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National College
for School Leadership

Schools and academies

How teaching schools are making a difference: part 2

Resource

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Introduction

This paper is an update to the first edition 'how teaching schools are already making a difference' and gives examples of teaching schools continuing to develop innovative and high quality approaches to the programme.

The role of teaching schools: the big six

Teaching schools are part of the government's drive to give schools more freedom and take increasing responsibility for managing the school system. As well as offering training and support for their alliance themselves, teaching schools will identify and co-ordinate expertise from their alliance, using the best leaders and teachers to:

- play a greater role in training new entrants to the profession
- lead peer-to-peer professional and leadership development
- identify and develop leadership potential
- provide support for other schools
- designate and broker specialist leaders of education (SLEs)
- engage in research and development

This paper explores a wide range of examples of innovation that are developing as teaching schools continue to take the lead in teacher training, staff development and school improvement.

Initial teacher training

South Farnham School, Surrey

South Farnham School has a strong history of initial teacher training (ITT). The school became a recommending body for the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) in 2001, delivering its own route to qualified teacher status (QTS). Subsequently, it became a founder member of the management group of Surrey local authority's designated recommending body, later becoming an accredited body, then a recognised provider for employment-based initial teacher training (EBITT). South Farnham took a lead role in the strategic planning and delivery of the GTP route, with practitioners from the school working as programme trainers, support tutors and final assessors, in addition to the school providing placements and mentoring each year.

In 2011, South Farnham collaborated with national partners to form Surrey South Farnham school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT), recruiting 10 high-quality trainees who began their training in September 2012 in a number of partner schools.

Given its experience of taking a lead role in teacher training, South Farnham was also keen to get involved in the new School Direct route alongside its SCITT leadership. The alliance is working with Roehampton University to manage five pilot School Direct places in 2012/13. For next year (2013/14) it has secured 30 fee-paying School Direct places and 20 salaried places, all primary, in addition to 10 SCITT allocations. The alliance's aim is to grow the Surrey South Farnham SCITT each year to become the ITT provider of choice within Surrey and in the nearby counties of Hampshire and Berkshire.

Belleville Primary School and Southfields Academy, Wandsworth

ITT is a major focus for this cross-phase alliance. Some aspects are led separately for primary (Belleville) and secondary (Southfields) so there is a strong lead school in each phase, whilst other projects are undertaken jointly with a cross-phase ITT core group in place.

The Belleville and Southfields alliance works with a range of initial teacher education (ITE) providers, with Kingston University, Roehampton University, St Mary's and the Institute of Education all acting as strategic partners. The alliance is increasing its ITT activity and is actively engaging with the new School Direct routes.

Southfields is leading a Post-graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) programme for the School Direct pilot year (2012/13) and has secured 72 secondary School Direct places (36 salaried and 36 non-salaried) for 2013/14. The Southfields EBITT was graded 'outstanding' by Ofsted and evaluated as the best EBITT in the country by *The good teacher training guide 2011*. Plans are in progress for conversion to SCITT this year. Southfields is running an ITT cluster group for PGCE students in partnership with the Institute of Education. The school is working with alliance partners to plan a forthcoming Train to Teach event to promote ITT applications.

Belleville is committed to the development of primary teacher training and is on the management board of both the West London Partnership (GTP route) and Wandsworth's primary SCITT. It is delivering training for 100 primary GTP students in phonics, science and ICT on behalf of the West London Partnership this year, as well as providing placements for students on GTP and PGCE routes. As a continuation of ITT, the school is running an induction programme this year for 38 newly qualified teachers (NQTs) from 16 partner schools across 4 boroughs.

Belleville has secured 24 School Direct salaried primary places for 2013/14 as the lead school in a cluster of 15 local primaries. Belleville's programme will be based in schools, and include placement rotation, a comprehensive scheme of high-quality, school-delivered training days, and structured, focused visits. The programme will be accredited by Kingston University.

The Belleville and Southfields alliance is also working in partnership with the Youth Sports Trust on an innovative project on exceptional primary PE teaching. It aims to support trainees and NQTs to build skills and confidence for teaching and learning in PE, as well as offering specific sport/activity courses such as Start to Move. Participating trainees and teachers undergo developmental observations in order to identify and track improvement.

Millais School, West Sussex

This alliance has 121 trainee teachers this year: 27 primary, 93 secondary and 1 special. A significant number of pre-ITT placements are also offered, with Millais facilitating over 50 school experience placements last year, mainly in maths and science. The alliance is now actively aiming to increase this provision even further and is working with higher education (HE) institutions to develop a three-year projection for local supply and demand.

Teacher training initiatives at Millais this year include a pilot project with the University of Brighton to provide a new PGCE course in physics with maths with the aim of increasing the number of physics trainees. Millais is currently supporting training for 20 students on this course. The alliance has also been involved in recruiting PGCE history students in collaboration with the University of Sussex.

Naturally, School Direct is now becoming a key focus. This year the alliance is providing School Direct PGCE places in primary as well as in secondary physics, maths and modern foreign languages, working with the universities of Brighton and Sussex. Next year Millais has nine non-salaried and seven salaried places.

Consistency is very important and a common induction programme for all ITE students is being developed across partner schools. The alliance is also looking closely at the training and recruitment of ITT mentors and has created a designation of lead mentor, which is applied to experienced mentors who will offer training and quality assurance to others. Currently the alliance's mentor pool is made up of 43 primary, 168 secondary and 5 special school professionals.

Arthur Terry School, Birmingham

Arthur Terry leads an alliance of 12 secondary and 12 primary schools from across Birmingham, Warwickshire and Staffordshire. It was recently accredited as a SCITT offering PGCE in chemistry, drama, maths and physics, with trainees able to follow one of two routes validated by Birmingham City University: one offering 60 Master's-level credits and one offering 30 credits. The 38-week programme is divided between structured training sessions and teaching experience in schools, with support from a school-based learning coach as well as SCITT subject leaders.

The alliance is also working with Aston University on a new four-year Master's in science with QTS. The first two years are primarily spent at the university with short spells in school made up of observation and team teaching. Towards the end of year 2, interviews and assessment will be carried out to select those who show the potential to become outstanding teachers. Successful students will then spend a full-time year at Arthur Terry, where all their time will be spent training in the classroom. The programme will culminate with a final year at university where students complete their degree, including a focused action research project on an aspect of pedagogy.

All ITT students get placements in at least three schools across the alliance and Arthur Terry has developed a 'pair and share' model for placements, where pairs of trainees work alongside an outstanding teacher.

The alliance has 18 School Direct places in 2012/13, offering PGCEs in biology, English and music, and 38 places for next year, covering a wide range of subjects.

The Fallibroome Academy, Cheshire East

For the Fallibroome alliance, School Direct is a major focus. In 2012/13, the alliance was allocated one secondary School Direct trainee who is following a PGCE programme, as well as two primary School Direct places.

For the two primary trainees, a brand-new programme has been developed by alliance school Mottram St Andrew Primary Academy in partnership with the University of Manchester. Recruitment was school led and the programme designed by an experienced outstanding teacher. For half of the year, trainees are based at university three days a week where they study maths, English and science. On the other two days of the week, in-school training covers behaviour, special education needs (SEN), assessment and the teaching of foundation subjects. For the rest of the year, trainees will undertake block teaching practices in schools. Successful trainees will be awarded a PGCE as well as QTS.

Fallibroome sees the new route as very positive, both for schools and trainees. A key benefit is the selection of trainees by the school, meaning that trainees are viewed as potential employees from the start. The alliance can see the potential for a ready supply of future teachers, trained in line with schools' own ways of working, whilst trainees also bring fresh ideas and resources into schools from their university experience. Additionally, the challenge of designing, delivering and quality assuring training has provided valuable leadership development for existing school staff.

Trainees access good-quality input from a Russell Group university combined with day-to-day school experience. They benefit from working with an outstanding teacher for an extended period, and bespoke training that meets their individual needs. The expectation is that they will gain employment within an alliance school once qualified.

For 2013/14 Fallibroome has 16 non-salaried and 4 salaried places. Trainees will be placed across alliance schools and the model will build on the successes of the pilot year.

Continuing professional development and leadership development

The Woodroffe School, Dorset

There is a big focus on continuing professional development (CPD) at Woodroffe, which offers a professional Master's programme to staff across the alliance in partnership with Bath Spa University.

The alliance also has its own CPD programme, consisting of a series of sessions on Monday evenings covering a wide range of topics, free to all alliance staff. Themes include literacy, assessment for learning, middle leadership and group learning and for each theme there are a number of training events. Each session ends with recommended next steps, designed to ensure the training has an impact on pupils and their learning.

Another key element of CPD is trio and collaborative learning. Through this system, teachers from different schools work in threes to deepen their pedagogical skills. Staff work collaboratively, undertaking reciprocal observations of lessons, planning together and trialling new strategies. Each trio is supported by a specialist leader of education (SLE), who supports the development of teachers' confidence and skills as well as evaluating the impact of the work.

To ensure an ongoing programme of development opportunities, Woodroffe is developing a directory of expertise across all partner schools which will support cross-alliance CPD.

Wildern School and Hounslow School, Hampshire

The Wildern and Hounslow alliance is launching its own framework for leadership qualities and behaviours. This has been developed by a group of alliance schools as a tool for 360-degree self-evaluation in order to identify strengths and areas for development. It will support leaders in deciding on an appropriate personalised pathway through a menu of development options. The alliance now plans for seven of its heads who are local leaders of education (LLEs) to work with aspiring leaders. Each LLE will undertake an evaluation with a senior leader from another school, providing professional coaching with an element of objectivity and, in many cases, cross-phase input.

Partner schools are also involved in providing CPD for leaders across the alliance. Each partner school has been invited to lead a discussion session on a specific subject, which will be a professional learning conversation in the form of a seminar or workshop on a particular theme, and which staff across the alliance may choose to attend. This model supports the alliance's view that professional development should not always be composed of structured courses requiring time out of school, and some discussions will be held as breakfast or twilight meetings. It is felt that everyone in the alliance has something to offer.

The Wildern and Hounslow alliance is also taking on school-led management of a well-established leadership development programme previously run by Hampshire local authority called 'Future Change Makers'. This successful nine-month programme for senior leaders aspiring to headship is in its seventh year. Around 30 participants a year are supported by local headteachers who give up their time to act as mentors and facilitators. 'Beyond Boundaries' is another programme that the alliance will build on, involving a placement system for senior leaders to gain experience of working in other schools and contexts.

An overarching theme for the alliance has been building a coaching culture. In connection with this, partners are developing a peer review model, linked to the new Ofsted framework. Alliance heads will form review groups to support one another, helping each school to undertake challenging and rigorous self-evaluation.

Oldway Primary School, Torbay

Across Oldway's alliance there is a focus on developing leaders at all levels and ensuring exposure to outstanding practice. Torbay Leadership Academy, established by Oldway in partnership with the local authority, co-ordinates a range of leadership programmes. In collaboration with the neighbouring South West and Peninsula alliances, Oldway has secured a license to deliver the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH). Teachers have also been trained to facilitate the Improving Teacher Programme (ITP) and the Outstanding Teacher Programme (OTP).

Five teaching and learning networks have been established by Oldway, and in these experienced middle and senior leaders work with others, often using lesson study as a key tool. Teachers and trainees research together, leading to joint practice development, and different schools assume leadership of the networks depending on their strengths and the focus of enquiry.

There is a strong overlap between CPD and research activity at Oldway. For example, a project on literacy supported by the Teaching Agency includes systematic synthetic phonics, while a longitudinal maths project supported by the National College and the Institute of Education is researching 'great CPD leading to consistently great pedagogy'. Another key theme is coaching and mentoring, which runs through all CPD activity from ITT to the development of experienced staff.

The alliance is currently working on a programme aiming to improve teaching and learning in Spanish across participating schools. The project, supported by CfBT and the Department for Education, is intended to give teachers a deeper understanding of progression from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 as well as improving language learning skills in Year 7.

Each primary school will send single year-group teams of three pupils from years 4, 5 and 6 together with their teachers, to attend five whole-day workshops over the academic year. The workshops will be led by sixth formers acting as language leaders and supervised by an advanced skills teacher (AST) and a Spanish teacher from the lead primary school. Primary teachers are required to complete tasks between sessions to ensure that they apply their learning, whilst the pupils cascade the learning activities to their classmates on returning to school.

Teachers, trainee teachers and sixth-form students will work together to produce digital language-learning resources for the classroom, and teachers will also attend a day's training on Spanish phonics to enhance their practice.

Recent Ofsted judgements of alliance schools have seen an increase in grades of 'good' and 'outstanding', including those for teaching and learning.

Succession planning and talent management

Belleville Primary School and Southfields Academy, Wandsworth

Belleville School and Southfields Academy have undertaken significant work in the development of senior leaders with ambitions to progress in their careers. For example, Belleville has created and facilitated a programme of development opportunities for over 20 primary deputy heads across Wandsworth. This year, the deputy development group has been expanded to involve partner schools in Croydon, Bromley, and Kensington and Chelsea. Alliance heads and senior leaders support specific sessions, which have included preparing for headship interviews, developing satisfactory teachers, strategies for staffing and admin structure, data analysis and the use of RAISEonline. The group has also undertaken focused school visits to observe practice in different contexts and talk to practising headteachers about their experience in the role.

Another aspect of succession planning that the alliance has focused on is the recruitment and support of new headteachers in order to enable development and retention in the role. Southfields has for some time had a significant role in leading new headship support on behalf of the secondary London Leadership Strategy and is now taking a lead role in supporting the secondary pan-London aspiring heads course, including the development of a core conference, in partnership with the National College's succession planning team.

Belleville has recently worked with Wandsworth local authority to set up a headteacher recruitment and mentoring programme. Experienced primary and special heads have formed a mentoring pool and are matched to newly employed heads in the borough to provide voluntary peer support. Experienced primary heads also support the recruitment of new heads by offering to work with governors on interview processes. Several primary heads in the alliance have contributed to borough-wide deputy heads' conferences as well as aspiring leader events co-ordinated by the South West London School Effectiveness Partnership (SWLSEP).

The alliance recently secured additional National College succession planning funding for work on diversity and talent management. Southfields will lead a project on diversifying senior leadership teams, looking at developing strategies to support more women and Black and minority ethnic (BME) leaders to move into senior positions. Belleville will look at structured talent management, including systems for co-ordinating leadership placements and tracking career progression. Partner schools from the alliance will be involved in both projects, which will result in the dissemination of ideas and practice to the wider teaching school network.

Forest Way School, Leicester

The Forest Way Teaching School Alliance is led by Forest Way School, a special school near Leicester. Working with other schools in the East Midlands, Forest Way played an important role in the development of the Talent Management Quality Mark (TMQM) system.

In the first issue of Green Shoots, we described how Forest Way had brought together headteachers from 22 primary, secondary, nursery and special schools to create an alliance talent management initiative for 2011-12. This included developing an audit tool that complements the TMQM, as well as an accompanying training package, to identify aspirant leaders and understand their specific development needs. The audit questionnaire/interview process has since been used to excellent effect, identifying and supporting 21 aspirant leaders in an initial cohort in 2012.

The 21 aspirant leaders from the first cohort were partnered with established senior leaders in order to receive career coaching, mentoring and shadowing opportunities. The group have been able to access bespoke leadership development training, developed and delivered within the alliance, such as a 'get that job!' session offering practical tips and advice for applications and interviews. Courses like this one are offered free to alliance schools, with a small charge levied for schools beyond the alliance in order for the provision to be sustainable.

The alliance is now in the process of identifying leaders for a second talent management cohort. The audit and training will be carried out with nine new alliance schools. Forest Way is planning new bespoke workshops for the group, such as one looking at dealing with difficult situations and people. Supported leaders will include middle leaders who aspire to senior leadership roles, as well as senior leaders looking to progress more quickly into headship.

Forest Way works closely with the other teaching schools in the East Midlands, three of which are licensed to offer National College programmes, such as the new National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership. Aspiring leaders in the Forest Way alliance are encouraged to access these.

School-to-school support

Ringwood School Academy and Bransgore Church of England Primary School, Hampshire

This cross-phase alliance is known as the Southern Partnership for Excellence in Leadership & Learning (SPELL) and specialises in school improvement, from primary to post-16, mainly in Hampshire, Wiltshire and Dorset. SPELL has a good track record of supporting schools in special measures and those identified as requiring improvement.

The heads and senior leaders across the alliance offer a range of support services, and details of individual national, local and specialist leaders of education (NLEs, LLEs and SLEs) can be found on SPELL's website. An extensive menu of support is offered, which includes:

- headteacher support in strategic leadership, evaluation and raising standards
- leadership and management review, including lesson observations, strategic planning sessions, meetings with governors and a staff questionnaire
- a guidance and support day, looking at pupil tracking, understanding and using data effectively, inclusion and working with external agencies
- one-day curriculum review and redesign package
- teaching and learning support, including joint lesson observations, student dialogue groups and opportunities to visit and observe outstanding teachers in other schools
- whole-staff Inset delivery
- student leadership resources and training
- practical support on ICT networks, the school information management system (SIMS), and site and financial management
- school governance sessions on academy conversion
- support for schools considering applying to become teaching schools

SLEs are an important component of SPELL's school-to-school support offer. Eight lead practitioners have been accredited as SLEs and are able to support others in a range of specialisms. The alliance runs courses designed specifically for staff interested in developing their skills in coaching others and applying to become SLEs themselves.

In addition, SPELL has created a role of alliance improvement partner (AIP) as a response to the decreasing role of the school improvement partner (SIP). Addressing a 'gap in the market', NLEs and LLEs will act as AIPs to offer daily support in areas such as assessing the effectiveness of school self-evaluation and improvement plans, analysing school performance data, and reviewing targets and priorities. AIPs will also support heads and governors to agree a package of support and challenge for the school as well as supporting headteacher performance management.

Carmel College, Darlington

Carmel College, which is a Catholic academy, has supported other schools for many years in a range of initiatives. Barriers to engagement have in the past included difficulties in brokerage, and developing trust and confidence in the capacity and capability of partner schools to deliver. Becoming a teaching school has given Carmel the licence and motivation to develop solutions to these barriers.

The Carmel teaching school alliance is working together to proactively develop capacity, secure relationships and identify the needs of schools across the region. Capacity has been grown through NLEs, LLEs and SLEs. Systematic reviews have been conducted across the area, identifying future capacity needs and through local knowledge; there is a clear understanding of where support will be needed in the immediate future.

Programmes of support have ranged from single SLE deployment to whole-school support. For example, following requests from a local primary school for support and guidance with Level 6 English, experienced primary and secondary SLEs have worked to develop Key Stage 2 teachers' confidence to teach and assess at these higher levels. Other leaders have been deployed to work closely with a secondary school that has moved from grade 3 to 2 (Ofsted overall effectiveness) in just over a year.

In addition to onsite support, courses and workshops are held at Carmel to support local schools. Primary and secondary schools have engaged with teaching development programmes as well as workshops on raising the attainment of pupils in English and maths above 90 per cent. Carmel College continues to promote the work of teaching schools across the North East region, including working with schools that are geographically isolated.

Specialist leaders of education

Ashton-on-Mersey School, Trafford

In the first round of SLE recruitment, Ashton-on-Mersey designated 15 SLEs from 6 different schools within its alliance. To meet the needs of primary alliance schools, primary leaders were specifically targeted in the pilot for the second SLE cohort. Several priority specialisms are covered including English, maths, leadership, data and intervention.

Of the 15 SLEs designated in the first cohort, 12 have been deployed for a total of just under 80 days. Support has ranged from one-day diagnostics in English and science to a 19-day deployment focused on increasing attainment and progress in maths. SLEs have also designed and delivered Inset sessions. By popular request, one SLE, who had been seconded to Ofsted and has current inspection experience, has supported many schools across the alliance in preparing for inspection.

Deployments are commissioned through various channels including requests from alliance schools, general enquiries through the teaching school website and commissions via a successful school network established under the Greater Manchester Challenge. A payment model has been established and agreed by alliance partners. In future, this may include brokerage fees as well as a system for costing different SLE tiers based on levels of leadership responsibility.

Two of Ashton-on-Mersey's SLEs have developed and delivered a training package for leaders considering applying for SLE status. During the autumn term of 2012, Ashton-on-Mersey held its first SLE review meeting to discuss the deployment process from end to end, listen to feedback from SLEs and look at how the system can be improved further.

Wildern School and Hounslow School, Hampshire

SLEs are integral to Wildern and Hounslow's plans as a teaching school. The alliance's pool of nine SLEs (eight secondary and one primary) is considered to be at the heart of its work in CPD provision and succession planning as well as school-to-school support. A further five primary and special school SLEs will be appointed this term.

Investing in SLEs' development is taken seriously and the alliance has established a specific programme to support them to further develop their coaching skills. The course consists of three half-day sessions, jointly delivered by one of the SLEs (a coaching and mentoring specialist) together with an external consultant.

The next step will be for each of the SLEs to provide individual, focused support to another leader. Each SLE will work with someone in whom they have identified leadership potential, coaching them to develop over time. Subsequently, the coachee will in turn coach someone new, creating a leadership development chain that is central to the teaching school's approach.

The Wildern and Hounslow alliance is currently planning a marketplace event in January to showcase SLEs and other expert professionals at middle and senior leader level. Each leader will speak briefly about their experience, skills and expertise to an audience of heads and senior leaders from alliance schools. Each SLE will also have their own stand, which colleagues can visit if they are interested in commissioning a deployment. To raise interest across the alliance and to provide opportunities for SLEs to practise their skills, attending members will be entitled to a free gift, for example two hours' free support from an SLE or lead teacher.

Research and development

The Wroxham School, Hertfordshire

The ethos of Wroxham teaching school alliance revolves around transformative practice. This is heavily inspired by the findings published in 'Creating learning without limits' (Swan et al, 2012), the culmination of a research project between The Wroxham School and the University of Cambridge. The Learning Without Limits project findings suggest that ideas of fixed ability can limit children's learning. These ideas are embedded in practice at Wroxham so that rather than pupils' activity being determined by a particular level or set, they are encouraged to choose from activities of varying difficulty according to how confident they feel.

The school has also undertaken a range of research work on student leadership and voice. This has been highlighted in the books *Democratic citizenship in schools: Teaching controversial issues, traditions and accountability* (Brown, Ross & Munn, 2012) and *Leading a creative school: Initiating and sustaining school change* (Sanders, 2011).

The Wroxham School aligns itself closely with the Cambridge Primary Review, for which Wroxham's head, Alison Peacock, leads the national network. Alison also contributed to the Rose review (Rose, 2006). Both reviews support the importance of a broad and balanced curriculum, something that is firmly emphasised at Wroxham.

Evidence from the Cambridge Primary Review's final report (Alexander, 2009) has informed and influenced a four-session leadership course, 'Transformational Primary Leadership Practice', which was developed by heads from across the alliance. The course combines leadership theory with everyday practical advice and resources, for example school development plans, monitoring forms, school self-evaluation, governors' reports and behaviour review formats. Each session focuses on one of the four new school inspection priorities:

- **the big picture and fine reality:** leading and managing in real life
- **excellent teachers transform lives:** creating and sustaining a culture of empowerment
- **children's behaviour in and around school:** scaffolding learning for engagement
- **having it all - achievement and attainment:** high standards through rigour and creativity

The school's research into transformational leadership has provided a basis to explore what can be achieved when schools work together. The research highlighted seven dispositions that increase capacity for professional learning: openness to ideas; questioning; inventiveness; persistence; emotional stability; generosity; and empathy. Funding from the National College is supporting the alliance's research into how teaching schools can support learning at a system level, using a lesson-study approach and research groups for heads and senior leaders.

As well as long-standing links with the University of Cambridge, Wroxham has also recently worked with the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE) in order to clarify the alliance's strategy for professional development. This has resulted in a clear structure built on three main strands: building a growth mindset in mathematics, a language for learning and leadership.

Portswood Primary School, Southampton

Portswood Primary has a decade-long history of research and development (R&D) through a combination of national research projects, accredited study, small-scale action research on new initiatives and thorough use of case studies and evaluation. Staff operate as action researchers in their daily work, approaching teaching with a problem-solving mindset.

Previous research projects have included a one-year project on the use of learning logs with gifted and talented pupils; a best practice research scholarship on the impact of double-class-sized teaching (featured in the *Times Educational Supplement*); an educational doctorate on the emergence of assistant headship; and Master's dissertation on assessment for learning (AfL). Smaller scale work has included action research on the use of symbols in feedback for Year 1 pupils and lesson study research into writing paragraphs in Year 4. Across the school there is extensive use of questionnaires to gather feedback from pupils on teaching and specific subject areas to inform developments. Central to R&D work has been Portswood's professional tutor, whose research leadership role includes providing intensive coaching for teachers.

Portswood's strong focus on R&D is now being extended across its teaching school alliance. Using the ideas of Hargreaves (2011), the alliance is pushing the idea of innovation in an attempt to demystify research for teachers. A cross-alliance research group meets half-termly to discuss and develop action research in partner schools. Current alliance research includes comparing single and multiple interventions in SEN, the impact of phonics screening on teaching methods in Reception and Year 1, measuring the impact of improving times tables on mental maths, and examining the impact of ensemble work in Early Years music on social skills. Alliance teachers are supported with Master's study.

An additional action research group has been set up to look at assessment in partnership with the local authority. Portswood is also undertaking a national research project on developing great pedagogy across the alliance, working with nine schools and focusing on developing a coaching culture.

Throughout all of this activity, the focus is on using a research-based mentality in order to raise the quality of teaching across all partner schools, keeping in mind the alliance aim of 'every lesson at least good.'

The Mead Community Primary School, Wiltshire

With two sites serving a rural community, the Mead's logo features a badger, which has lent itself to the creation of 'learning setts'. These groups promote research practice across the alliance, as well as supporting capacity-building and leadership development.

Joint practice development (JPD) innovation hubs have been created. JPD is a key factor in Mead's research and development approach. 'Spiral', a common teacher research methodology, has been applied to support JPD activity. As well as shared methods, activity is aligned to alliance priorities and informed by shared data, with an information-sharing protocol in place across schools. This ensures a systematic approach to collaborative research activity across the alliance. Each JPD innovation hub has a research lead, a HE partner and an experienced supporting consultant.

One focus has been on developing the leadership of enquiry, including designing a training programme for building a supportive professional culture and supporting improvement through research. The alliance has also developed a self-assessment e-tool to support research participation and leadership. As well as building teachers' understanding of the knowledge, skills and attributes required in R&D, the tool will also support performance management in this area. A range of R&D work has been undertaken by Mead on the SLE role. Working in partnership with Bristol local authority and Bristol early years centres, the alliance is developing a model for Early Years SLE activity which will include early language, early maths, family support, assessment and transition, and inclusion. A role specification and induction programme have been written and Master's accredited modules are in place. Induction and training include a strong focus on research enquiry and the role of the SLE as research mentor to other colleagues.

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