials or 'capitals', as shown in Figure 4. We shall develop the model further in the second and third parts of this account.

Figure 4: Four capitals for the development of teaching school alliances



There are clear distinctions between teaching hospitals and teaching schools. Teaching hospitals are well-established formal trusts embodying clinical excellence and medical education, each of which works in close partnership with a university medical school. The teaching school has also achieved a standard of practical excellence but its alliance is based on mutuality and is sustained by the strength of its moral, social and organisational capital. The strength of links with university schools of education varies greatly.

Part 2: Implementation: delivery of the six major strands of teaching school activity across an alliance

Teaching schools are expected to take increasing responsibility for managing the school system. In particular, they are expected to identify and co-ordinate expertise from their alliance, using the best leaders and teachers to deliver:

1. Initial teacher training (ITT)
2. Continuing professional development (CPD) and leadership development
3. Succession planning and talent management
4. School-to-school support
5. Specialist leaders of education (SLEs)
6. Research and development (R&D)

National College, 2012b:3

We explore and illustrate some early responses to the remit of teaching schools, taking each of the six areas in turn. The areas have not been defined consistently from the beginning of the teaching schools initiative; governance and quality assurance have recently also been absorbed in the list.

Taking a strategic approach to the recruitment and initial training of teachers

Teaching schools and their strategic partners need to plan and manage a coherent, school-led approach to teacher and leadership training and development, linking this to the priorities of their alliance and their own school improvement planning. The government's focus on recruiting, training and deploying teachers of the highest quality is reflected in its strategy for ITT (DfE, 2011b) and implementation plan (DfE, 2011d). The policy envisages the closer involvement of schools in ITT and the selection and recruitment of trainees and expects teaching schools to take a strategic lead in co-ordinating school-based initial training.

As employers of newly qualified teachers, schools have a critical interest in ensuring that they are of high quality and ready to teach... They should play a greater role in the recruitment and selection of new teachers; and over time, they should take on a greater responsibility for managing the system.

DfE, 2011a:14

The strategy envisages teaching schools taking the lead together with their alliance schools and intends accrediting schools and chains to become ITT providers. Three teaching schools were accredited providers by May 2012 with many more expressing an interest in this opportunity.

The government's implementation plan proposed the new system called School Direct, allowing schools to control access to ITT funding. Teaching schools have seized the opportunity to play a more central and strategic role in ITT and will increasingly be expected to take a strategic lead in School Direct. School Direct aims to allow schools or groups of schools to recruit and select the trainees they want, and teaching school alliances have been awarded 21 of the first 60 licences for this provision. Once the trainee has completed training and gained qualified teacher status (QTS), the school or another school in the alliance is expected to employ the trainee. The school can decide how much of the process to manage, and can negotiate a proportion of fees from the accredited provider to reflect this. By autumn 2012, over 1,000 schools had been allocated School Direct places, including most of the 80 per cent of alliances that have indicated plans to develop School Direct places (Illustration 8). All teaching schools will be co-ordinating schools across their

alliances to increase the ownership of ITT among schools and to increase the range and quality of trainees' experience. This extends the work that many teaching schools did as training schools.

Illustration 8: South Farnham (4-11) School: uptake of School Direct places

South Farnham School has a strong history of ITT. The school became a recommending body for the Graduate Teacher Programme in 2001, delivering its own route to QTS. By 2011 it had formed the Surrey South Farnham SCITT in collaboration with key national partners. The teaching school alliance is also working with Roehampton University to manage five School Direct places in 2012/13. For 2013/14 they have requested up to 50 School Direct training route places including the new salaried places. The alliance's aim is to become the ITT provider of choice within Surrey and the nearby counties of Hampshire and Berkshire.

South Farnham School [online]

There is a particular role for special school teaching schools in providing placements for the many trainees who wish to experience this area of work. The second cohort of teaching schools includes examples that are linked with HEI partners that have particular strengths in the areas of special educational needs and inclusion (Illustration 9).

Illustration 9: Fairfields School: many routes to qualified teacher status

Fairfields School is a special school and a designated teaching school in Northampton where 9 of the 12 special schools are rated 'outstanding'. Fairfields also has close links with mainstream schools and is very active in providing training placements and experience for a range of professionals from trainee teachers to medical students and other health workers. It provides ITT placements for students from the University of Northampton and a range of other HEIs, and makes a significant teaching contribution to PGCE programmes (and formerly GTP). Progression routes within the school enable learning support assistants to graduate and go on to become teachers through pathways that will soon include School Direct. Two current NQTs are former learning support assistants. Others progress via the BA-QTS route, for which the University of Northampton is an outstanding ITT provider with a very strong special educational needs and inclusion department – the largest in the country. The headteacher and the head of Gateway (a strategic partner) also teach across a range of university courses.

Whitefield Schools and Centre in Waltham Forest is working with the University of East London to write primary and secondary PGCE courses with a special educational needs or inclusion focus, with the aim of supplying NQTs to London special schools and schools with learning support units. The project is being supported by the Teaching Agency and the National College³. Whitefield also has a model professional development centre (containing an excellent research library), which hosts advanced courses for teachers in the 13 contributory local authorities.

Previously a successful training school, Ashton on Mersey School, Trafford, like other teaching schools, is committed to expanding its role in ITT. The school offers placements to over 130 trainees and is leading on a range of innovative work in this area.

³ The Teaching Agency and the National College were due to merge in April 2013.

Illustration 10: Ashton on Mersey School: two ITT projects

Behaviour management in ITT

Ashton has completed a Teaching Agency research and development project focused on behaviour management, drawing on the expertise of teachers, local and national leaders of education and behaviour specialists. The project involves 22 trainees from Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Manchester, and offers a programme of immersion days at different schools and colleges. Evaluations from the initial events have been outstanding, with trainees praising the opportunity to work closely and directly with outstanding teachers across different phases. The project is supported by theoretical sessions delivered by alliance partners from across the north-west, looking at different behaviour management techniques.

Journey to outstanding

Together with five strategic partners, the school has also developed its own Journey to Outstanding programme, which gives trainee teachers the opportunity to work with outstanding teachers both in the classroom and through discussions and taught sessions. Participants are assigned to a particular teacher, who works alongside the trainees' professional and subject mentors to provide additional support during their placement, including subject-specific experience. Ashton intends to expand the programme across its alliance from September. There are also plans for similar provision at different career stages, all the way up to senior leadership level.

In 2011-12, the Cabot Learning Foundation introduced a new programme for post-16 students who were interested in teaching. The initial group numbered 17 students who applied to join the course and are taught for 2 hours a week alongside their A-level studies (Illustration 11).

Illustration 11: Cabot Learning Federation: experiences on the Teachers for Tomorrow programme for sixth-form students

- Observation of lessons across the federation
- Planning and delivering an outstanding lesson
- Teaching reading in the early years
- Designing resources for a Year 8 humanities lesson and then using them to teach a small group of students
- Presentational skills
- Using creative play as a stimulus for language development in Years 1 and 2
- Coaching and mentoring a younger student
- One-to-one with a PGCE student to understand the routes from post-16 education to a career in teaching
- Final assessment: to design and deliver a lesson for 20 minutes to a Year 7 class.

Cabot Learning Federation [online]

Leading peer-to-peer professional and leadership development

Government policy for the recruitment, training and professional development of teachers reflects international influences, particularly in countries such as Finland and Singapore and captured in a study by Barber & Mourshed (2009):

The best education systems in the world draw their teachers from among the top graduates and train them rigorously and effectively, focusing on classroom practice. They then make sure that teachers receive effective professional development throughout their career, with opportunities to observe and work with other teachers, and appropriate training for leadership positions.

Barber & Mourshed, quoted in HM Government, 2010:9

The National College specifies that:

Working with their strategic partners, teaching schools will offer a range of professional development opportunities for teachers and support staff that work in schools. It will be important that this is linked and builds on provision for ITT and induction, as part of an integrated continuum of support.

National College, 2011b:10

To become a teaching school, a school will already be undertaking a significant amount of CPD activity as this is part of the eligibility criteria. Examples of provision include Master's-level development programmes, facilitation of middle and senior leadership programmes recognised by the National College or delivery of the Improving and Outstanding Teacher programmes (ITP and OTP), which have been widely adopted since being developed in London and disseminated in Greater Manchester and other areas. A primary school demonstrated a range of provision when applying for designation as a teaching school (Illustration 12).

Illustration 12: Hillcross Primary School, Merton: professional development provision

CPD in Hillcross is extremely well developed, with a constant theme of improving the effectiveness of teachers as facilitators of learning. Weekly CPD sessions focus on the current priorities and initiatives as well as technical issues such as inclusion and English as an additional language (EAL) issues, taking in the curriculum, thinking skills, and so on. The school has two ASTs who play a leading role in staff development in addition to their 20 per cent time for outreach work with other schools.

There are regular conversations with individual staff about their development needs and career interests and staff have access to a development programme run by the authority and many other development opportunities, including National College programmes. Teaching assistants have access to the same CPD as teachers and to other courses, tailored to their needs and interests. Two are currently doing a national vocational qualification (NVQ) at Level 3, and one is in the first year of a foundation degree en route to becoming a qualified teacher.

Increasingly, local authorities are looking to groups of schools, particularly teaching schools and their partners, to provide the professional development programmes that formerly would have been organised centrally by the local authority. Examples include Harrow, Derby and Telford and Wrekin. An alliance of primary and special schools in Swindon is not only managing a range of core provision devolved by the local authority but supplying expertise to other local authorities in the south west.

Leadership development has taken a new direction with the decision by the National College to award licences for the delivery of its new leadership programmes, adding national professional qualifications in senior and middle leadership to the flagship National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH). Teaching schools and strategic partners play a major role in this work: 18 of the first bids received had teaching schools as the lead licensee, and the majority of other bids name teaching schools as key partners. Research has shown that the parts of NPQH that participants find most useful are those elements delivered in schools by headteachers. The approach to licensing reflects this, with a requirement for strong school involvement. Teaching schools are at the heart of this approach, which also provides new qualifications through senior (NPQSL) and middle (NPQML) leadership programmes. One licensed partnership brings together Edge Hill University, three lead teaching schools and clusters of schools across four local authorities.

City Challenge and the arrival of national teaching schools have been accompanied by an upsurge of professional development activity following a joint practice development (JPD) model (Fielding et al, 2005; Hargreaves, 2012). Some teaching schools are well used to working in the spirit of JPD. Take for example Askwith Primary School, now the teaching school at the centre of the Harrogate and Rural Teaching Alliance (HART), a network of 14 primary schools (Illustration 13).

Illustration 13: Askwith Primary School: joint practice development

Professional development is strong both in and beyond the school. It infuses the school, is systematic and regular, and based on identification of individual and whole-school needs. There are also regular 'research' meetings where new ideas are shared and the school has developed its own hierarchy of factors affecting learning (based on Hattie, 2010). Reflection and review are at the centre of the development of the school and individual teachers, for example through frequent lesson observation, videoed lessons and mentoring. It is a sharing school with a passion for teaching and learning, which it is keen to share with other schools either on their own ground and/or through visits to Askwith. Visits always include reflection and opportunities to share lessons learned. Since becoming a teaching school, the school has led a JPD project involving six NQTs from small rural first schools. The NQTs established protocol and targets for lessons. All six observed and assessed each other's lessons, which were also recorded on iPads and later IRIS technology (www.irisconnect.co.uk). The six NQTs discussed the feedback and set the next target. Regular meetings were held to discuss pedagogy and impact on progress was assessed.

The ITP and OTP delivered by many teaching schools are examples of powerful learning through a JPD approach described, for example, by Sebba et al. (2012). These programmes help teachers to examine their own practice and learn tools and strategies to develop their teaching and move it to the next level. Joint learning, especially in 'learning threes' is at the heart of the process. The ITP aims to improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good. The OTP helps teachers to understand what makes a lesson, or series of lessons, outstanding. Both programmes require substantial commitments of time (typically 10 days in a term). Both programmes take place within schools, affording vital opportunities for lesson observations and subsequent discussion. They are delivered by outstanding teachers, trained through an intensive, high-quality facilitation course, which gives the courses credibility and keeps them rooted in current practice.

Around 70 per cent of the first cohort of teaching schools now have at least two trained facilitators, enabling them to deliver the programmes within and beyond their alliances. A charitable trading arm of Ravens Wood Academy, OLEVI (www.olevi.co.uk), runs training around the country for facilitators and coaches, quality assures delivery and undertakes development work to keep the course content current. Without national teaching school designation, delivery of these highly regarded programmes would not have spread as far or as quickly as it has. The designation process identified schools across the country with the capacity and commitment to deliver this type of provision, so it was possible to identify staff to be trained as ITP and OTP facilitators in a very short space of time. There is now a strong network of delivery schools and outstanding teacher-facilitators.

An Ofsted (2010) report on London Challenge was unequivocal in its findings on the teaching and learning programmes:

Recently... substantial improvements have been achieved through effective partnerships with so-called 'teaching schools'. Teaching schools provide extended coaching and practical activities on their own site to groups of teachers from several schools that need support and are within easy travelling distance. The training provided includes separate courses to improve teaching from being predominantly satisfactory to securely good – the 'Improving Teacher Programme' (ITP) – and from good to outstanding, the 'Outstanding Teacher Programme' (OTP). Participants and providers with whom discussions were held during the survey were unanimous in their appreciation of the positive impact that this approach was having on raising standards in both the host and participant schools.

Teachers on these programmes universally welcomed their impact on the quality of their teaching. School managers could point to measurable improvements in the quality of the teaching, with consequent improvements in outcomes for pupils. Providers also noted that the quality of their own teaching had improved further. This was the primary reason why teaching schools wanted to continue with this work: they recognised that their own staff and pupils benefited. They were careful to monitor the time teachers spent out of lessons and the potential disruption to classes caused by course participants practising their new (or re-discovered) skills in the host school's classrooms.

Ofsted, 2010a:5

Teaching schools also provide a ready-made mechanism for undertaking national curriculum development initiatives, as Illustration 14 demonstrates.

Illustration 14: Notre Dame High School: taking forward the national ICT agenda

Notre Dame High School in Sheffield is leading a consortium of teaching schools in a bid for funding to lead a national ICT initiative in response to the Secretary of State's vision for new technology as featured in his speech at the opening of the 2012 BETT show. Notre Dame has formed an advisory board comprising the four lead teaching schools for ICT, significant industry players (including Microsoft, Apple and Intel), leading universities for training teachers to use new technology, and some key educational agencies including Vital, the government-backed ICT teacher CPD agency.

The board members will develop a strategy around the use of 21st-century technology to improve learning. They will look at what training is needed for new and existing teachers, as well as how leadership programmes could be changed to reflect the new skill-set needed by school leaders. The focus will be on developing practitioners' confidence in harnessing technology to improve pedagogy. The school hopes that its work will help ensure that learning becomes more relevant to young people and will enable the education system to 'finally break free from Victorian models of what learning should look like'. This is something that the four lead schools have already delivered and they are now using their teaching school status to step up to a national stage to share this vision with others.

Succession planning and talent management

Teaching school alliances have a key role in identifying and developing the leaders of the future. Many teaching schools are already delivering significant leadership development opportunities for teachers and support staff in their own and other schools.

The biggest contribution to school leadership development lies in providing rich and varied opportunities to lead, innovate and take responsibility, and the encouragement and trust to accept a measure of risk and enable new and aspiring leaders to demonstrate their aptitude for leadership. These opportunities are inevitably more numerous and diverse in school partnerships.

Matthews et al, 2011:7

These experiential opportunities are augmented through school-centred provision such as middle leadership development clusters, licensed by the National College, and by offering placements, mentoring and coaching to trainee heads as part of NPQH. Teaching schools or their strategic partners may also have well-established links with a university or local authority that involve shared delivery of leadership development programmes or succession planning initiatives. Teaching school alliances are expected to work with all schools in the alliance to identify potential leaders from the start of their careers and help them on their career journey, and may develop leadership talent pools.

Tudor Grange Academy, Solihull has developed a placement scheme that is successfully supporting leadership development within its alliance. Through its leadership group exchange initiative, schools and academies in the group have nominated senior team members whom they feel would benefit from time immersed in another school context, whilst adding value from their own experience (Illustration 15).

Illustration 15: Tudor Grange: leadership development exchanges across a teaching school alliance

Each nominated leader identifies an aspect of leadership on which they would like their one-week placement to focus, which links to their own school's improvement agenda but will also support their professional development. These requests are discussed by the alliance group, which decides the best place for the placements to be hosted. As well as considering each leader's development needs, the placement decision takes into account each leader's strengths and specific expertise, helping to ensure that the host school will also gain from the experience and thus facilitating an exchange of leadership expertise between schools.

Once a host is identified, the visiting senior leader is also given a specific task or piece of research to carry out in their own school, which will be written up as a report to the school being visited.

Forest Way Special School leads an alliance of 22 schools across all phases, having a common commitment to developing leadership and headship potential. The aim is to pair each participating leader with an aspiring leader from another alliance school, acting as their career coach. In addition, opportunities for headteacher shadowing and leadership placements will be shared between the schools, enabling individuals across the alliance to access a wide variety of developmental experiences (illustration 16).

Illustration 16: Forest Way Teaching School Alliance: talent management training and audit

The school arranged a meeting of all 22 alliance heads and brought in a succession planning expert recommended by its National College associate to help the school develop an approach to talent management across the group. The resulting strategy includes a bespoke training course, a comprehensive audit and a plan for providing cost-effective, targeted development for those ready to make a career move.

Each of the alliance schools has nominated a CPD leader to take responsibility for co-ordinating its work on the project. Forest Way has managed to negotiate a free training package for these leaders. The bespoke course, which includes training in coaching and mentoring, takes place on two separate days. Following day one, each participant undertakes a self-evaluation audit of their school's current talent management provision, bringing the results back to the group on the second day. Concurrent with this training, a more detailed audit is being undertaken in all the schools in the alliance, identifying and talking to 'aspirational staff'. The results of the audits will be brought together in a report, creating a clear view of leadership potential across the group. Common development needs can then be identified so that further cost-effective training can be commissioned where appropriate, as well as setting up peer-to-

A primary school alliance based on a well-established cluster of schools in Kent has taken a similar approach to leadership development placements. A comprehensive menu of provision is offered across the alliance and complements the in-school provision made by the lead schools and others. Underpinning all leadership development is a focus on teaching and learning, with close monitoring, feedback and support and close attention to the analysis, use and interpretation of data (Illustration 17).

Illustration 17: Sandgate Primary and St Eanswythes RC Primary School: a job-share alliance leading on leadership development

An alliance in south-east Kent is based on an existing partnership of schools and led by the job-share teaching schools of Sandgate Primary and St Eanswythes RC Primary School. Leadership development is actively promoted across the schools and the consortium. As one teacher said: 'the headteacher knows my future better than I do'. Aspiring senior leaders benefit from an internship project which gives them placements in other schools within the alliance and there are complementary programmes that include developing school business managers (the National College's Certificate in School Business Management (CSBM) and Diploma in School Business Management respectively (DSBM)), leadership of faith schools and mentoring for new headteachers.

Numerous teaching schools are also involved in the Teaching Leaders⁴ initiative, which aims to address educational disadvantage by developing middle leaders through placements in challenging schools. These teaching schools host Teaching Leaders participants and work with the organisation in a variety of ways. For example, Altrincham Grammar School for Girls in Trafford is actively involved with Teaching Leaders. The school has been used as a venue for events and the deputy headteacher facilitates on the Teaching Leaders core programme. The headteacher is leading an international trip to New Orleans on behalf of the organisation and is on the Teaching Leaders advisory board. Other teaching schools heavily involved with the organisation include Lampton School in Hounslow, Challney High School for Boys in Luton, and Hayesbrook School in Kent, which is hosting a joint Teach First and Teaching Leaders event for challenging Kent schools at Swann Valley School.

Supporting other schools

Support for schools usually means working with a school identified by Ofsted or by a local authority (or equivalent body) as requiring improvement or special measures. The teaching school could be expected to work in one or more of a number of ways, for example:

- working to further improve a school so that it is no longer regarded as being in need of significant improvement or special measures
- supporting a school that is currently performing below floor standards to improve pupil performance, raise attainment and standards and/or close the gap at a vulnerable school
- providing an acting headteacher in a challenging school
- working as an executive headteacher of a federation or similar organisation of schools
- acting as the sponsor for a school becoming an academy
- supporting a school in challenging circumstances or in transition to sponsored academy status
- leading a chain of schools or academies

Given that the eligibility criteria for teaching schools include a requirement to demonstrate capacity to undertake such work, many (80 per cent) of the designated schools are led by headteachers who are already NLEs. Headteachers who have not come through the NLE route have the option to be designated as NLEs and their schools as national support schools. Teaching school alliances will work closely with their local network of NLEs and LLEs and, over time, will be well placed to take on a role in brokering school-to-school support, including that provided by LLEs.

The support given by NLEs and NSSs, many of which are now teaching schools, has been extensively documented (Hill & Matthews, 2010). There is often some antipathy to support by selective schools on the basis that they are unlikely to have experienced the challenging context faced by some schools causing concern. Some grammar schools have proved their ability as well as demonstrated their commitment to sharing their expertise with other schools, but their credibility has to be earned. Altrincham Grammar School for Girls has had far-reaching influence in this respect. A new teaching school is on a similar path (Illustration 18).

4 www.teachingleaders.org.uk

Illustration 18: Westcliffe High School for Girls: supporting Southend schools

Westcliffe High School for Girls (WHSG) makes a good contribution to school-to-school support in the area, mainly through the activities of its three ASTs for science, mathematics, and design and technology and engineering. It has worked with a number of schools in Southend, including two in special measures which it has been instrumental in helping turn around. The local authority still has a variant of school improvement partners that enable the authority to keep track of the quality of schools. It deploys the 3 ASTs from Westcliffe, together with 11 others where they are most needed. The ASTs are expert at working not only with pupils but with staff to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and getting involved in planning, dual observations and other approaches. The headteacher of WHSG has recently become an NLE and the school an NSS.

Teaching schools in the north-west provide a promising example of region-wide collaboration to improve satisfactory schools. There are over 700 satisfactory schools in the region, many with good capacity to improve, but facing reduced capacity within local authorities to support them. Although the deployment of LLEs has been highly successful in the region, this can be expensive on a one-to-one basis and cannot address such a large-scale need. Teaching schools in the region have been discussing a co-ordinated and cost-effective approach to addressing this issue (Illustration 19).

Illustration 19: North-west teaching schools: a large-scale school improvement initiative

The teaching schools group started by identifying common themes in the areas for improvement for satisfactory schools such as: teaching; attainment (sometimes in a specific subject or for a specific group); the senior leadership team's monitoring and evaluation skills and the school's use of assessment and tracking. Knowing that mutual support is an important factor in securing improvement, the group then started to create a new development approach where small groups of satisfactory schools in similar situations will work with local LLEs.

A programme is being devised including an initial diagnostic process, access to teaching school provision (such as ITP or SLE support), coaching support and a series of 'best practice' sessions led by LLEs with specific strengths.

Identifying, designating and brokering the deployment of specialist leaders of education

The 2010 white paper introduced the concept of specialist leaders of education (SLEs), who are outstanding middle and senior leaders with the capacity, skills and commitment to support others in similar positions beyond their own schools. SLEs may come from any school, not just teaching schools, and this is one way in which teaching schools will be able to encourage all schools to contribute to their alliance. A consultation involving over 3,600 leaders and other stakeholders welcomed the SLE role:

The proposed introduction of SLEs has attracted considerable support as a means of sharing good practice and building capacity within the system. It was also seen as a potentially positive way of supporting struggling schools ahead of more formal mechanisms of intervention.

National College, 2011d:4

Many teaching school alliances have moved quickly to identify SLEs and get them trained and designated. Since SLEs do not have to come from the teaching school, their designation is a good way to recognise and engage the skills of the wider alliance. The criteria for SLEs are demanding (National College, 2011d). Over 1,000 SLEs were identified in the first cohort of teaching school alliances. Their training is organised nationally by the Ashton on Mersey Teaching School Alliance.

Fairlawn Primary School, a teaching school in Lewisham, has long been involved in providing school-to-school support. The school has a leading role in the London Leadership Strategy and Challenge Partners (a large group of schools that includes 15 teaching schools) and has brokered NLE and LLE support to numerous schools in London and beyond. The school is keen to extend this role to involve middle and senior leaders and has been proactive in brokering deployments for its 11 newly designated SLEs (Illustration 20).

Illustration 20: Fairlawn Primary School: using SLEs to raise attainment in primary mathematics

Fairlawn is working in partnership with its local authority, Lewisham, on an ambitious project centred on SLE support. The Lewisham Primary Maths Project involves supporting identified local schools on the leadership of maths teaching and learning and the monitoring and assessment of progress. In many of the schools, progress in maths at Key Stage 2 has been below the floor standard for at least four out of the past five years so the need for support is paramount. The project fits perfectly with Fairlawn's status as a lead teaching school for both maths and assessment for learning.

Through the project, maths leaders in eight identified schools are receiving targeted challenge and support from an SLE to drive up attainment, specifically with the 2013 Key Stage 2 results in mind. Each of the 8 SLEs is undertaking 10 to 12 days' work with their partner school. Initial work has been partly funded by the National College but Fairlawn has negotiated additional financial support from the local authority, which has agreed to match the College's grant. A website will feature pen portraits of each of its SLEs. The school is facilitating termly network meetings to help SLEs share experience and support each other.

In addition, as part of the London primary teaching school group, the school is keen to create network opportunities for primary SLEs across London. Fairlawn's SLEs come from schools in four different authorities, helping the teaching school to further strengthen its cross-borough links.

A second example comes from the alliance centred on Outwood Grange Academy, Wakefield. The alliance has 48 SLEs, including 8 designated by Ossett Academy, Outwood's strategic outpost school. Following core training commissioned by the National College, the alliance is providing supplementary development sessions, such as training in the new Ofsted process, through its SLEs (Illustration 21).

Illustration 21: Outwood Grange Academy: use of SLEs in ITT and curriculum support

Outwood's current research and development (R&D) project on the role of outstanding teachers in ITT, in partnership with Hibernia College, will provide additional development for SLEs as well as drawing on their expertise. The alliance is using SLEs to explore how outstanding teachers can develop trainee teachers' maths, physics and chemistry subject knowledge as well as their understanding of behaviour management, pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, and post-16 teaching. Three maths SLEs and one science SLE are involved.

The alliance plans to deploy its SLEs quickly and a current focus is to develop SLE deployment processes including a regional banding and a value-for-money costing structure. Like Fairlawn, Outwood Grange is about to launch a teaching school website which will feature descriptions of all its SLEs and enable other schools to easily identify the support on offer.

The alliance has already received requests from a number of schools asking for these expert practitioners to carry out bespoke staff training. Outwood is providing particular support to a local primary school with a focus on maths and for which SLEs will be part of the deployment team. In addition, a number of shorter SLE deployments have been requested, including two days on curriculum design and two days focusing on intervention and data tracking.

Engaging in research and development

Through their work, teaching schools will contribute to a national R&D network, sponsoring practitioner research, co-ordinated by the College and involving universities. The National College consulted with the first teaching school alliances to identify three overarching research questions:

- What makes great pedagogy?
- What makes great professional development which leads to consistently great pedagogy?
- How can leaders lead successful teaching school alliances which enable the development of consistently great pedagogy?

The College is funding work with 66 teaching school alliances from the first 2 cohorts to explore these themes over 2 years. A research team has been commissioned to support each strand. Some schools were strongly research-orientated before they became teaching schools. For example, all staff at The Academy at Shotton Hall are required to complete 20 hours of CPD each year, but this is exceeded by most. Staff from other schools are invited to use the extensive programme too, and do. The teaching school is committed to accredited, researched-based development (Illustration 22).

Illustration 22: The Academy at Shotton Hall: practitioner enquiry in the north east

A very substantial provision for CPD is the link the school has with Newcastle University for its own in-house MEd in practitioner enquiry, a two-year modular course. Now in its third year, and taught at the school, there are over 40 teachers involved – 21 from the academy – in studying for this qualification. The course closely links personal development with the school's strategic plan for teaching and learning and is having a noticeable impact on teaching. The headteacher and some other senior staff are currently writing their final dissertations.

Action research is high on the agenda of the teaching school partners Farlingaye and Kesgrave schools. Both have a strong learning community culture and both are dedicated to excellent teaching and learning. Senior leadership development is strong in both schools with effective use of the NPQH. Both run strong middle leadership programmes and have built the coaching skills of staff. Both schools deliver popular in-house MA modules. Action research is particularly strong at Kesgrave (Illustration 23).

Illustration 23: Kesgrave High school: action research

Kesgrave is in a teaching school job-share partnership with Farlingaye High School, Suffolk. Both schools have a very strong CPD programme but Kesgrave puts especially high value on action research and involves staff in a range of projects led by middle leaders. These projects have a common structure, and focus on key elements of successful teaching, such as the features of an outstanding lesson or the value of homework. The activities develop the skills of middle leaders, engage staff in cross-curricular research and provide opportunities for all staff to build the capacity of the school. This approach has been shared with and taken up by another school in the alliance and a further 25 or more schools have expressed an interest. Kesgrave has hosted large conferences based on its action-research approach.

Also of note are two action-research projects that are supporting teaching schools in developing new school-centred approaches to high-quality teacher training, funded by the former Teaching Agency. Both projects are focused on enhancing the quality of ITT. The first project focuses on the leading role of outstanding teachers in ITT and aims to explore and demonstrate how teaching schools and their alliances, working with ITT providers, can enable outstanding teachers to take a leading role in enhancing the quality of teacher training. Across the country, 15 teaching schools are working on this, 8 of which are also involved with School Direct. The second project is looking at how teaching schools can support school improvement against the key priorities of literacy (including systematic synthetic phonics) and/or behaviour, whilst enhancing the quality of ITT. A total of 12 alliances are involved.

The Wroxham Transformative Learning Alliance is convinced that research and development are key drivers for school improvement. This is underpinned by a strong belief that everyone is capable of improvement, given a culture of high expectations, respect and self-belief (Illustration 24).

Illustration 24: The Wroxham School, Hertfordshire: creating learning without limits

Wroxham has established research projects that focus on high aspiration in mathematics 3-11 and a language for learning 3-11. Middle and senior leaders are beginning to engage in small-scale action research and the school is establishing a core research and development team.

The alliance is also involved in the research project, *Learning Without Limits* (Swann et al, 2012), which is developing approaches to teaching and learning that do not rely on determinist beliefs about ability. This is a joint project between Wroxham School and the Faculty of Education at Cambridge University. The project set out to explore the possibilities for developing a pedagogy where children can grow in an environment where they experience continuous and sustained support for the development of their learning capacity. Wroxham's hypothesis is that an innovative, pioneering and optimistic approach to collaboration will impact directly upon the quality of pedagogy, because it will enable teachers at all stages of their career to explore and evaluate new approaches and ideas, enabling their learning in a supportive yet challenging environment of enquiry.

In terms of innovation, one of the most ambitious projects comes from Molescroft Church of England Primary School, a teaching school in the East Riding. The school aims to tackle the endemic challenges of rural isolation and apathy and the sustainability of education provision in the many small schools in the East Riding. It has a vision of promoting or identifying many 'innovation hotspots' among the schools dotted around the area and sharing their practices and findings. Molescroft is rich in innovation and ideas and is a good role model, and has shared these ideas with all the other schools.

Commentary

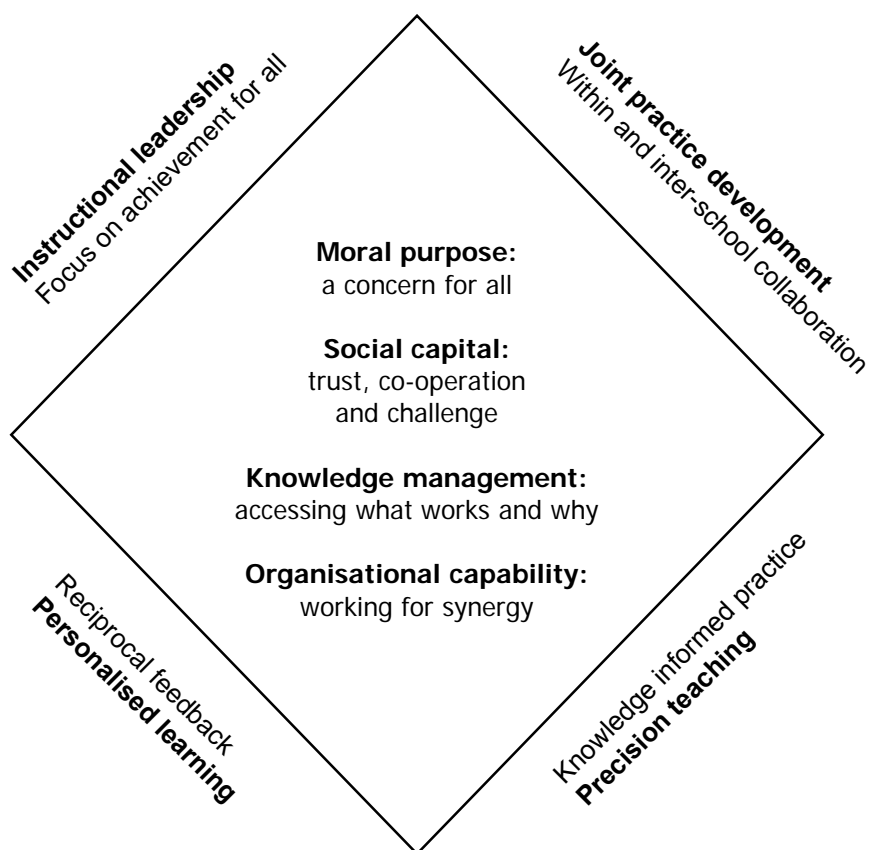
The strands of teaching school alliance activity are defined as the responsibilities and accountabilities of teaching schools. These strands summarise what is expected of teaching schools. Some, such as ITT, attract specific funding and need their own audit trails. Ultimately, however, the effectiveness of a teaching school alliance will depend on more than the sum of its parts.

If we return to the overall aim or moral imperative of raising achievement and closing outcome gaps, applied to pupils and all other learners in the school community, then each of the strands needs to contribute to the main drivers of effective education, which we have added to the essential elements of schools and alliances as shown in Figure 5.

Active learning for teachers

If effective teacher learning is the key activity of a teaching school, then each alliance needs to develop a common understanding of how to foster the effective learning of all staff. The specified strands are of limited help here. ITT is not a standalone activity but an active learning process that links with and draws from the culture, ethos, approach to staff learning and exposure to best practice in placement schools. As part of the role of teaching schools in ensuring effective teacher learning, they are currently working with other ITT organisations to ensure the best selection and training of the next generation of teachers. However, one of the weaknesses in effective teacher learning is the lack of systemic responsibility for teacher development post-NQT. In many cases this is left to the individual teacher and the school they work in. Thus their effectiveness can reflect the quality and performance of the school to which they are first appointed, which vary considerably across schools. Many of the interventions carried out by teaching schools are designed to address the underperformance of these teachers.

Figure 5: Application of four essentials to the work of schools and alliances



In the health service, the development of newly qualified staff is not left to chance. A regional senior tutor is responsible for ensuring that staff in all establishments after their initial training are kept up to date. Recent high profile cases, however, have raised questions about the skills and qualities of some in the nursing profession and apparent deficiencies in accountability. In the teaching profession, the ongoing development of generic and subject-specialist pedagogical knowledge and skills is haphazard, and often dependent on the initiative of the individual. This is not good enough for a professional approach to teaching that is sufficiently expert to choose the right approach to every learning requirement, what we have termed precision teaching.

Such provision is likely to have a significant positive impact on student learning and teacher retention. The development of NQTs needs to build on ITT as well as engaging them in the practice development strategy of the school.

Challenge 1. We need to consider how to identify, disseminate and incorporate the most effective forms of teaching and learning into the practice of all schools and teachers.

The term continuing professional development (CPD) is largely outmoded because of its association with courses and educational tourism (ie, visits to other providers) that often have little lasting impact. Professional development should not be a thing apart but the outcome for each individual when a school or alliance takes full responsibility for the effective learning of its entire staff. Increasingly the approach that is being adopted to achieve this involves active learning through, for example, learning partnerships (Berwick, 2001) or joint practice development (Hargreaves, 2012). This area now needs research and leadership.

Challenge 2. We need to consider how to maximise the methods, contributions and findings of evaluation and research so as to inform and guide practice.

To further stress the links between the six strands, the issues concerned with creating and maintaining an expert profession relate closely to the instructional leadership role of school leaders at all levels, particularly the headteacher or principal. At this level, the challenge is not only to be the instructional leader but also to create the climate of trust and social capital in which matters of teaching and learning are explored openly, constantly and in depth. Recent research (Leana, 2011) has shown that in such an environment, it is possible for less capable and qualified teachers to become more and more effective, in contrast to highly qualified and skilled teachers in a school with low social capital, whose effectiveness tends to diminish as they operate individually and without the challenge and support of colleagues.

To summarise, the six strands need to be considered as braided into a rope that is strong enough to support, sustain and lift the quality of teaching and learning to the heights necessary to raise the bar and close the achievement gap.

Part 3: Projection: the future of teaching schools in a changing landscape

In this part we look to the future, starting with system-wide questions before homing in on crucial aspects of teaching schools and their alliances. The context is the government's stated objective of reducing the size of central government and empowering schools and teachers to take responsibility for improvement. In their foreword to *The importance of teaching*, the prime minister and the deputy prime minister state that a 'lesson of world class education systems is that they devolve as much power as possible to the front line, while retaining high levels of accountability' (HM Government, 2010:3). The OECD has shown that countries that give the most autonomy to headteachers and teachers are the ones that do best (Hooge et al, 2012) although there are exceptions to this. Conversion to academy status is the main vehicle for increasing school autonomy to new levels, although, somewhat paradoxically, the autonomy and so-called freedoms of some then become constrained as they enter multi-academy trusts, chains and federations.

Are teaching schools here to stay in the new school landscape?

Teaching schools have emerged at a time when the education system in England is being re-engineered in a way that changes the culture of schools, introduces further freedoms and promotes school partnerships in an environment that embraces both collaboration and competition. The driving purpose is better schools and higher standards, and many of the changes are intended to accelerate school improvement.

Aggregates of schools, such as federations and chains, are growing in number and size, some of them absorbing many of the functions once undertaken by local authorities, whose position in education is diminishing. The pendulum of policy has swung from improvement driven by the state to improvement driven by schools themselves.

Government policy set out in the 2010 Academies and 2011 Education acts, *The importance of teaching* (HM Government, 2010) and *Training our next generation of outstanding teachers* (DfE, 2011a) places teaching schools at the heart of school improvement and the initial training, leadership development, research-based innovation and continued development of the teaching profession. Leadership development leads inexorably to the issue of succession planning, with the implicit aim of providing a ratchet in the form of a pool of highly trained and experienced school leaders-in-waiting, so that schools are safeguarded from slipping backwards when their leadership or circumstances change.

These changes are being implemented by a new brand of school leaders and executives, known generically as 'system leaders'. These are headteachers (or principals) who exercise leadership beyond their own schools, sharing their expertise and their school's practice with other, less effective schools through school improvement partnerships. The government stated:

Our aim should be to support the school system to become more effectively self-improving.

HM Government, 2010:13

A sizeable force for change is being established through teaching schools, their alliances, and the change agents within them, particularly national, local and specialist leaders of education. Forward-looking local authorities, HE institutions and businesses are seeking to work with school professionals in new, collaborative ways. Even the accountability agenda is shifting towards peer review and locally commissioned inspection and audit. The projection, set out by Hopkins (2007:79), of schools leading the system has the opportunity to become a reality. The mission implied by the formula of teaching school alliances has three parts:

- to provide a system that enables every child and young person to achieve the most they can and close attainment gaps

-
- to enable every teacher to attain mastery of their profession
 - to ensure that every school is effective and well led

The first teaching school alliances needed to demonstrate their growing efficacy within, say, two years of designation. Many, such as the Cabot Learning Federation, found their feet, built an alliance and gained considerable momentum very quickly. Others are showing what they can do alongside and often as part of federations, chains and other established partnerships that are shaping the education landscape. Realistically, teaching school alliances need to demonstrate what they can do and achieve by the next parliamentary election in 2015. Otherwise, they risk being overtaken by another policy, another experiment, another fresh start. The tenure of education secretaries in England is just two years on average (Mourshed et al, 2010:22) – and of HM chief inspectors two and a half! Teaching schools should seize the moment. As the McKinsey study of the most improved school systems makes clear:

The stability of reform direction is critical to achieving quick gains in student outcomes.

Mourshed et al, 2010:24

The future for teaching schools depends on their meeting a number of challenges, from school to system level. These include, for example:

- sustaining the school's designation as a teaching school
- producing tangible outcomes across the six strands
- nurturing the alliance through challenge, support, distributed leadership, communications, trust, social capital and promoting mutual benefits
- managing the size and spread of the alliance: logistics, efficiency, economics and effectiveness
- demonstrating the value added to other schools in the system and to children and families
- articulating the reciprocal benefits to children, young people and staff in the teaching school

The performance of teaching schools is reviewed after three years. Those that can show good impact are then re-designated for a further four years. The review process will involve peer review. In a self-improving school system, this raises a new question.

Challenge 3. We need to consider how and by whom teaching schools will be identified, accredited and their quality assured in an increasingly self-regulating system.

What are the biggest challenges for alliances?

The relationship between teaching schools and their alliances is symbiotic, each reliant on, contributing to and drawing strength from the other. Hargreaves sums up the task of the teaching school as being the strategic alliance's 'hub or nodal school that offers strategic leadership and co-ordinates, monitors and quality assures alliance activities and expertise' (Hargreaves, 2011):

The teaching school is not the positional top-dog type of leader, but rather the leader who has the right knowledge and skills (competence) to engage in the right kind of processes that produce the intended results of the partnership.

Hargreaves 2011:5

Teaching schools may be the jewels in the crown of the school system, but within their alliances they must act as catalysts for change. This involves achieving a balance between demonstrating the expertise, professional and social qualities, purpose and intentions that will attract schools into the alliance, and the focus and challenge without which little will happen. It is important that teaching school alliances and other types of partnership sustain a focus on the core purpose of their existence, as summarised by David Hopkins:

Highly effective educational systems ensure that the achievement and learning of students is at the centre of all that teachers do. As a consequence, the enhancement of the quality of teaching is the central theme in any improvement strategy. This will be partially achieved by selection policies that ensure that only the very best people become teachers and educational leaders; and then by putting in place ongoing and sustained professional learning opportunities that develop a common ‘practice’ out of the integration of curriculum, teaching and learning. This takes place in schools where leadership has high expectations, an unrelenting focus on the quality of learning and teaching, and has created structures that ensure that their students consistently undertake challenging learning tasks.

This further occurs within a system context where there is increasing clarity on standards of professional practice. To enable this, procedures need to be in place that provide ongoing and transparent data to facilitate improvements in learning and teaching. School performance is therefore amenable to early intervention; and inequities in student performance are addressed through good early education and direct classroom support for those falling behind. Finally, system level structures are established that link together the various levels of the system to support practice.

Hopkins 2011:7

Hargreaves (2011:8) deconstructed further the dimensions and components that are needed in a successful system. He defined a ‘maturity model of a self-improving school system’ as:

a statement of the organisational practices and processes of two or more schools in a partnership by which they progressively achieve shared goals, both local and systemic.

Hargreaves, 2011:8

He classified the characteristics of such a model in terms of three dimensions, each containing four inter-connected strands, as tabulated in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Dimensions of a successful system

Professional development dimension	Partnership competence dimension	Collaborative capital dimension
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint practice development • Talent identification and development through distributed leadership • Monitoring and coaching • Distributed staff information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High social capital • Fit governance • Evaluation and challenge • Distributed system leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analytical investigation • Creative entrepreneurship • Alliance architecture • Disciplined innovation

Hargreaves 2011:8, 9

The main challenge for voluntary alliances committed to improving teaching and raising standards arguably relates to the open exchange and productive use of performance information across the alliance. Support needs to be complemented by challenge. Where there is support without challenge, the result may be comforting but unproductive. Challenge without support can be threatening and equally unproductive.

It follows that a teaching school alliance can only be sustained if its members subscribe to the system leadership principle of mutual responsibility for improvement of all schools and the progress and achievements of all pupils in the system represented by the alliance. This requires trust and the high social capital described earlier. It necessitates openness about the performance, strengths and weaknesses of each provider in the alliance including partners other than schools. This, as Sir Terry Leahy, former CEO of Tesco, implies, is one of the biggest challenges of all:

Organisations are terrible at confronting the truth. It is so much easier to define your version of reality and judge success and failure according to that. But my experience is that truth is critical both to create and sustain success.

Leahy, 2012:11

Since teaching school alliances are unlikely to be fully effective unless their members are open to challenge as well as support, there should be a mechanism to provide a basis for this.

Challenge 4. We need to consider how to develop a culture within and beyond teaching school alliances in which member institutions share performance data, challenge each other, identify the priorities for improvement and provide help and expertise where it is needed.

Quality assurance and peer review

The problem of reconciling challenge and support is solved by the executive leadership of performance-orientated chains using the management tools of performance targets, performance management and a range of professional and leadership development opportunities to support staff in meeting the expectations of them. A school wanting the help of the Outwood Grange Trust, for example, must not only submit to a scrutineering visit as part of due diligence but to the first step of a 48-hour challenge conference for senior leaders and governors at which weaknesses are laid bare.

Data-sharing and peer review are the preferred approaches of less formal partnerships of schools, in some of which – like Challenge Partners (a national group of schools containing more than a dozen teaching schools as the hub schools of their own alliances) and the Bradford Partnership – agreement to a formal peer review is a condition of membership. These reviews follow a carefully specified and agreed procedure. They are undertaken by senior leaders of member schools that have been trained in the review process, and are led by trained inspectors. Alliances thrive where their member schools mean business. Peer review will also be part of the re-designation process, as discussed earlier.

Challenge 5. We need to consider how schools as well as teachers can build their capacity for authentic peer review, endorsing successful practice and identifying priorities and strategies for improvement.

What should happen to teaching schools that no longer meet the designation requirements?

Schools have always faced the issue of what happens when the headteacher leaves. Teaching schools and other highly effective schools are likely to have taken three or more years under a good leader to evolve into the kind of school that earns national recognition. In this time, depth in leadership should be complemented by succession planning to the extent that the departure of the headteacher poses little threat to the school or alliance. The school's capacity to continue fulfilling the obligations of the designation criteria would normally need to be assessed, but automatic removal of designation on the departure of the headteacher would imply a lack of confidence in the capacity of the school to sustain its teaching school functions. This does not normally happen with Russell Group universities, FTSE 100 companies or, indeed, medical schools and teaching hospitals.

Moreover, there is more at stake than the designation of the school. The teaching school is the hub of an alliance, often the only one. Where there are one or more other teaching schools in the alliance, the de-designation of one does not necessarily threaten the existence of the alliance. Repercussions are fewer if the school remains a strong contributor as a strategic partner.

Reviews of designation procedures have been established by the National College for situations ranging from the inability of a school to continue to meet the designation criteria to professional misconduct (National College, 2012a). In the case of a change of leadership, the College considers the strength of the succession planning arrangements and – where appropriate – will defer a decision by keeping the teaching school under review. There is an onus on governors to appoint a new headteacher or principal with appropriate experience, such as the pedigree that being part of the leadership of another outstanding school may bring. It remains to be seen whether governors consider other measures to secure the teaching school's future, such as involving the headteacher or principal of another teaching school for a period in an executive

capacity. Alternatively, an alliance that loses its teaching school may have the possibilities of either seeking a new teaching school or merging with another alliance.

Challenge 6. We need to consider how governors, trustees and other appropriate authorities can play a better informed and more effective role in monitoring, challenging and managing the performance of the alliance and its leaders; planning and managing leadership succession, and anticipating and mitigating risks to the school and alliance.

Is school improvement in England sufficiently developed that the system can take responsibility for sustaining the pace of improvement?

This question is important in that the characteristics of successful, system-wide school improvement appear to change depending on how far down the improvement road the system has travelled. As Mourshed et al (2010:111) wrote: 'In the early days, outcomes improvement is all about stabilising the system, reducing variance between classrooms and schools, and ensuring that basic standards are met.' Hence we have had national strategies, Ofsted grades, floor targets for schools, school improvement partners and a range of other mechanisms for stabilising the system. Mourshed et al continue:

At this stage of the journey, the reforms are almost always driven from the centre. Later as the system improves, the engine for improvement shifts to instructional practices. This by its very nature has much less to do with the centre and is primarily driven by the schools themselves: it is all about turning the schools into learning organisations.

Mourshed et al, 2010:111

The policies of the current government have nudged the school system in England pointedly towards what Gladwell (2001) termed 'the tipping point'. Academisation is the vehicle for giving schools the freedom to innovate as well as the responsibility to be successful and accountable for their performance. It is likely that by 2015 almost all secondary schools and a sizeable proportion of primary schools will be academies. The white paper (HM Government, 2010) articulates the new rationale for school improvement.

Over recent years, centralised approaches to improving schools have become the norm. Government has tended to lead, organise and systematise improvement activity, seeking to ensure compliance with its priorities... We think that this is the wrong approach. Government should certainly put in place the structures and processes that will challenge and support schools to improve. And where schools are seriously failing, we will intervene. But the timetabling, educational priorities and staff deployment of schools cannot be decided in Whitehall. And the attempt to secure automatic compliance with central government initiatives reduces the capacity of the school system to improve itself. Instead our aim should be to support the school system to become more effectively self-improving. The primary responsibility for school improvement rests with schools and the wider system should be designed so that our best schools and leaders can take on greater responsibility, leading improvement work across the system.

HM Government, 2010:13

School intervention and improvement strategies rest heavily on 'an increase in the number of national and local leaders of education – headteachers of excellent schools committed to supporting other schools' (HM Government, 2010:14) and the development of teaching schools.

The terrain is further complicated by the rapid growth in school federations and the size and number of chains (Hill et al, 2012). These groups have their own vision and values, corporate policies, procedures and practices and quality assurance measures. Some are more effective in driving the improvement of member schools than others.

Into this mix come teaching schools and their alliances. Although some teaching schools are already embedded in existing chains, many others provide an alternative approach: a co-operative rather than directed alliance of schools. This adds to the richness of the system and scatters across it models of excellence in the form of teaching schools that have a strong system improvement remit, in contrast to the 'beacon schools' of old.

The dynamics and conditions for a self-improving school system have been explored at length by David Hargreaves in a series of thinkpieces (Hargreaves, 2010; 2011; 2012). Fundamentally, the improvement of the system depends on schools either working in partnership or working within a managed framework, such as an academies trust. The aggregations of schools that have emerged in England range in terms of management from hard to soft: from formal federations or sponsored academy chains to collaborative chains such as multi-academy trusts and school partnership organisations. Teaching schools are to be found in all types of partnership as well as among voluntary and maintained schools. Teaching school alliances may:

- be coterminous with the federation or chain of which the teaching school is a member
- be collaborative chains in their own right
- co-exist with other partnerships, of which the teaching school or other schools are also members

Sustainability will depend on whether teaching schools and members of their alliances continue to value the four essentials of system leadership, see a need to continue this approach for the benefit of their pupils and staff, and perceive the benefits to outweigh any disadvantages.

Challenge 7. We need to consider how Ofsted can identify and report on the effects of membership of a teaching school alliance, federation, chain or other partnership when inspecting a member school.

Can teaching schools protect schools from leadership failure?

One way of testing the ability of the system to identify and support its weaker members is through exploring possible responses to real scenarios. One of the most serious is the decline that can happen to some previously effective schools when there are changes of personnel, particularly the headteacher. We consider the real case of the changing fortunes of a school, chronicled by inspectors, in Illustration 25.

Illustration 25: Big Dipper Primary School (pseudonym): recent history

When the school was inspected in 1999, it was judged a very good school and shortly afterwards was awarded beacon school status. The excellent headteacher then moved to another school, to be replaced first by a temporary appointment and then by a headteacher who presided over the school's decline. Pupils' progress slowed and standards fell to about average for the pupils' age by the time they left school. The school was causing concern.

Then another new but experienced headteacher was appointed in 2004. An inspection soon after noted: 'Provision has started to improve quickly from its lowest point. Teaching, learning, leadership and management are now satisfactory and improving. As a result standards are starting to rise but have yet to reach the high levels attained previously.'

Four and a half years later, the school was inspected again. In March 2009, inspectors wrote: Big Dipper 'is a good school. The headteacher and senior leaders have been successful in creating a school where pupils achieve well, teaching is good and standards are above average by the time pupils leave in Year 6. This is an improvement since the last inspection when the school was judged to be satisfactory.

Parents agree that there is not only a good emphasis on academic achievement but also on developing the whole child so that pupils are well-equipped for later life.'

Illustration 25 continued

The school was inspected again in November 2011. The report said: 'This is an outstanding school where pupils are eager to learn and staff are committed to continual improvement. Year-on-year, the attainment reached by pupils at the end of Year 6 has been consistently high. Pupils make good progress through the school given their starting points and pupils' achievement is excellent. The headteacher and senior team drive the school forward with great enthusiasm and have been very successful in securing improvements in key areas since it was last inspected.'

In this school, two or three years of inept stewardship set the school back for several years. It took first-rate leadership to achieve the gradual improvement from special measures to good and then outstanding. Could the decline of a very good school have been prevented by peer schools?

This sequence of events is unfortunately all too common. Changes in the quality of a school when the leadership changes or there is excessive staff mobility are understandable, particularly in small or challenging schools. But Big Dipper was neither. It was a well set-up and popular primary school with good parental support and low disadvantage. According to inspectors, it had a very effective senior management team and very knowledgeable governors who provided a significant contribution to the overall management of the school. It was a community school in a functioning local authority. Yet none of these agents could prevent atrophy in the hands of inadequate headship. Such a turnaround in the school's fortunes says little for the effectiveness of the education system, locally or nationally, in preventing or minimising such a reverse.

Challenge 8. We need to consider how teaching school alliances and their partners can identify and redress potential deficits in the supply of teachers and a reservoir of leaders in their regions, reducing in particular the risks of staff changes to smaller, less popular and more isolated schools.

HMCI's annual report for 2010–11 (Ofsted, 2011) found that, although more schools improved than declined in relation to their previous inspection, about half of the schools judged satisfactory previously had remained satisfactory. More seriously, nearly one school in five had declined since the previous inspection. The challenge for the system is to minimise the risk of this happening. Ofsted's decision that from September 2012 the satisfactory grade should be replaced by requires improvement has additional implications for the school-to-school support role of teaching schools and their strategic partners. Can teaching schools and their alliances achieve this? The periodic joint reviews of members' performance referred to earlier ought to provide early warning of schools that need help.

Can teaching schools be the catalysts for other schools in their alliances to raise standards of teaching to the same level?

Many of the first teaching schools are setting the pace within their alliances, especially where they are the only teaching school in the alliance or where their excellence, perhaps of long-standing, gives them a natural authority. This is to be expected, since these schools co-ordinated the application, invited partners to join them and began to attract other schools to the alliance. The teaching school is the key to the existence of the alliance. In some cases the school was approached by existing partnerships to supply the key, with the partnership itself in the driving seat.

Catalysts, levers or leaders? There are certain conditions for success. Teaching schools and their alliances are unlikely to thrive unless the teaching schools fulfil the following conditions. The teaching school must:

- Ensure that it remains outstanding so as not to let down its pupils, their parents and the alliance.
- Plan for any contingencies that may threaten the school's ability to meet the criteria or its capacity as a teaching school.
- Establish a clear and effective leadership and co-ordination of the alliance, involving all members and undertaking agreed distributed leadership of aspects of work as far as possible.
- Build openness and trust, finding out and sharing where the strengths and weaknesses are among and within the schools (and other members) in the alliance.

-
- Identify the resources available to the alliance, particularly with reference to high-quality teaching and the leading of learning; resources may include national and local leaders of education, outstanding HE provision and the selection, appointment and training of SLEs.
 - Agree protocols and costs for deploying expertise across schools.
 - Co-ordinate and stimulate the implementation of the generation of an alliance development plan which responds to the needs of member schools in terms of the six strands.
 - Agree evaluation and monitoring arrangements in the alliance, including performance monitoring and peer review of member schools.

What part might teaching schools and their alliances play as a mediating layer?

As the education capacity of local authorities diminishes, academies and chains are even more significant organisations in relation to the quality and improvement of provision for children and young people of school age. Three particular roles have been identified in maintaining system improvement in the world's most improved systems:

- providing targeted support to schools
- acting as a buffer between the centre and schools while interpreting and communicating the improvement objectives, in order to manage any resistance to change
- enhancing the collaborative exchange between schools, by facilitating the sharing of best practices between schools, helping them to support each other, share learning and standardise practices.

Mourshed et al, 2010:83

An effective middle tier would need a wider and clearer remit which defined such a role and the resources it would attract. There are many issues concerning, for example:

- local democratic responsibility
- the funding of schools for school improvement
- whether an identified group of schools will take responsibility for all students in an area (educator of last resort)
- advantages of teaching schools and their partners being grouped so that they could bid for funding and act in a more strategic way

Teaching school alliances are not sponsored or tightly managed systems like academy chains. They are families of schools, able to tap into excellence wherever it is to be found across their members, taking responsibility for producing and developing their teachers, growing their leaders, challenging and supporting each other and opening their doors to new members. Some alliances overlap with other types of organisation. School groupings form an expanding patchwork that will soon cover much of the country. They are forming a type of middle layer and often transcend local authority boundaries.

It is likely that most schools will in time see the benefits of being part of one of these aggregations of school. Those that remain isolated and underperform will be challenged by Ofsted's new regional directors, acting presumably as a safety net for pupils and families whose schools are not good or better. Teaching schools and their partners will become part of the brokered solution for such schools.

At their best, school alliances should be learning communities in which every member is encouraged to be the best they can be. The teaching school concept expands the theme of collective wellbeing beyond the walls of the school through the commitment required to share practice with other schools and harness the strengths of schools in a partnership that improves the effectiveness of all. It is in this sense, above all, that the teaching school model is more ambitious and potentially more efficacious than the demonstration and laboratory schools that were its forebears. The teaching school alliance is not just a school community but a community of schools. It is part of the future.

How can tensions in the education of teachers be resolved?

One of the key issues in developing effective leaders and teachers concerns the balance between theoretical and practical knowledge. In the past, there has been a disjunction between the two in much of both teacher education and medical education. One of the fathers of medical education and advocates of learning at the bedside, Sir William Osler (1849–1919), expressed it thus:

To study the phenomenon of disease without books is to sail an uncharted sea, while to study books without patients is not to go to sea at all.

Sir William Osler [source: www.quotationspage.com]

The challenge is to integrate the theoretical and practical aspects of teacher education. The new teaching standards place an emphasis on classroom practice. Many excellent teachers have emerged from non-academic teacher training routes. There are some outstanding providers – in the form of HEI–school partnerships and SCITTs – that accomplish this well. But other school-centred and employment-based initial teacher training (SCITT and EBITT) provision has been of variable quality, according to Ofsted reports, owing to the insufficiency of some partners in the scheme. Teaching schools and their high-quality partners have the opportunity to provide excellent professional training in situ as many already demonstrate. Teaching school alliances are engaging strongly in School Direct. Learning to teach in a school in which both teaching and teacher development are outstanding has a strongly positive impact on the performance of trainees.⁵ The best schools have also frequently succeeded in rebuilding the confidence and skills of trainee teachers destined for failure in lesser schools. But the fundamental question remains: is the ITT system being redesigned so as to train paramedics or doctors, so to speak?

For strongly school-centred initial teacher training, it is desirable that the school has a professional tutor: a member of staff with expertise in teacher education, a higher degree in education and the ability to ensure a balance between the theoretical and practical aspects of training. It can be helpful for the professional tutor to be strongly connected to a university school of education. Another function of the professional tutor is to facilitate progression to an education Master's degree as an expected part of professional and career development. There needs to be greater consensus about the nature of initial training and lifelong learning for teachers, plus continuity and progression, and the place of initial and higher academic and professional qualifications. There also needs to be greater understanding of what is best practice in the teaching of different subjects and meeting the individual dispositions of learners.

As the disparity in performance between and within schools and between students from socially deprived backgrounds and their more advantaged counterparts shows, the knowledge in the system is still not effectively managed. In order to address this, there needs to be continued educational and political support for bodies who:

- commission focused education research
- identify best practice
- disseminate best practice, ensuring it is embedded

Ofsted (which now has a best-practice website), the Education Endowment Foundation⁶, Challenge Partners and a postulated Royal College of Teachers are all organisations that could play a pivotal role in this. In addition, the role that teaching schools play within these organisations has to be defined in policy because without their involvement in all these activities, and in particular in the area of embedding best practice, knowledge management will remain fragmented.

⁵ Evidence for this statement derives from interviews in over 80 teaching schools.

⁶ See the Education Endowment Foundation, at <http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk>.

In the health service, teaching hospitals function with a number of other institutions to provide quality assurance of health services. Critical to these are the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) and the Royal Societies. One provides guidelines on the validity of drug treatments and the others disseminate best practice. Both are underpinned by research.

As the Education Endowment Foundation's work has shown, and the growing number of meta-analyses demonstrates, there is now evidence to support the defining of best practice in a number of areas – including teaching and leadership. Applying this knowledge is fundamental if we are to have a profession. One solution could be the formation of a non-governmental lead body such as a Royal College of Teaching. This College would provide models of best practice that would be derived from research undertaken by subject specialism groups and the centres of excellence that should increasingly be housed in teaching schools. Such an organisation would do much to give weight to the commitment implied in the 2010 white paper.

Integration of knowledge from other education systems

Within the UK there have always been knowledge divides, some real and others artificial: between universities and schools, primary and secondary, selective and non-selective. A similar and often more challenging set of barriers exists for knowledge-sharing between the UK and other countries. The first barrier to this is the lack of agreement about what our students should be achieving. In many cases this is for justifiably cultural reasons; however, in some case it is not. For example we should all have a common agreement about what constitutes excellence (or even functionality) in numeracy and literacy. But not just that; in 2015, PISA will test collaborative problem-solving. How well is the UK likely to perform? At least it should be incumbent on all examination bodies in England to ensure that, where culturally appropriate, their standards are internationally benchmarked so we can learn from the best practice in the world.

How do we develop system leaders for the future?

The development of future system leaders is critical. In the past, to become a system leader, a capable headteacher moved out of school to join a local authority, another education body or Her Majesty's Inspectorate. The only system leadership roles available to a serving headteacher were as union representatives or as a member of local authority advisory panels. Most of these roles were about vested interests, not the collective improvement of student outcomes.

Teaching schools provide an opportunity to change all this. To be successful however, as with all staff development programmes, there must be opportunities for people to encounter challenges (or to fail?) in post and learn from the experience; to have access to a range of coaching and mentoring support, and to role models and to role progression. The National College's Fellowship Commission is one approach to high-level development for system leaders. Challenge Partners, a senior partners' development programme, is another example.

The most valuable staff in any school are those who contribute most, both to students' learning and the practice development of their colleagues. The loosening of teachers' terms and conditions will allow teaching schools to reward the contributions of staff more directly in terms of the twin meritocracies they operate: those who most effectively support students' learning and those who have a similar impact on the staff. This in turn will assist with the effectiveness of a collaborative leadership style.

As teaching schools mature, a new generation of leaders is emerging who accept this collaborative leadership style as their way of doing business. As has been seen in NSSs (Ofsted, 2010a), partnership arrangements offer ideal opportunities for leadership development, which are magnified further in clusters such as chains (Matthews et al, 2011). Opportunities to lead teaching schools are increasing as more of their headteachers or principals retire, driven inexorably by demographic trends.

How can small schools become viable teaching schools?

Primary schools comprise the great majority of schools in any country. Since they and the pre-school arrangements in their locality are crucial to educational progress and achievement, it is essential that they are fully represented in the teaching school policy. Primary schools are not proportionately represented in applications for teaching school designation.

Singly, the capacity of most primary schools as teaching schools is limited, particularly smaller schools. A few pioneers among small rural schools are demonstrating what can be done. The early signs are that they cluster with other partners and act corporately, sharing strengths and distributing the lead roles on the different strands of teaching school work. Job-share and multiple teaching school arrangements provided the work opportunities for small schools to combine their strengths and share lead responsibilities.

A second approach is for eligible primary schools to become partner teaching schools in an existing or new alliance containing at least one other larger school. This gives them access to the administrative arrangements of the alliance and enables them pool their strengths and fulfil their needs with recourse to the greater talent pool of a larger alliance. The proportion of primary schools could be increased significantly if measures such as the following were adopted.

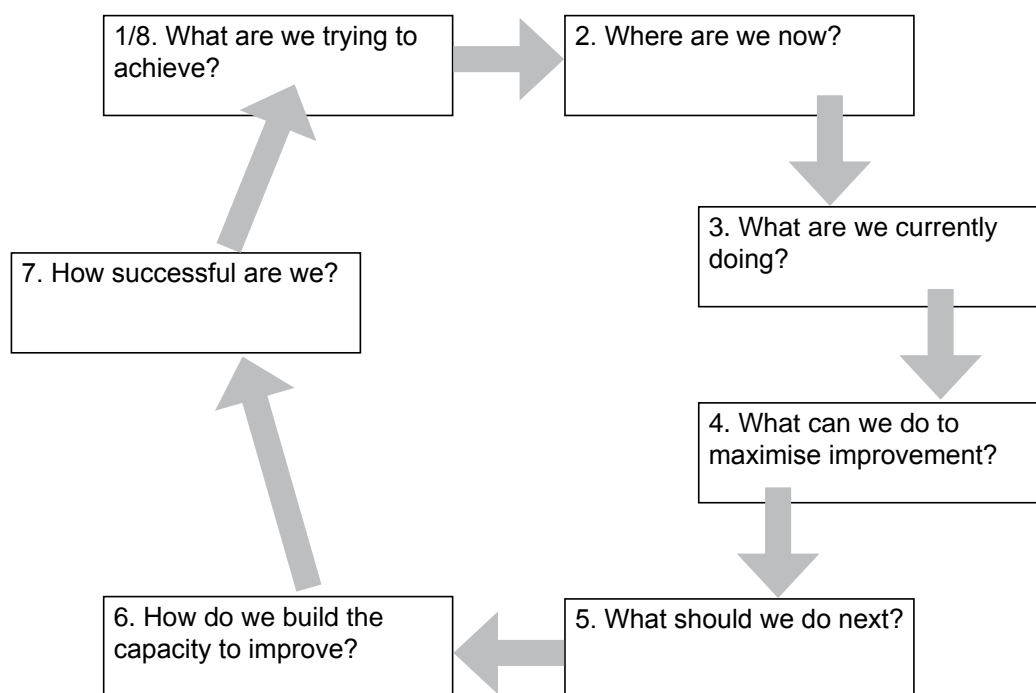
- Every secondary school applicant for teaching school designation is only valid if accompanied by at least two primary schools wishing to be designated as part of the alliance.
- Eligible small primary and special schools are encouraged to make joint or multiple teaching school applications, in effect pooling resources so as to become a collective teaching school.
- All smaller schools that are currently designated are encouraged to form strong alliances with other small potential or designated teaching schools and not to continue to exist in isolation.
- A minimum size limit is imposed on individual applications; for example 420 pupils in primary and 600 in secondary schools. Cluster applications would need to meet these totals in aggregate.

Considering whether there is an optimum size for an alliance, experience shows that for certain activities carried out by teaching schools, the limits on the size of the alliance are determined by organisational issues such as proximity, variety of opportunities or resources – ITT would be one of these activities. Other work, such as sharing within-school best practice, demand a degree of moral capital and issues around trust, and commitment and ownership can take time to develop. Alliances that grow too large for practical purposes are likely to subdivide or to have hubs and partner schools: alliances within an umbrella organisation.

Leadership approaches to school improvement

Teaching school alliances are developing in a way that puts into practice the best of what has been learned from the most successful and enduring national examples of school improvement in recent years, and then adds further value to this. The process fits with a 'theory of action' for school improvement which draws upon two of the theoretical models that were used to develop the school improvement work in London and other City Challenge areas in the first place. This is based on a seven stage decision-making process (Figure 7) resembling the school improvement cycle. The process applies equally well to teaching individual pupils, areas of the school, whole schools or a grouping such as a teaching school alliance.

Figure 7. The decision-making process (after Berwick 2010a:88)



In terms of the critical step, 5 – what should we do next? Berwick (2010a:89) has postulated four contributory factors:

- Personal preference – driven by leadership experience and moral purpose but taking account of the concerns of others and tries to reach consensus
- Local context – including capacity within school, between schools and within the system which affects the decisions that are made
- Educational approach – which is informed by research, knowledge of other practice that works and the school's stage of development
- Political control – which includes governance, professional leadership and national policy. Paramount among these is the preferred approach to leading school-to-school support.

A school partnership approach to school improvement, as seen in the work of many teaching schools and NSSs, is typically based on a collaborative leadership culture; one in which there is clarity at all levels about what is to be achieved. The power of school improvement partnerships involving national leaders of education and national support schools has been amply demonstrated (Hill & Matthews, 2008; 2010). Such partnerships can be preventative as well as restorative. The most effective leadership partnerships have several dimensions; they are most concerned with providing support and building knowledge through coaching, mentoring and brokerage.

In the model described above, leadership support is purposeful and focused, constantly refining priorities and overtly ensuring that all are clear about what they are trying to achieve and where they are now. This type of collaboration uses evidence-based decision-making and rewards those who successfully support their students' learning and promote in the staff a culture of learning from each other, sometimes termed 'joint practice development', as discussed earlier. As capacity to deal with the underperformance issues increases and the number of such issues decreases, the whole approach becomes proactive and gathers momentum. The success of collaborative approaches should persuade more leaders in the system to reflect on and adopt such approaches, which are the essence of the teaching school model.

Such a style is not necessarily embraced by every successful school leader. For example, some academy chains have adopted branding and procedures that suggest a 'one-size-fits-all' approach, at least in the early life of the chain. Other chains have raised standards by balancing operational consistency with mechanisms

for making the most of the large talent pool they often have at their disposal: a dynamic equilibrium that contributes to succession planning as well as school improvement. If the efficacy of a collaborative approach can be constantly demonstrated, one can but hope that those leaders who resolutely plough only their own furrows will review their practice.

Educational efficacy

An increasing body of evidence supports the stance that school-to-school work has a positive effect on school improvement. It is too early to say the same about teaching schools, except that many have their origins in successful NSSs. The accumulating case studies – such as those highlighted in this overview – indicate their potential, but most do not yet allow convincing analysis of impact. Such analysis will in any case be difficult because the multiple activities of teaching school alliances are continually evolving, thus making a link between cause and effect problematic. Much of this new activity is in response to the changing role of traditional providers of school improvement services, such as local authorities, for which teaching school alliances are likely increasingly to become part of the solution.

Despite the challenges, we believe it is critical that teaching schools, wherever possible, justify their actions, especially to their peers, on the basis of improved outcomes for pupils. Without an empirically based decision-making framework, effective knowledge management will not evolve.

Challenge 9. We need to consider which models of teaching school alliances are most effective in fostering and sustaining the high performance of their members to the benefit of children and young people.

Who owns the problem of school improvement?

The unprecedented changes in the education system, involving unprecedented levels of school autonomy, cannot be considered wholly successful unless they can assure every parent that their child has access to a good school. There is a risk of accentuating a two-tier system in which schools are on one hand either continually successful in their own right or members of school improvement partnerships such as federations, chains and teaching school alliances or, on the other hand, isolated and vulnerable to changes of leadership or other circumstances. In 2012, nearly one-third of the schools in the country were judged inadequate or as requiring improvement, ie, they are not yet good schools.

A school-led system for school improvement will not be judged fully effective unless it demonstrates the capacity to recognise, challenge and support underperforming schools that are not members of any improvement partnership.

It is clear that not all schools are working in active partnerships. The risk here is that the weakest lack the confidence to invite the support of their peers and even if they wanted support do not know where to find it.

Gilbert, 2012:23

The challenge for teaching school alliances is to recognise and embrace such schools as part of their mission, helping them to tap into the expertise and support they need in order to improve, strengthening their resolve and accompanying them on the journey. It is not always easy. What happens to the schools that, like Groucho Marx, would not want to join a club that would have them as a member? Or whose commitment to participation is less than whole-hearted? This is where the core capitals help the teaching school alliance make headway with such schools.

If alliances and chains do not rise to this challenge for the system, others will. Many local authorities no longer have the capacity or, in some cases the will, to intervene. Ofsted has recognised the problem by appointing eight regional directors (covering education, learning and skills, and social care) to identify underperforming providers: challenging their performance and taking action that will lead to improvement. The performance of these regional directors will be measured by their ability to drive improvement in those schools, colleges and other learning and skills providers that are less than good. One of the mechanisms at their disposal is brokering the engagement of a teaching school and its alliance.

An underlying consideration is reaching clarity about who 'owns' the problem of a school's improvement. Fundamentally, responsibility rests with the appropriate authority for a school, for example the governing body or academy trust. The use of consultant leaders in London Challenge schools showed what could be done through deft partnering of keys to success schools where success owed much to the relationship between the headteacher and consultant leader. Managed chains can be more directive with their member academies in a way that is inappropriate for teaching schools. Teaching schools are there to provide resources to assist schools to solve the problem of how to improve the quality of the education provided for the young people they serve. If they are to succeed, a way has to be found for them to engage with schools that 'own the problem' in a manner of speaking, but are poor at dealing with it. Such schools bounce along just above the danger point or coast along in the middle. If there is to be a major systemic shift, teaching schools have to engage effectively with these schools. London Challenge achieved this; hence the complete shift in school performance across the city. With its demise, Challenge Partners, a co-operative partnership of more than 120 schools, including 12 teaching school hubs, has been formed to try to formulate a solution to this problem.

London achieved what it set out to do. London leaders shared their knowledge and worked to improve the lot for all. We believe the teaching-school-led system can do the same. The development of teaching schools has been based on emergent research with limited structural influence but a focus on outcomes. Development has included significant piloting of the teaching school model. The crucial tests will be the effect of teaching schools on teacher supply and raising the quality of teaching, their ability to spot and intervene in underperforming schools and the extent to which they are having a positive impact on pupils' achievement. The opportunities are there.

Challenge 10. We need to consider how best to consolidate the vision of teaching schools as lasting and influential centres of excellence in an autonomous school system.

Commentary

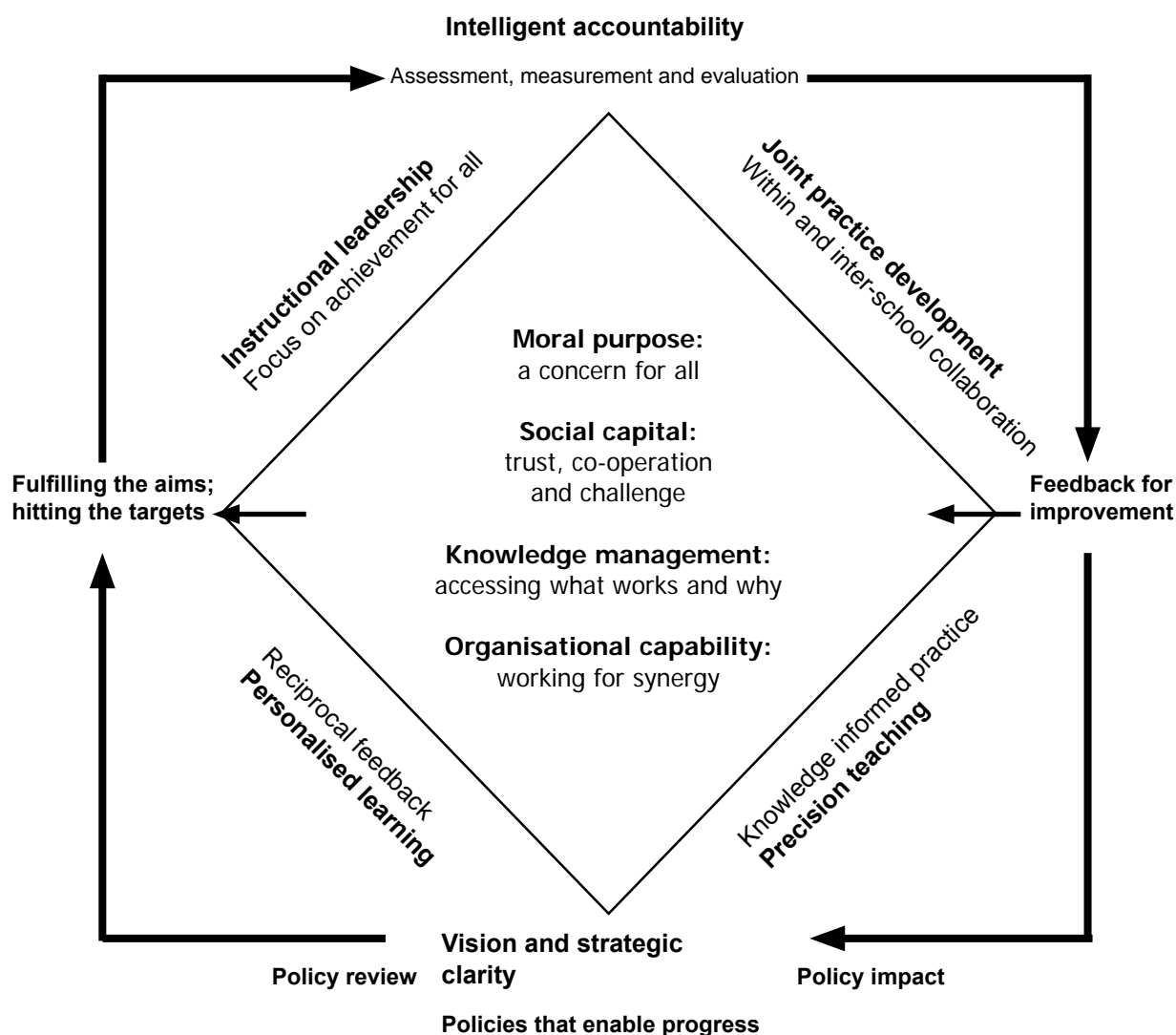
Teaching school alliances are a bold concept whose time has come. They have the potential to be a key driver in achieving a self-improving school system. The source of their influence and impact relies on mutuality rather than overarching management, which is what distinguishes alliances from chains and gives them strengths as well as potential frailties. A school can walk away from an alliance much more easily than it can break free of a chain, and it is fundamentally only the depth of the four essentials (capitals) that gives an alliance its cohesion.

The next step of our emerging model for teaching schools and their alliances needs to incorporate quality assurance, evaluation and a feedback loop. These are represented in Figure 8, which also provides a basis for a 'theory of action' for teaching school alliances.

This model applies at many levels: within the school, the whole school and the alliance of schools. It also applies to the system of schools in England, for it summarises the universal factors that contribute to the national mission to make every school a good school.

Teaching schools and their alliances represent an unusual face of educational policy-making; they emerged from a 10-year history of school improvement strategy based on schools partnering schools and reflect the lessons of that history.

Figure 8: Emerging model for teaching schools and their alliances



The designation benchmark for teaching schools has always been seen, by those who set the criteria, as aspirational. The expectations of them are very high. It is a reflection on the quality of leaders in our schools that so many are keen that they and their schools should rise to the challenge. The government has stressed that they should be 'of the highest quality – truly amongst the best schools in the country' (HM Government 2010:23).

In a time of economic stringency, teaching schools provide a relatively inexpensive yet highly effective source of school improvement. It is already clear that those who work in teaching schools gain much satisfaction from this extra dimension. They feel it allows them to have a role that has a deep-set moral purpose within a public service. It gives that service a shared sense of responsibility beyond the boundary fence. At a time when headteachers are being encouraged to become system leaders this motivation needs to be nurtured.

One weakness in this aspect of a self-improving school system may be the lack of a clear independent champion for teaching schools. Since the outset, the movement has been supported by the Department for Education and facilitated and administered by the National College for School Leadership (or its successor body). There is no doubt that without ministerial backing, the development of teaching school alliances would not have reached the position they are in today, poised to make a difference. However, the National College, which was largely independent, is now part of the Department for Education and has merged with the former Teaching Agency. With this come opportunities such as ready access to policy-makers but also potential weaknesses. Of these, the teaching school movement must guard against the possibility of:

- burdensome bureaucracy stifling the development process, cutting off the rich seam of creativity that has sustained the development from the outset
- restricting the role the leaders of teaching schools play in the systemic development of this policy

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- teaching schools being viewed by the schools they are seeking to support as politically rather than educationally motivated
 - the movement becoming driven politically first and educationally second rather than vice versa which has been the case up until now.

One body which can act as sentinel as well as provide a voice is the council of regional representatives of teaching schools, the Teaching Schools Council, whose proceedings should be more widely known. But the survival of teaching school alliances will depend on their ability to demonstrate clearly and conclusively that they are improving teaching, learning and educational outcomes across the system. This will be the best guarantee of ongoing political and professional investment. The danger is that some teaching schools or alliances, having won the badge, fail to deliver. There are lessons to be learned from those converter academies that do little to take advantage of their new freedoms to raise achievement and make little or no contribution to the improvement of other schools.

We conclude that the introduction and initial implementation of the teaching schools policy and creation of alliances has made an impressive start but that the next phase will be more difficult. Teaching school alliances are complex, multi-tasking organisations requiring not only strong collective leadership but also a sophisticated approach to management. There will be tensions between collaboration and autonomy, between the self expression of individual institutions and the corporate good. The test will be whether they can provide a sufficiently dominant gene pool to provide the teachers and leaders best able to transform both the schools in which they work and the system of which they are a part.

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