National College
for School Leadership

Establishing and leading new types of school: challenges and opportunities for leaders and leadership

Resource

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education.

Acknowledgements

Executive summary

University technical colleges (UTCs), studio schools and free schools are the three new types of school whose leadership is studied in this report. Discussions to establish UTCs and studio schools had started before 2010, and the first UTC opened in September 2010, with another in 2011 and three more in 2012. Six studio schools opened in 2011 and 12 in 2012. The free school programme began in May 2010, with the first 24 free schools opening in 2011 and 55 further free schools opening in 2012.

The fieldwork for this report was carried out during late 2011 and through 2012, so the observations and conclusions relate to a specific point in the early stages of development of these new types of school. The government's approach to supporting these schools has evolved during the course of the study. Nonetheless, the results of the research are instructive.

There are useful lessons to be learned from the leadership of similar schools in other jurisdictions and from the literature on the leadership of small schools. Some of the new types of school are small by design, and many of the rest are small in practice as they tend to open one or two year groups at a time. Some of the new types of school seek to develop an innovative curriculum and it is useful to study the principles on which this can be done effectively.

The main motivations for establishing new types of school are parental demand and to fill a perceived gap in the curriculum. This is backed by a strong personal mission on the part of the promoters and principals of the schools.

Leading new types of school presents great opportunities for school leaders, but also major challenges, both in the set-up phase and in the early years after opening the school. The leaders of these new types of school have coped with these challenges in different ways, but all have stressed the opportunities that starting a new school has given them to enact their vision of the education best suited to fulfil the aims of the school and the needs of its pupils.
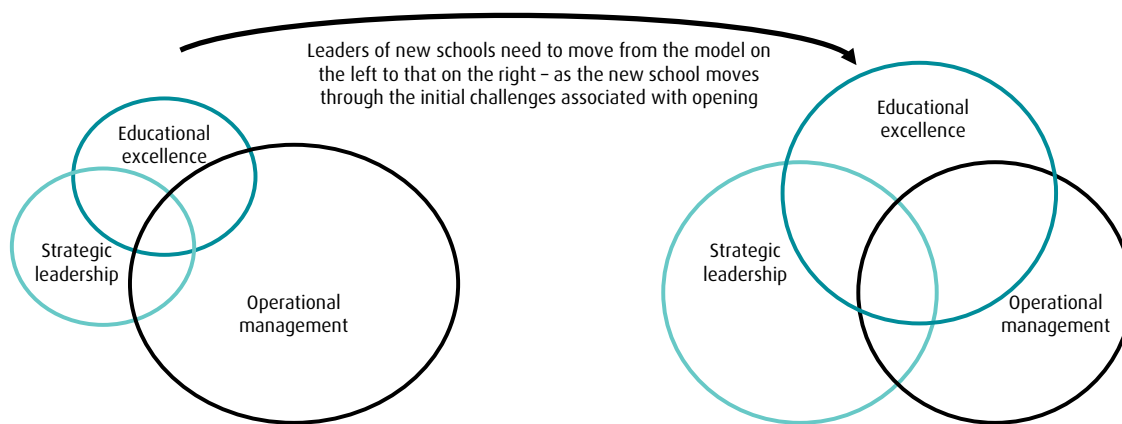
The process of establishing a new school is extremely challenging, with a restricted timescale between approval and opening and, frequently, difficulties in finding suitable premises, both to open the school and then to establish it on a permanent site. During this set-up period, promoters and principals have to deal with a myriad of other challenges, from the need to recruit pupils and appoint staff, to building relationships with a local community that may be sceptical about the arrival of a new type of school with which they are unfamiliar.

The length of negotiations between promoters and the Department for Education has been a critical factor underlying many of the pre-opening challenges. However, the Department has made some reductions to the extent of negotiations with promoters of free schools opening in 2013 and 2014, while still maintaining the government's requirement for robust accountability and best value for money.

Leaders of new schools that are part of chains or groups are supported in much of this challenging work and are more likely to be able to spend a higher proportion of their time on leading teaching and learning and addressing strategic as well as operational issues.

There are particular challenges for principals who have not previously been headteachers, who are learning the job of headship at the same time as establishing a new school. Based on responses to our survey, the proportion of principals of new schools opening in 2012 with no previous headship experience is significantly higher than the proportion for schools that opened in 2011. The level of challenge was increased in instances where other senior staff had no previous experience of school leadership, when heads were appointed as little as four months before the school was due to open, where the school had difficult premises issues to address, and was not part of a chain or group. Pupil recruitment also provided a substantial challenge, particularly as there may have been no premises to show to parents, where the normal process of school admissions had already taken place, and where other local schools were strongly opposed to the creation of the new school.

As the school moves from set-up to opening, the challenge of balancing leadership time and focus between the demands of operational, strategic and teaching and learning roles becomes more acute. Priorities are constantly being juggled. The first half-term after opening is inevitably dominated for principals by the demands of day-to-day management, with strategic discussions beginning to take place later in the term. The challenge for new school leaders is to ensure that operational habits do not become so entrenched that they are unable to move to a better balance in their roles as their school develops during its first year.

Leaders of new schools need to move from the model on the left to that on the right – as the new school moves through the initial challenges associated with opening

Educational excellence

Strategic leadership

Operational management

Educational excellence

Strategic leadership

Operational management

This situation is indicative of the dynamic nature of the leadership structures and methods of operation in a new school that will expand each year for several years. At the start of the second year, pupil and staff numbers may well double, requiring a clear plan to maintain the momentum, ethos and leadership cohesion of the school's first year.

Our interviews revealed that just about every challenge has its matching opportunity. Starting a school from scratch means that many practical issues, such as IT contracts and telephony, have to be sorted out; there are no established policies and practices, and every member of staff and all pupils have to be recruited. These challenges are balanced by the opportunity to implement a vision of education, and appoint staff who share that vision and who enjoy working in a climate of innovation. Leaders of new schools are also free to establish new systems to underpin their vision, including different ways of structuring the school week, organising curriculum planning and staff development time, and supporting teaching and learning in the classroom.

Most new types of school start small, which presents its own set of challenges, particularly for leaders of small secondary schools. All staff, and especially those with posts of responsibility, must wear several hats and be prepared to turn their hand to anything. At the same time, the small size enables better communication, closer working relationships and more rapid innovation and evaluation of new approaches to teaching and learning.

There is a similar range of challenges and opportunities for the promoters, as the school opens and they take on the role of governors. Many promoters will have been very hands-on during the set-up phase, putting in many hours of work on premises issues, marketing, human resources policies and the education plan required for approval by the Department for Education's advisers. This can make it harder for promoters to step back and take on a more strategic role as school governors.

Governing bodies of new types of school have a particularly important role to play, especially in standalone free schools, where the governing body is the critical line of accountability, there being no other backstop except the Department for Education. It is therefore imperative that governors are trained for this role.

Governing bodies of UTCs must have a majority of governors from business and higher education, and our research found that these governors play a significant role in the development of the school, with their employers attaching considerable importance to the reputational effect of the performance of the school.

Not all external relationships are so strong or so encouraging for the new types of school. Relationships with other schools can be difficult, often turning on the issue of admissions and the effect on pupil numbers of the arrival of the new school on the local scene. Most headteachers of the new schools are able to join the local heads' group, although sometimes not immediately.

There is a risk that some new schools could become isolated and out of touch with local developments, but many new school leaders are attending meetings of local headteachers and some are linking with a teaching school alliance. Relationships with local authorities are very variable, with some local authorities taking the initiative in establishing a free school and others being openly hostile. UTCs and studio schools have very strong relationships with employers and are taking school-business links to a new level in the impact on the curriculum for young people.

The skills and qualities required of the leaders of these schools are similar to those needed in leaders of maintained schools, although with some differences of emphasis and degree. In the set-up phase for a new school, leaders emphasise the importance of being able to exercise skills in the areas of project management, capacity to innovate, financial management, media and marketing, and political and stakeholder management. This has implications for the training offered to the leaders of new types of school by the National College and its partners.

Leaders of new schools are accessing professional and leadership development through four main routes:

— using coaches and mentors: the coaching provided by the National College to the principals is particularly welcomed, not least because of the limitations of time available to those establishing and leading a new school; the leaders' preferred style of training mirrors the flexible modes of leadership development recommended in the literature

— buying into development programmes, including from Future Leaders and other National College licensed providers of leadership development

— working with leaders of other schools, including independent schools: leaders of schools that are part of groups or chains have a core group of other leaders with whom to work on school improvement strategies, a facility not available to schools that are more isolated

— networking with leaders of other new schools; since networks between free schools are generally not as strong as those for studio schools and UTCs, this has an impact on the ability of new schools to join with other schools for professional development and school improvement support

The research team's recommendations are grouped under five headings.

Recommendations for promoters

Promoters of new schools are encouraged to identify a dedicated person to oversee project planning for the new school (including the appointment of a headteacher). They are also recommended to use the report's findings to consider the skills they need to look for when appointing a principal. As the set-up phase is ending, promoters are advised to consider their role, the optimum composition and chair of the governing body and, if the new school is part of a chain, the balance between policy-making at a group level and school autonomy. Promoters need to be aware that systems, relationships and personnel used during the set-up phase may need to be adapted as a new school opens and starts to operate in its steady-state mode.

Recommendations for leaders

Leaders of new schools may well face opposition to the establishment of their school, but they should still make every effort to explain to other local schools the reasons why the new school is being set up and should seek to work constructively with other local schools and headteachers, including participating in local heads' meetings. The operational pressures on new school leaders and their staff are intense but they are still advised to make it a priority to ensure that all staff have access to professional and leadership development opportunities, including engagement with other schools. In addition, the senior leadership team should ensure that it allocates sufficient time for strategic discussion, reflection and leading teaching and learning. Senior leaders should also ensure that they receive external support and challenge on professional issues and school standards. New school leaders who are not part of a school group should be

prepared to buy in additional support from external sources during the set-up phase.

Recommendations for the National College and its licensed providers of training

The National College and its licensees should consider offering an induction training programme, in partnership with the New Schools Network and the Department for Education, for all heads of free schools. The College should also build on its well-received coaching programme by offering to pair heads of new schools with leaders who have experience of setting up new academies or opening new schools in previous cohorts. Principals of free schools should be encouraged to establish how best to facilitate networking opportunities similar to those available to studio schools and UTCs.

The National College's leadership curriculum should remain responsive to the needs of middle and senior leaders appointed to a leadership post in a new school for the first time. The College's licensees, for their part, should ensure that the curriculum is available through a combination of online, local and/or networking sessions to both prospective and new leaders of new types of school. Linking leaders and governors of new schools to teaching school alliances will help them in their leadership succession planning.

Recommendations for the Department for Education

The Department for Education should maintain the practice, as applied for the 2013 cohort of free schools, of formally approving the establishment of new schools at least a year in advance of opening in order to enable principals to take up full-time appointment at least eight months before the school opens. This should also enable new schools to carry out their admissions process at the same time as other schools, where they decide to do this. As part of the process for approving a new school, the Department for Education and the Education Funding Agency (EFA) should agree a critical path for securing and converting the premises for the school in order to inform decisions about whether the opening of a new school should be delayed when significant slippages occur.

The Department and its advisers should consider how they can be less prescriptive in the education plans that they require new schools to submit during the set-up phase. The Department should advise new schools of the importance of arranging training for all governors, especially in the role of monitoring and evaluating school performance, risk assessment and the implementation of school improvement measures.

Recommendations for others

In the interests of young people, local authorities should seek to develop productive relationships with new types of school being established in their area. Leaders of free schools, UTCs and studio schools should also be invited to attend local heads' meetings in order to promote collaboration and partnership working between different types of school serving the same area. The Studio Schools Trust and the Baker Dearing Trust should continue to facilitate and develop opportunities for studio schools and UTCs respectively to network, share skills and evaluate new practice. In its inspection of teaching and learning in studio schools and UTCs, Ofsted should take into account the different style of learning in those schools.

1: Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore the ways in which leaders are working to establish and lead new types of school in the English education system and to draw out the implications for leaders and leadership in the future. Included in this definition are free schools, studio schools and university technical colleges (UTCs), each of which involve leaders in establishing innovative models of schooling in a more diverse and autonomous educational landscape.

The research has focused on a sample of free schools, studio schools and UTCs, established in 2011 and 2012, in order to identify the key elements of their approaches. This includes particular emphasis on how these schools recruit and select their leaders, the skills and experience of those leaders, the specific challenges they face in establishing the new schools, the ways in which they operate to achieve success, and the forms of support that would be of greatest benefit to them.

The study seeks to understand the challenges and opportunities faced by the leaders of these types of school, as well as the leadership structures, models and behaviours they adopt to secure success. From this evidence, the research draws out common learning on effective leadership across and within the different types of school and the implications of this for wider leadership and leadership development.

New types of school

Free schools

A free school is a non-selective school that operates independently within the state system. It receives public funding according to the number of pupils it attracts and is independent of the local authority. It is subject to inspection by Ofsted. The government allowed groups to apply to set up free schools in England from June 2010 and the first 24 free schools opened in September 2011. A further 55 free schools opened in September 2012. Legally, free schools are the same as academies.

Free schools must:

— teach students only within the Reception to 19 years age range

— abide by the school admissions code

— take account of the special educational needs code of practice

— be run by a charitable trust

— provide a broad and balanced curriculum, including mathematics, English and science, although free schools do not have to follow the national curriculum

— achieve good results and do well in inspections

According to information from the Department for Education (DfE), categories of free schools opened in 2011 and 2012 are as shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Categories of free schools as identified by the promoters

Type of free school	Opened 2011	Opened 2012
Community groups	2	10
Teacher-led groups	2	12
Parent-led groups	6	6
Faith groups	1	3
Academy sponsor	5	10
Charity-led groups	2	7
Independent school led	5	3
Education group	1	0
Maintained school led	0	1
Existing providers	0	3

Source: Information provided by the DfE to the research team

Care should be taken in interpreting these figures, as the picture is considerably more complex than is apparent from Table 1.1. For example, only one school in 2011 and three in 2012 were set up by groups that described themselves in their bids as being faith organisations. There are, in fact, 17 open free schools that have a faith designation – 6 in the 2011 cohort and 11 in the 2012 cohort. Of these 17 schools, the promoters were four faith groups, three parent groups, two teacher groups, one parent and teacher group, two charities, two community groups, two independent schools and one existing voluntary-aided school. The faith designations were eight Christian, three Jewish, and two each of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh. Complicating the categorisation further is the fact that sponsor groups may be a mixture of parents, teachers and people from the local community, creating a school with a faith ethos and run by a charity.

Studio schools

Studio schools are free schools that offer a new model of 14-19 education for students of all abilities. They are small schools of typically around 300 pupils when they reach their maximum size, and deliver both academic and vocational qualifications through project-based learning and enterprise projects. The essential elements of provision in studio schools are:

— employability and enterprise skills

— key qualifications

— personalised curriculum

— practical learning

— real work

— small size

— students of all abilities

These elements provide a framework for all studio schools and are built upon by individual schools that are expected to tailor the model to meet the needs of their local community and local labour market. Students work with local employers and a personal coach to follow a curriculum designed to give them the employability skills and qualifications they need in work, or to take up further education.

Thus studio schools have a distinct mission, motivated by the aims of raising student aspiration and improving progression. In some cases, the rebranding that being a studio school brings is a deliberate part of addressing the progression challenge.

There are two different contexts in which studio schools may be established. Some are promoted by further education colleges and some by schools. Those coming from a further education background have to grapple with a different legal framework for managing 14 year olds, educational welfare aspects, and issues of special educational needs, while those from a school background may have further to travel in building relations with employers.

The Department for Education worked with the Young Foundation on the development of studio schools which were trialled in the Luton area. The first six studio schools supported by the government and recognised by the Studio Schools Trust, which had by this time been formed, opened in September 2011. Twelve further studio schools opened in September 2012, although one of the 2011 studio schools had closed by this point.

University technical colleges

UTCs are 14-19 schools that specialise in subjects needing modern, technical, industry-standard equipment, such as engineering and construction. They teach these disciplines alongside business skills and the use of ICT. Students integrate academic study with practical learning, studying core GCSEs and A levels alongside technical qualifications. The ethos and curriculum are designed with local and national employers, who also provide support and work experience for students.

UTCs are sponsored by universities, local employers and further education (FE) colleges with strengths in the UTC's specialist subject areas. The university or FE college and employers lead or serve on the governing body of the UTC and provide help by:

— contributing to the development of the curriculum

— allowing university staff to assist in teaching areas in which they have particular expertise, eg mathematics for engineers

— supporting and mentoring students, in particular those who might be considering or have the ability to consider entry to higher education

— allowing the UTC to use the university's specialist facilities

— providing undergraduate and foundation degree modules to UTC students who have the ability to benefit from them

In the 2011 budget, it was announced that at least 24 UTCs are planned to be open by 2014. The first UTC, the JCB Academy in Staffordshire, opened in September 2010. The Black Country UTC in Walsall opened a year later and UTCs opened in Aston, Hackney and central Bedfordshire in September 2012.

Models for free schools

The development of free schools in England has been inspired by the charter school programme in the United States and the free school programme in Sweden.

Charter schools are non-selective public schools (American state schools) that are free from many of the regulations that apply to traditional schools. The charter is an agreement that sets out the school's mission, goals and methods. Most charters are given for three to five years; if by that time the school has not performed, or has not been administratively competent, the charter will not be renewed. Charter schools are typically run by groups of parents, teachers or community members, large charities or businesses, or they may be existing schools converting to charter school status because of the flexibility it gives them.

Swedish free schools have no fees and are not academically selective. Beyond that they vary widely. In 1992 the Swedish government allowed groups to set up free schools, and these new schools received 85 per cent of the per-pupil funding of traditional state schools. This was eventually raised to 100 per cent of funding. Over a fifth of all schools in Sweden are now free schools. They are often smaller than traditional schools and have a range of approaches. The average size of a free school is 132 pupils.

Swedish free schools are typically run by parents and community groups, with many running schools in rural areas to prevent their closure, or by schools offering alternative pedagogies such as those developed by Steiner and Montessori. Some are run by teachers and headteachers attracted by the autonomy and flexibility of new schools, or by businesses.

The work of the National College

The interim findings from this study informed the content of a new leadership development module for free school leaders. This module was developed as part of the National College's wider leadership curriculum offer for school leaders launched in autumn 2012. It will also inform the development of wider content on the leadership of studio schools and UTCs.

Terminology

Free schools, studio schools and university technical colleges are as defined above. All these schools are technically academies, except for some studio schools that are schools within schools.

New types of school is a generic term covering all the above.

Maintained schools are community, foundation, voluntary-aided and voluntary-controlled schools.

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2: Methodology

Key research questions

The National College, which was asked by the secretary of state to undertake this research, set out a number of key research questions for the project to address:

— What are the professional backgrounds, skills and motivations of leaders who establish new and innovative schools? Do these differ between the different types of school?

— What challenges and opportunities do leaders establishing new types of innovative school face? How do these differ between the different types of school? How have the leaders been effective in addressing these challenges?

— What are the key tasks that leaders establishing new types of school must address? For example:

  · How do leaders establish a clear and widely owned vision for the school?

  · How do they appoint and induct staff and create a high-performing team?

  · How do they develop productive relationships with parents, communities and other schools and partners?

  · How do they establish new curricula and pedagogical approaches?

  · How do they establish effective governance arrangements?

  · How do they design and develop their leadership teams?

— What particular knowledge, skills and qualities do leaders of new and innovative schools require to be effective? How does this differ from effective leadership in mainstream schools?

— What forms of support do these leaders find most effective as they establish the school? What are the implications of the above for leadership development and how would these leaders want any development to be structured to meet their needs?

Where these questions relate to the effectiveness of the new schools, it should be noted that, at the time of the fieldwork, the schools had no outcomes to demonstrate their effectiveness, nor had they (with one exception) undergone an Ofsted inspection since opening. This study is therefore not able to produce firm findings on questions of effectiveness in the usual sense of that term in relation to school performance. However, the report does identify policies and practices that are likely to make the implementation and leadership of new schools more effective.

The first phase of the study began in late 2011 with a survey of the principals of all open free schools, UTCs and studio schools. Responses were received from 13 of the 24 open free schools, 3 of the 6 open studio schools and 1 UTC.

This was followed by visits and telephone interviews in early 2012 with 10 free schools, 4 studio schools and both UTCs.

Our visits generally included structured interviews with the principal, the chair of the governing body and one or more other school leaders. Our telephone interviews used the same structure of questions and were usually with the principal.

During this period, meetings were held with stakeholders, including Department for Education officials, Rachel Wolf of the New Schools Network, Peter Mitchell of the Baker Dearing Trust, David Nicholl of the Studio Schools Trust, Matthew Horne of the Innovation Unit, the general secretaries of the Association of School and College Leaders and the National Association of Head Teachers, Emma Ing, HMI of Ofsted, Heath Monk of Future Leaders, and Nick Hudson of Wigan Borough Council on behalf of local authorities.

We also spoke to Dr Rob Higham of the Institute of Education, who was carrying out research on free schools (Higham, 2011).

The results from these interviews and surveys were analysed and an interim report was presented to the advisory board in February 2012.

The second phase of the research began in September 2012. The same survey was used to gather information from all the newly opened free schools, UTCs and studio schools. Responses were received from 23 of the 55 new free schools, 5 of the 12 new studio schools and 1 of the 3 new UTCs.

In order to aid comparison between the 2011 and 2012 cohorts of schools, percentages have been used in the tables in this report, although it should be noted that the sample numbers are small in absolute terms.

Visits and telephone interviews were carried out in October and November 2012 with 12 new free schools, 2 new studio schools and 1 new UTC.

In the first term of their second year, visits and telephone interviews took place with all but one of the schools visited in phase 1 of the project.

All these school visits and telephone interviews took place at a particular point in the evolution of the schools: those in early 2012 during the second term of the first cohort of schools, and those in autumn 2012 during the first term of the second cohort. The context of the findings and the source of the quotations used in this publication should therefore be recognised as coming at this early stage in the development of these schools. The research team also recognises that the government's policy and approach towards the establishment of free schools, studio schools and UTCs have evolved during the period of the study and that changes have been made affecting issues identified in the report. Where this is the case, we have acknowledged the changes in policy.

One further stakeholder interview took place in phase 2 with Charles Parker, the new chief executive of the Baker Dearing Trust.

Two online seminars took place with leaders of free schools, and the project advisory group held three meetings (the membership of the latter is listed in Appendix 3). Members of the research team have contributed to events hosted by the Baker Dearing Trust and the Studio Schools Trust.

Occasional blogs have been written and posted on the online community that was created by the National College for the new schools.

Case studies have been produced by the research team on six schools (four free schools, one UTC and one studio school).

Short briefing papers providing practical advice have also been produced on the following topics:

— set-up period

— leading a small school

— operational and strategic leadership in the first half-term

— appointing senior leaders

— curriculum design and leading teaching and learning

— leadership and professional development

— building partnerships beyond the school

3: Key lessons from research on setting up and leading new schools

Introduction

The policy of encouraging the formation of new and different types of school may be a relatively recent phenomenon in England, but the government's approach builds on programmes introduced in other education jurisdictions. There is therefore learning to be gained regarding the challenges involved in setting up and running new schools.

Studio schools, UTCs and some free schools have a distinctive approach to the curriculum, the organisation of the school structure and the approach to teaching and learning. Here again, research findings provide many useful insights on the particular leadership skills necessary to make a success of new and more innovative approaches to schooling.

This chapter summarises an extensive literature review undertaken by the research team. We have focused on drawing out the practical learning relating to issues that principals and school leaders in England are likely to face. We have not commented on the overall success of these programmes, which have generated an extensive literature in their own right, but have focused on how they have operated rather than whether overall they have proved effective.[1]

This chapter has four main sections:

1. The section on charter schools identifies key challenges involved in establishing new schools, and the form of leadership development support that leaders of these schools value most highly.

2. The section on free schools in Sweden highlights their impact on relations with municipalities and with other schools.

3. The third section focuses on lessons in leading curriculum and classroom innovation.

4. The final section summarises the learning on effective leadership of small schools, which many of the new schools in England are designed to be.

Many of the findings from the literature review have been echoed or reinforced through this study. Where the research findings have relevance for longer term policy and practice, these have been highlighted in our recommendations in Chapter 9.

Lessons from research on the leadership of charter schools

Charter schools are publicly funded schools in the United States operated by independent non-profit and for-profit organisations. They are responsible to public authorities such as local school districts, universities or states, which are known as 'authorisers'. Charter schools enjoy considerable autonomy over staffing, curriculum and budget management and are exempt from many of the rules, regulations and statutes that apply to other public schools. In exchange, they are judged on how well they have delivered their charter, which is typically issued for three to five years and incorporates a school's mission, goals, admissions profile, teaching and learning philosophy, methods of assessment and success measures.

The challenges of leading a charter school are in many respects similar to those of leading a traditional public school (leading instruction, tending to the culture of the school, and managing people). However, communicating and embedding the instructional vision and ensuring leadership is distributed to enable what may be a small school to function effectively are particularly important dimensions of charter school leadership (Campbell & Gross, 2008). Charter school leaders also report (Campbell & Grubb, 2008) that some of the more practical issues in running a charter school produce particular challenges, including:

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1   For a broader discussion of the impact of free schools, see Allen (2010) and Böhlmark and Lindahl (2012).

— ensuring sufficient student enrolments to fund operations

— finding and managing school facilities

— hiring the right faculty (staff) for the school

— negotiating relations with boards, parents, and authorisers

Charter schools that are part of charter management organisations (CMOs) – the equivalent of academy chains in an English context – receive substantial support in addressing these challenges from their CMO (Lake et al, 2010).

Leaders with experience of financial management are less likely to report concerns about raising and managing funds than those coming to the role straight from teaching (Campbell & Gross, 2008). Bypassing the on-the-job training of the assistant principal position puts these leaders at an initial disadvantage when it comes to managing people, money and school systems.

Charter schools sometimes operate in a politically hostile environment and so their leaders may need to become adept at lobbying, activism and networking to protect their own school and others (Campbell, 2010).

The turnover of charter school leaders (10 per cent a year) is lower than for traditional public school principals (Campbell & Gross, 2008). However, succession planning is still a major challenge for charter schools. Nearly three-quarters of charter school leaders surveyed say that they expect to leave their schools within five years and in one study only half of the charter schools reported having succession plans in place, and many of those plans were weak (Campbell, 2010).

In terms of leadership development for charter school leaders, traditional training via a college or a degree helps with educational issues; but non-traditional training (on-the-job experience) helps with management issues (Campbell & Gross, 2008). A study of 13 specially designed training programmes for charter school leaders (Campbell & Grubb, 2008) found that they focused on practical, hands-on support by:

— being relatively light on lectures and formal training, while heavy on real-world experience such as field observations, project- and task-based learning and discussion

— offering apprenticeship support, with prospective principals shadowing or working under strong charter school principals and receiving further mentoring after the initial training

— providing flexible access to training via courses organised into short sessions during the year and longer sessions during the summer, plus online learning and development tailored to a principal's experience

— focusing on topics such as personnel and labour relations, financial management and academic accountability

Lessons from Swedish free schools for relations with municipalities

In the early 1990s, three major reforms of education were introduced in Sweden[2]:

— Financial responsibility for public schools was transferred from the state to municipalities.

— Pupils were allowed to choose between public schools in their municipality, whereas before they had to attend their nearest school (although pupils who live nearest to the school continue to have priority).

— Municipalities had to provide private schools with a grant, equivalent to (most of) the average per-pupil expenditure in the public school system, for each pupil residing in the municipality who chose to enrol in a private (or free) school. Thus, the resources devoted to public schools were directly affected by the choices of pupils.

To be eligible for funding, free schools have to be approved by the National Agency for Education (NEA), and are not allowed to select pupils on the basis of ability, socio-economic characteristics or ethnicity. If a school is over-subscribed, three selection criteria for admittance are allowed:

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2   The background information on free schools in Sweden is taken from Böhlmark and Lindahl (2008).

— proximity to the school

— waiting list (where each child's place in line is determined by the date of the parents' application)

— priority to children who have siblings already enrolled in the school.

Free schools are not allowed to charge fees, so top-up funding is not permitted. As with charter schools, some free schools are run for profit and some are operated by education charities and faith groups.

Municipalities can object to the establishment of a free school, but few such appeals have been upheld by the NEA.

Between 1988 and 2003, the percentage of children attending free schools grew from under 1 per cent to over 5 per cent. However, the growth in free schools has not been uniform. In 2003, only 93 out of the 284 municipalities had any free schools with 9th-grade children enrolled (equivalent to year 10 in British schools). However, in those municipalities with at least one free school, on average 9 per cent of children were educated in free schools. The municipality with the largest share had 39.4 per cent of its children educated in free schools.

In 2006, the NEA published the outcomes of a questionnaire sent to directors of municipalities on the impact of free schools on compulsory schooling in their area (Antelius et al, 2006). The survey produced the following findings:

— The percentage of pupils switching from a municipal to a free school before or during the 2003/04 school year varied considerably. In the majority of municipalities it was less than 1 per cent, but in 8 per cent, around 1 in 10 pupils switched; these were primarily municipalities in the cities and the suburbs.

— Unsurprisingly, it is in municipalities where there is a higher proportion of students in free schools that relations between free schools and municipal schools are characterised by competition.

— In the majority of cases, free schools continue to participate in the municipalities' arrangements for follow-up and evaluation, but not to the same extent as other schools. However, municipalities with a higher proportion of free schools report higher engagement in the municipalities' evaluation and follow-up arrangements than those municipalities with a low proportion of free schools.

— Overall, around 63 per cent of municipalities thought that competition between free and public schools had contributed to school improvement to some extent, although again this varied considerably according to the proportion of free schools. Just under half the municipalities said that the establishment of free schools had not led to increased segregation, although this was not the case in municipalities with a high proportion of free schools.

Lessons from research on leading curriculum and classroom innovation

In England, a number of free schools and all the studio schools and UTCs are working to new and, to a greater or lesser extent, innovative curriculum models.

Curriculum innovation sometimes starts by focusing on a school's product – its curriculum – and sometimes on teaching and learning practice in the classroom – the process. Others combine both approaches. Whatever the focus of the innovation, the literature suggests that school leaders should have regard to a number of key principles:

— Be clear about the scope of the innovation. Is the scale of innovation aimed at improving or radically restructuring how teaching and learning are organised (West-Burnham, 2010)? Leaders should also, at this stage, take account of both mandatory requirements on content and standards (Mooney & Mausbach, 2008) and current national and international practice and knowledge of theories of learning (Ofsted, 2008).

— Develop and articulate a clear vision that explains the reasons for change and/or innovation (West-Burnham, 2010) in a way that secures whole-school understanding and commitment (Ashley, 2010).

— Empower professional autonomy (Ashley, 2010) by co-constructing the planned changes with teachers, both to build ownership of the change process and because this is also more likely to result in classroom practice that adheres to and replicates the agreed model (Muijs, 2010).

— Include pupil voice so that children and young people can help shape and deliver the change and share in any success that leads from it (Brundrett & Duncan, 2010).

— Use data to help ensure curriculum change and classroom innovation are based on an in-depth understanding of students' strengths and weaknesses (Mooney & Mausbach, 2008).

— Set assessment benchmarks. The schools that are most successful with curriculum innovation have clearly defined baselines and unambiguous criteria for success (Ofsted, 2008).

— Make time available off-timetable for staff to develop their thinking together and to jointly plan curriculum and classroom change (Ashley, 2010; Mooney & Mausbach, 2008). An overarching curriculum map and planning templates can help leaders to manage the innovation process and monitor progress (Mooney & Mausbach, 2008).

— Design classroom interventions to be sufficiently detailed and, crucially, accessible to average as well as highly effective teachers. Overly complex interventions may not be the most successful (Muijs, 2010).

— Test new approaches, in partnership with research institutions, through a series of small-scale experiments (Muijs, 2010). The learning can then feed into and build up a repertoire of effective classroom practice.

— Build innovation around a whole-school culture of achievement and high expectations of everyone involved (Ashley, 2010). This supports consistency of approach across teaching staff (Muijs, 2010).

— Communicate well with parents/carers and governors about new approaches and provide opportunities for them to see the curriculum and classroom changes in action (Ashley, 2010).

— Embed innovation in a culture of sharing and learning both within and across schools. In-school and between-school co-operation is a key mechanism for successful change (Brundrett & Duncan, 2010).

— Evaluate the impact of change. Leaders should not be afraid to regroup and make adjustments in the light of evaluations (Mooney & Mausbach, 2008). They should create an environment where mistakes are an intrinsic part of the learning process (Hattie, 2009). Impact need not just be measured by test scores and exam results, but also by how well change is improving learning through the use of feedback, making thinking visible, fostering creativity, bringing subjects to life and empowering pupils (Mills, 2011).

Lessons from research on the leadership of small schools

A higher proportion of secondary new schools and all-through schools are planned to be small (fewer than 500 pupils) than are found nationally. Furthermore, as free schools are typically growing one or two intake years at a time, even those schools in which the final capacity will be average or above average share some of the attributes of small schools in their early stages of development.

The research[3] suggests that some leadership characteristics take a distinct form and contribute to success in small school environments:

— knowing and being known – taking advantage of the small school size to foster personal relationships with staff and pupils (Copland & Boatright, 2004)

— nurturing professional learning communities so that teachers are given adequate time to plan together and critique and improve each other's instructional practices

— exercising strong principal leadership to establish a clear vision, develop key structures and build an effective professional learning community

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3   The leadership characteristics are as summarised in Stevens (2008) unless otherwise stated.

— distributing leadership intelligently to help meet the demands of the increased workload associated with having a smaller staff

— focusing on a tight and clear learning agenda with a small number of measurable outcomes (Copland & Boatright, 2004)

— being committed to social equity, in that small schools offer a real chance to ensure success for every student, regardless of background, ethnicity, or social status (Copland & Boatright, 2004)

— providing personalised academic and social support by fostering strong relationships between students and teachers and the structures to support them

— pushing all students to achieve, where a collective focus on rigorous academic work helps to move small schools beyond being simply nurturing environments to places where students can develop their full intellectual potential and promise

— fostering deeper and more robust connections between family and community in ways that are simply impossible for the staff of large comprehensive schools (Copland & Boatright, 2004)

What is critical is how these leadership qualities are brought together. Research on successful small schools in Chicago (Stevens, 2008) highlighted the importance of combining key characteristics because reducing school size does not of itself guarantee success. Strong teacher professional communities, deep principal leadership and strong teacher influence are the essential elements.

Successful smaller schools make the difference by exploiting their smaller scale to change how adults work together: they enable staff collectively to improve instruction and create new routines for monitoring and developing teachers and students.

This collective approach, however, requires strong school leadership. Deep principal leadership is crucial for monitoring, organising and sustaining collective work, while teacher leadership helps to make collective work more relevant for the staff engaged in it.

There are also some distinctive challenges associated with leading small schools (Mohr, 2000):

— Small schools can more easily be blown off track by single events.

— The work has to be done by fewer people, meaning leaders and teachers can be overwhelmed by the demands of distributed leadership, and principals caught between the demands of the school and the wider community.

— Small schools can try to provide too wide a range of courses and activities and lose their core focus.

— Developing and maintaining the close personal relationships and learning community that are at the heart of a successful small school can be time-consuming and emotionally challenging.

— Managing the day-to-day operation of the school can result in insufficient focus being given to improving teaching and learning.

The characteristics, opportunities and risks inherent in leading small schools are summarised in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Characteristics, opportunities and restrictions in leading small schools

Characteristics	Opportunities	Restrictions
Leaders are more 'hands-on'.	• Leaders really know what is happening in the school. • Leaders are more accessible.	• Delegation can be problematic. • There are just as many jobs to do as there are in larger schools but fewer people to do them.
Leaders 'wear many hats'.	• There are more opportunities to take on school-wide leadership roles. • Leaders have a more holistic whole-school view.	• Leaders experience task overload and become less effective. • One person can struggle to balance several different responsibilities.
Leaders have to cope with limited finances and resources.	• Leaders have to look for creative solutions to develop resources and to recruit and retain staff.	• Some appointments may be too expensive to make. • As staff may be paid less they may come to the school with less experience. • The curriculum may be restricted and teachers may have to teach outside their areas of expertise.
Teams are smaller and more cohesive units.	• Smaller departmental or year teams can be more flexible and take on change more quickly. • It is easier to establish committed and cohesive teams.	• One- or two-person departments can become isolated and professional dialogue limited.
An individual leader can become a 'big fish in a small pond'.	• Key leaders can be very influential and move the school forward.	• Individuals feel straitjacketed. • If key leaders leave they can be difficult to replace. • Promotion could come too soon.
Relationships within the school community are good.	• Leaders know the pupils and other staff better. • Pupils feel valued.	• It is harder for staff and pupils to break out of ways of acting.
Communication is easier.	• Leaders can 'pop in' and sort things out. • Communication can be personal and there is less paperwork. • It is easier to support each other.	• There is a lack of formal systems.
Professional development is crucial.	• Leaders can gain more experience of a range of issues. • Leaders need to develop a wider knowledge of educational issues.	• There are fewer departmental role models for emerging leaders.

Source: Summarised from Kimber, 2003, pp 6-13

# 4: Establishing new types of school: the role of school leaders

There are several motivations at play in setting up a new school. In some cases parental demand is to the fore. In other cases demographic demand is intense in a particular locality and a free school is part of the solution to that challenge. For others the rationale derives from teachers wanting to create or extend a particular curriculum model or to raise standards, for example in an area of deprivation. This chapter examines the reasons for setting up new types of school, the success criteria they are setting themselves and the motivations of school leaders in wanting to work in them.

The chapter also deals with the more practical aspects of leading the set-up of new schools, from getting principals appointed to the myriad of pressures faced by principals and promoters in ensuring that schools are able to open their doors on time. The chapter explains how this experience varies according to whether a new school is trying to manage this process on its own or is part of a larger group or chain of schools.

Motivations for establishing new types of school

The evidence collected during the course of this research, through both the survey and fieldwork with individual schools, has highlighted the fact that the reasons why promoters and principals were motivated to establish a new type of school are as diverse as the schools themselves. Figure 4.1 shows the percentage of principals in each cohort of the survey ranking each of six reasons that were either an important or very important motivation in establishing the school.

Figure 4.1: Reasons ranked by principals for establishing a new school
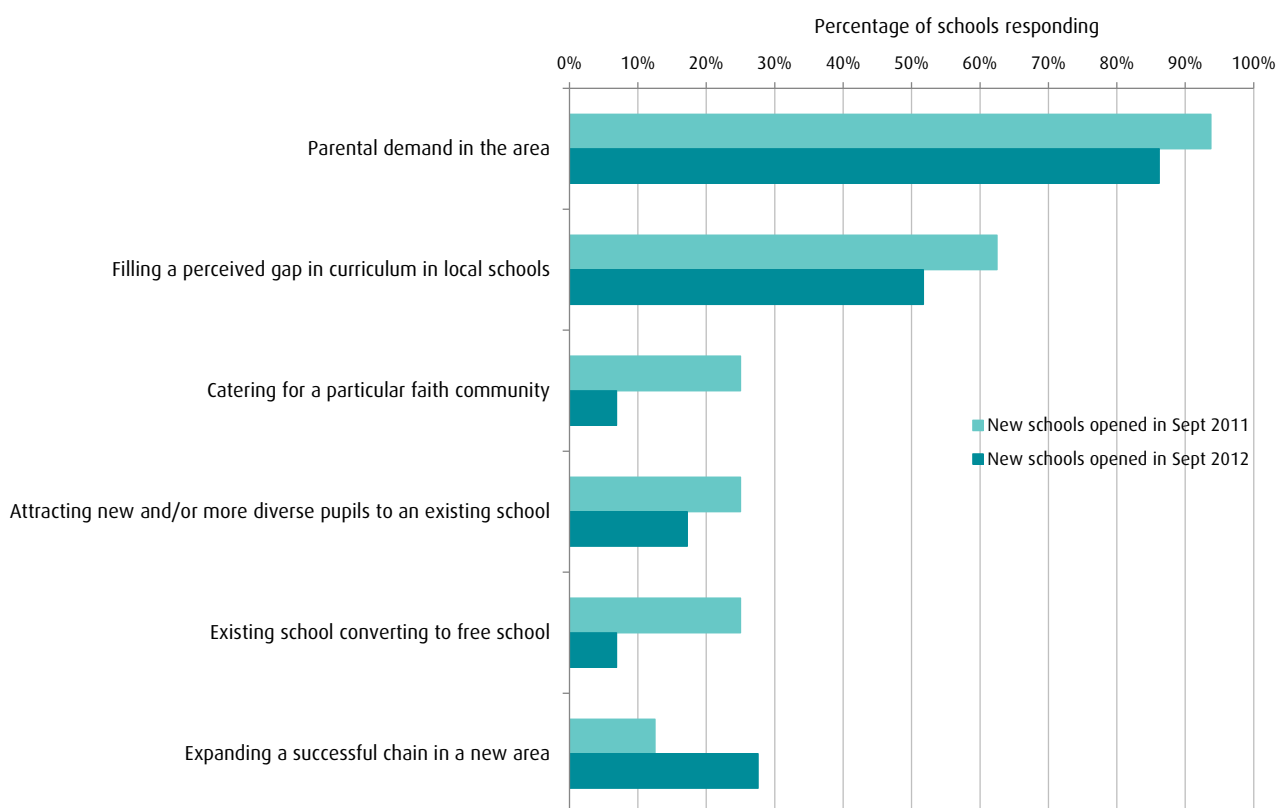
Note: From surveys of principals of new types of school conducted with schools opening in 2011 and 2012. Schools opened in Sep 2011: based on responses from 13 free schools, 2 studio schools and 1 UTC. Schools opened in Sep 2012: based on responses from 23 free schools, 5 studio schools and 1 UTC

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Figure 4.1 clearly shows that the great majority of principals of new schools responding to the survey saw parental demand in the area as a significant factor in motivating the establishment of the school. This was not only the case in schools in which parents had been the original promoters. However, the term 'parental demand' deserves some further analysis.

It was evident from our interviews with leaders in free schools in particular that parental demand might mean a simple demand for places in areas where growth in pupil numbers had been outstripping supply. This was a strong motivating factor for the establishment of Ark Atwood Primary School, Dixons Music Primary and Trinity Academy, and Woodpecker Hall and Kingfisher Hall primary academies.

There has also been a motivation for some parents to establish a secondary school where one does not exist in their area, such as Bristol Free School. In Hatfield, the local authority was the catalyst in establishing a free school to satisfy demand for primary school places in an area, with the free school route offering more ready access to national capital funding. In an area of Birmingham with no secondary school, the Department for Education approached the outstanding Perry Beeches Academy to establish Perry Beeches II in the centre of the city.

'Parental demand' might mean demand for a particular type or style of education. For example, The Free School Norwich is clear that, as well as aiming to offer an excellent education, it places a premium on meeting the needs of working parents by providing an extended school day and onsite child-care. There are also schools looking to meet parental demand for a more personalised education experience for their children in a small school environment; schools that are looking to satisfy parental demand for a 'traditional' style of education with a strong focus on academic subjects; schools that meet demands for a faith-based education; and schools that lean towards a particular educational philosophy espoused by parents in the area, such as Montessori education or bilingual learning. Finally, there are free schools that have opened in order to prevent the planned closure of an existing school, so responding very directly to the demand for parents in a particular local area to maintain a school in their neighbourhood.

The second highest scoring category on the survey – filling a perceived gap in the curriculum – also merits further investigation. It is perhaps unsurprising, given their unique curriculum focus, that all the leaders in studio schools and UTCs replying to the survey rated this factor as either important or very important, and they comprised over a third of respondents that did so. Of the free schools that rated filling a perceived gap in the curriculum as very important, over half had placed a distinctive curriculum offer, be that technical learning or bilingual teaching, at the heart of their vision and mission.

It is also apparent from the survey that as well as the broad commonalities explored above, there are some distinct differences in motivations for the establishment of new schools opened in September 2012 compared with those opened in September 2011, although, as we saw in Table 1.1, it is not a simple matter to categorise free schools, with different groups of people coming together to propose some of the schools and multiple motivations for doing so. Among the September 2012 cohort there are proportionally fewer independent schools becoming free schools than there were in September 2011. The second notable change between 2011 and 2012 is the higher proportion of free schools in which expanding a successful chain in a new area was cited as a strong motivating factor. Again, this corresponds with a trend in the underlying data. Around half the free schools opened in 2012 were part of a federation, partnership or existing chain, which is a considerably greater proportion than in the previous year. In some cases this reflects the decision by established academy sponsors such as AET, Ark, E-ACT, Harris and Dixons to open free schools and operate them in the same way as their existing academies. However, the chain dimension of free schools also encompasses a growing number of very successful and previously standalone schools using this as an opportunity to grow their educational vision and practice by running more than one school. The free schools promoted by Perry Beeches and Cuckoo Hall academies are examples of this. Similarly, FE colleges such as North Hertfordshire College and Barnfield College are taking the opportunity to promote studio schools and, in the case of Barnfield, two free schools. A further aspect of the development of chains is that some schools, such as Nishkam Primary School, having opened as free schools in 2011, are finding opportunities to expand either into new areas or into a different phase of education.

One element that cannot come out through a survey, but was evident in the interviews and fieldwork, is how often a very strong personal mission and belief motivated both promoters and headteachers to establish a new type of school. In many cases this was allied to a desire to raise standards of attainment in a particular area and was rooted in the leaders' longstanding personal experience. Many new school leaders told the research team that they had been inspired by seeing a particular type of education transform

outcomes for young people, be that the charter school system in the US, high-quality vocational learning or outdoor education, or were simply keen to replicate their experience of running a successful school elsewhere. Whatever the inspiration, it is clear that for many leaders of new types of school this deep personal motivation underlying the vision and ethos of the school is what has driven them to make a very significant commitment in terms of time, energy and workload during the period over which the school has been established.

Success criteria

Leaders of new schools are trying to ensure at the outset that the motivation for establishing the school is reflected in the success criteria they are setting for the school. This is not straightforward. Identifying success criteria, apart from examination results, can be difficult. Metrics are hard to find when "the vision of the school is educational excellence, character formation and spiritual insight" (primary faith free school). "We want to produce good citizens, but it is hard to quantify that" (primary faith free school).

During the period of our research, principals were still reflecting on the nature of success criteria beyond examination results. The principal of Aldborough E-ACT Free School said in February 2012: "We have had a lot of conversations about what success looks like for the school – and this is an ongoing discussion." She was clear that she wanted to involve not only staff but also parents and the community in developing the school. Nonetheless this ongoing refinement of what success looks like was underpinned by a clear focus on standards from the start. In October 2012, she explained: "Success criteria are focused on raising the quality of teaching and learning in every classroom, moving from good to outstanding." This drives school policy, creating a priority for systems and processes of assessment, moderation and lesson observation.

At Hatfield Community Free School, success criteria are being designed to evaluate progress on the proposers' priorities:

> We are bound to do what other schools do, but the proposers want an emphasis on speaking and listening, which is poor in the area, and on community engagement and enterprise. We are devising outcome-based measures in each of these areas.

Headteacher, Hatfield Community Free School

One head of a secondary free school wanted to develop indicators on behaviour and on pupil involvement in charity work and in school activities such as music and debating.

Success criteria have to match the priorities of the school and the Tauheedul Free Schools Trust is clear about what success means in its schools. All students must achieve at least five good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, and should gain the English Baccalaureate (Ebacc) in the traditional subjects specified. Art, music and technology are delivered as part of the school's specialism days, where the timetable is collapsed. There is a strong intervention programme with most students staying late after school to take part in activities in these and other areas.

King's Leadership Academy also has an aim of 100 per cent of students gaining the E-Bac and has identified a wide range of other success criteria on student destinations, attendance, exclusions, staff progression, pupil progress (monitored through national curriculum levels), progress in cultural activities and, as it is in the name of the school, progress in leadership. Leadership progress is measured, inter alia, through activities at the Brathay Outdoor Education centre and using the Duke of Edinburgh Award: the school aims for all its students to reach silver by age 16 and gold by age 18.

Reach Academy: Feltham tells its parents "Every pupil works towards top grades and the opportunity to succeed at a top university." The leadership of the school has identified key levers that will help students get to good universities – curriculum, teaching quality (one of the measures is the retention of high-performing staff), parental engagement (measured by parent satisfaction surveys and attendance of parents at the school), school culture and pupil wellbeing (measured by pupil surveys). Destination data of pupils into top universities will be the key success criterion. The London Academy of Excellence (LAE) is similarly focused on getting 200 sixth formers into Russell Group universities a year. LAE also has as a target the graduation success of its alumni:

> We must ensure that they are graduating as well as matriculating – getting out of universities with good degrees as well as getting into them with good A levels.

Headteacher, London Academy of Excellence

Studio schools and UTCs place a high priority on destination data for their students. In addition, the JCB Academy has an aim of having no school-leavers falling into the category of 'not in education, employment or training (NEET)'. One principal of a studio school said:

> The eventual destination of students at 18 will be the key test of our effectiveness and this requires a continuous emphasis on explaining the vision and strengthening the links with employers.

Again, the aim is driving the policy implementation.

The Black Country UTC asked employers to define what they wanted out of a UTC graduate. The employers identified resilience, confidence, communication, literacy and numeracy skills, independent learners and leadership potential. Success criteria are being devised on these. Destination data here particularly focuses on successful applications to university science and engineering, and apprenticeships.

There is a common aspiration across studio schools and UTCs to be outstanding, but they expressed concerns that Ofsted's model of inspection with its focus on what happens in the classroom may not capture or reflect the full extent of the learning taking place in these new types of school. In the studio school and UTC context, work experience and coaching are important components of teaching and learning and Ofsted will need to ensure that its assessment is broad enough to take account of these dimensions of a school's work.

How principals were appointed

Of the 44 schools that responded to the relevant question on our survey, covering both the 2011 and 2012 openers, all except 9 reported that the principal was appointed as a result of applying for an advertised post. Relatively little use was made of headhunters to facilitate this process (across both years, only six schools reported doing so). In addition, one school used a recruitment agency and a second school found a principal through Future Leaders. For the eight schools where the head was not recruited through an advertisement or a headhunter, three were the current head of an existing school that had converted to become a free school, four were drawn from the promoter's group of schools and one was seconded into post. Where free schools, studio schools and UTCs did not advertise a post externally and sought to appoint a head without headship experience (or without experience of being a head of the relevant phase or type of school), applicants were independently assessed for their suitability for the post.

Time of appointment of the principal

The length of time that principals were in post before the school opened varied from 18 months to as little as 1 month. In ideal circumstances, a head of a brand-new school would have a year in post to do all the necessary planning and appoint staff. In the case of free schools, UTCs and studio schools, there are major issues to resolve concerning the school site and buildings. Inevitably, much of this planning falls on the shoulders of the promoters.

The pressure on new principals is greatly increased if they are appointed in March or later. Where the school is not part of a group (for example, a chain of schools or a federation), the new principal may well be the only full-time appointed member of staff and therefore feel insufficiently supported through these early months of planning, as they seek to deal with a massive workload across a wide range of issues: education plans, policies, premises and marketing, for example. Where the principal is appointed only a short time before the school opens, this can have consequences for the appointment of other staff. Any staff appointed after 31 May will effectively not be able to take up their post before 1 September because of the contractual requirement to give at least half a term's notice to their existing school[4].

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4   Statutory notice for teachers is two months in the autumn and spring, and three months in the summer; the school academic year's final resignation date is 31 May. Statutory notice for headteachers is one month longer in each case.

In a few cases new heads have been able to take up post immediately, but in most cases, because of their contractual resignation date, there has been a time lag between appointment and formally starting their new role. Sometimes, with the support of their current employer, they have been released to work one or two days a week for their new school. However, in many cases new heads have had to sustain their previous work and use their own time to help with preparations for the new school. Typically, they have been involved in discussions on buildings, sorting out admissions arrangements, attending marketing and recruitment sessions, appointing staff and liaising with the Department for Education.

Examples of late appointments in 2011 included:

— The heads of three primary free schools, appointed in April and May and starting in August, who were not therefore involved in the appointment of the school staff.

— The head of a secondary free school appointed in March and taking up the post in June, having just three months to sort out the location of the school, building design, staff appointments and school policies.

There were further examples of late appointments in 2012:

— The head of a small, parent-promoted primary free school was appointed in December 2011, but did not start until April 2012, by which time a lot of the initial decision-making had already taken place.

— The head of a primary free school promoted by the local authority was appointed in October 2011. The Department for Education said that she could spend 2.5 days a week at the new school from January, but in fact only funded four days in that period. The head took up post in April, although without a firm contract until the funding agreement was signed in May.

In contrast, the principal of the Aston University Engineering Academy was appointed two years before opening and started six months later. However, there is concern that UTC principals will in future have a much shorter time in post before the school opens. The chair of governors at Aston expressed her concern that "newer UTCs are only appointing their principals one term in advance of opening and that is nowhere near long enough." The vice principal of Aston, who was himself appointed nine months before the school opened, shared the chair's concern:

> I wonder how future UTCs will do the strategic planning. So much of ours was done in the pre-opening phase. Once the school opens, there is much less time for strategic planning.

The situation is likely to improve for free schools opening in 2013. The Department for Education announced in July 2012 those free schools that were formally approved to open in September 2013, and consequently many schools sought to have principals-designate in place by January 2013.

Meeting the requirements set by the Department and by Ofsted

All new types of school have to write around 60 policies in order to pass the Ofsted pre-opening inspection. This has provided heads, especially of standalone free schools, with a time-consuming administrative task. In the pre-opening guidance for promoters, the Department lists tasks that must be completed during the pre-opening phase. This does not include a list of policies, apart from the admissions policy. However, the full list of policies can be found on the Department for Education and Ofsted websites, although some headteachers told the research team that they found it difficult to navigate the websites to find these lists. The head of a standalone secondary free school said that writing these policies had been a huge job, yet he felt that not all of them needed to be in place at the start: "Policies should be prioritised. They are not all needed so early." Many free school leaders had taken and adapted policies from their previous schools or, if their free school was part of a group, as in the Dixons example below, had used the group's policies, which had saved a great deal of time.

The Department requires free schools to prepare an education plan for a pre-opening meeting with a readiness-to-open panel in advance of the go-ahead for the school. Several schools have commented that the plan asked for by the Department's advisers was too detailed. A secondary free school head said: "The level of detail was absurd. We jumped through the hoops." Another commented that the detailed nature of the plan was counter-productive, since it involved promoters in a level of detail that they then find hard to surrender when the school opens. One studio school reported that it had been asked to carry out the futile task of setting detailed targets for an unknown cohort of students.

For the pre-opening inspection, policies have to be written, a curriculum map prepared and schemes of work produced for the first year. One head commented:

> We did not want to do this in the required detail because we wanted staff to be empowered to do this planning after they had started. We had been told that we needed to do all this for Ofsted, but then the inspector didn't look at the detail at all.

This desire reflects what the literature review (Chapter 3) identified as effective practice. The conditions for successful curriculum innovation include the capacity to empower professional autonomy by co-constructing the planned changes with teachers, both to build ownership of the change process and because this is also more likely to result in classroom practice that adheres to and replicates the agreed model (Ashley, 2010; Muijs, 2010).

Sources of support for leaders of new schools

The Department provides a list of project managers that promoters can contact to tender for their work, and some schools bought in consultants to carry out certain tasks. Even so, the burden of establishing many of the new schools – especially the standalone free schools – is falling on very few people in most cases.

Bristol Free School used the privately run education trust, which had supported the parent bid throughout, to help with staff and pupil recruitment and premises issues. The Free School Norwich employed consultants to co-ordinate staff recruitment. One secondary free school used one of the Department for Education's listed project management companies to support the set-up of the school and originally asked it to co-ordinate staff recruitment, but the head was dissatisfied with the work, and she and her deputy took charge of the appointments process themselves.

Where a new school has a promoter that is a sponsoring school, college or academy chain, this can be very valuable in terms of:

— releasing resources and specialist staff for the start-up phase

— providing business support and back-office services

— having a bank of established policies on which to draw

— having a pool of staff from which to recruit key leaders and teachers

— helping to deliver the vocational offer (this is more applicable in a studio school and college setting)

— enabling students access to a wider offer from other courses within the school or federation

— providing a supportive leadership development and accountability framework

The case studies below show how new schools that are part of a group receive considerably more support with the tasks involved in establishing a school than standalone free schools.

Case study 1: West London Free School

West London Free School was an early, high-profile free school that opened in September 2011. The headmaster, Thomas Packer, was appointed in December 2010, doing two days a fortnight until becoming full time in mid-April. His tasks were "first and foremost marketing", holding public meetings in the area and, with the help of a public relations agency and the promoter's expertise, obtaining both proactive and reactive media coverage in order to assist pupil recruitment. "The top priority was to fill the school roll in September or the school would not be viable," he says. In the event, there were 500 applications for 120 places.

Staff recruitment for a deputy head and six heads of faculty attracted good fields of applicants and interviews for the deputy head and heads of faculty were held simultaneously. Thomas remarked: "None of the faculty heads [was] appointed until all the interviews had taken place, in order to get a well-balanced team with a wide range of skills and experience between them."

Case study 1 continued

A large amount of time was spent by the head on designing and preparing plans for both the temporary site and the future permanent site.

The curriculum was clear from the proposer's vision and the head put it into a plan, attempting to maximise the use of teachers' time. He also re-cast the school budget for classes of 24 instead of the planned 30, with more being spent on teachers and less on support staff.

The head decided to lead the procurement of IT, doing the tendering process to European regulations, which was a very time-consuming process.

The way the Department for Education organised the pre-opening funding involved a lot of form-filling and negotiation with civil servants about expenditure on major and minor items.

In order to have all the policies ready for the Ofsted pre-opening inspection, the head wrote one policy a week.

Case study 2: Dixons Music Primary School (DMPS) and Dixons Trinity Academy (DTA)

DMPS and DTA, both in Bradford, were founded by Dixons City Academy (DCA), a well-established secondary sponsored academy that had previously been a city technology college. The two free schools are co-located about a mile from DCA and two miles from Dixons Allerton Academy, another secondary school in the Dixons group.

The executive principal of the group, Nick Weller, led the bid for both free schools. Following approval of the bids in October 2011, Dixons provided project management support through its director of finance and also administrative support, in addition to Nick Weller's role and the involvement of Luke Sparkes, a member of the leadership team at Dixons Allerton and previously of the leadership team of DCA, who subsequently became head of DTA.

During the set-up period, Dixons was able to underwrite spending on the two free schools, although it describes "a lot of batting back and forth" with the Department to get project funding approved.

Planning and supervising refurbishment of buildings was time-consuming for the team and there were serious problems establishing telephony services and broadband, the latter being operated through a signal beamed from Dixons Allerton Academy.

Staff appointments to DMPS were relatively straightforward, involving just one teacher (a DCA teacher with a music degree, who had just completed a primary PGCE) and a teaching assistant. All of the DTA posts were advertised externally, but over half of the successful applicants came from DCA. This provided a strong core for carrying forward the Dixons ethos and approach.

The many policies that had to be written for DMPS and DTA were taken from DCA and adapted to the new context.

DMPS drew on both external support and the expertise of a head of music at DCA to design the music dimension of its curriculum.

Places at DTA were offered to pupils who had made unsuccessful applications to DCA. This provided some disruption to other schools where parents withdrew from places they had previously accepted. At DMPS, entrepreneurial recruitment used marketing in the form of mail drops, flyers, advertisements in local papers, open evenings and standing outside supermarkets.

The schools share catering services, a caretaker/receptionist role, and administrative support. The Dixons group provides services such as finance, HR, payroll and insurance.

Key tasks for leaders of new schools in the start-up phase

In our survey, we asked leaders to reflect on which tasks associated with setting up the school they found challenging and which were more straightforward. Figure 4.2 shows the percentage of principals who responded that each of the following tasks was either difficult or very difficult.

Figure 4.2: Reporting by principals of the relative difficulty of set-up tasks
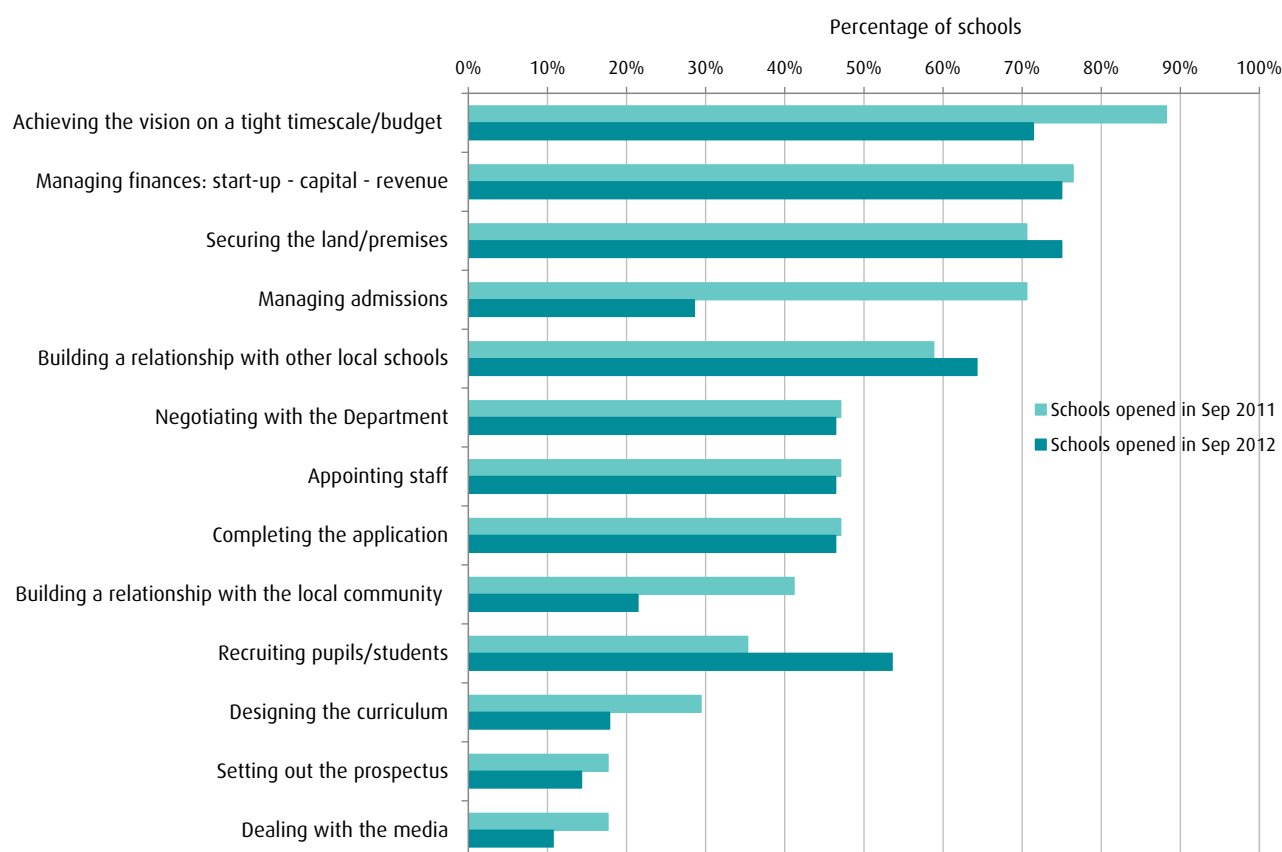
Through the interviews with school leaders we were able to explore these key tasks, both those that were proving challenging and those that were less so, in greater depth in order to understand the nature of the task and how it was being approached by leadership teams in different schools. According to our interviewees, the most important tasks in establishing a new school are:

— staff recruitment

— pupil recruitment

— marketing and media

— building relations with the local community

— planning the curriculum

— managing building projects

— managing start-up finances

Promoters of UTCs, when asked the same question, also mentioned all these key tasks.

Staff recruitment

Staff appointments have not been easy for some free schools, with no school building to show applicants and too short a time between approval from the Department for Education and opening. However, where the school is part of a group, staff can be transferred from other schools in the group in order to establish the ethos of the new school.

The date of the signing of funding agreements forced many of the free schools to make appointments late in the season. This has meant that many free schools have a high proportion of newly qualified teachers. Some free schools have made conditional offers of posts, subject to the funding agreement being signed. Chains or groups have sometimes taken the theoretical risk of the funding agreement not being signed and appointed staff to the group, but in some cases the Department for Education underwrote the salary of the principal-designate.

The appointment of staff to a new school is made more difficult by the fact that there may be no school for applicants to see and no classes for them to teach demonstration lessons. New schools therefore had to ask other schools if they could 'borrow' classes for this purpose.

Woodpecker Hall and Kingfisher Hall primary academies are both part of the Cuckoo Hall Academy Trust and appointments are all made to the trust, so staff can be deployed across the three schools. Woodpecker Hall was able to migrate three experienced teachers and experienced teaching assistants from Cuckoo Hall, and so had to appoint only one newly qualified teacher for the first year.

Pupil recruitment

Although new school applications have to include evidence of parental demand, recruitment to an unknown school with no track record (and in the case of studio and UTCs an unfamiliar concept) is bound to present challenges. This is exacerbated for some schools by the timing of the signing of funding agreements, the lack of a building ready to show prospective pupils and their parents, the fact that the local authority admissions process has already been completed, the lack of 'local knowledge' about the school's capacity to succeed, and the difficulty of marketing in the face of local opposition.

Some new schools are recruiting in a context where other schools and the local authority are broadly supportive, in which case marketing involves roadshows to other schools and open evenings. The London Academy of Excellence (for ages 16-19), which has positive relationships with the predominantly 11-16 secondary schools in its area (some of which are very strong supporters), was one such example. Sometimes schools are recruiting in a more hostile environment, in which other schools refuse to distribute leaflets to parents, and have to use social media, leafleting of supermarkets and local media. Where schools are recruiting across a city or wider area, tensions with other schools are likely to be less acute.

As noted in Chapter 7, recruitment is particularly tough for new schools if they are recruiting after the normal admissions round has closed. This destabilises the local schools, as it means pupils withdrawing from places elsewhere and moving to a new school instead. The earlier approval date for free schools opening in 2013 should help in this respect.

The head of one primary free school said that he had found pupil recruitment challenging, in particular convincing parents to send their child to a school that was not guaranteed to open until a late stage in the academic year. He spent a lot of time visiting local parents in their homes and in the community. In April, the school had just eight pupils committed to starting, but by September the school was full.

The head of a secondary free school found the recruitment process difficult because there was no building to show parents round and no certainty for much of the application period where the school would be located. Eventually 85 pupils were recruited, with 65 places unfilled. The head of a primary free school described the challenge of "dealing with the anxieties of parents and retaining pupils who had applied, while waiting to hear if the funding agreement was signed and the site secured."

None of the 60 pupils now on roll at Hatfield Community Free School had made it their first choice, so a lot of marketing was required. As the head put it: "There were no parents at the school gate who could tell the community that it was a good school."

Like Hatfield, Reach Academy: Feltham was not parent led and so there was no cohort of parents to spread the word about the school. The principal explained:

> Because the school was not parent-led, building a support base was more challenging. A frosty reception from local schools made recruitment even more difficult, so we were marketing the school on the street and visiting homes.

The picture is not uniformly challenging, however, and some new schools have been over-subscribed. Kingfisher Hall Primary Academy used the infrastructure of the Cuckoo Hall Academies Trust to take care of many of the recruitment elements of setting up a new school. The head reflected: "I don't know how standalone schools manage it."

Marketing and media

Many principals of new types of school had to do a great deal of media work during the set-up period. The marketing task is made more difficult if, as in the case of studio schools and UTCs, they are marketing a new concept as well as a new school.

Our survey of principals of new schools found that the schools opening in 2011 attached greater importance to media work than schools opening in 2012, although some of the 2012 schools spent a great deal of time on this work as media interest in their establishment was intense.

Some new schools had to work to counter a hostile local media, which was receiving plenty of good copy from opponents of the free school concept or of the establishment of particular schools.

For example, the local media discovered that one new school had recruited only 50 pupils in March against an admission target of 120, so the principal had to work proactively in the media to convey a positive message about the school, which did eventually recruit the planned 120 pupils.

Many new schools were happy to keep a low media profile. One primary school head found it "uncomfortable seeking publicity, so not much time was spent on media work. With hindsight we were not sufficiently assertive in filling our places." Other principals of new school worked to develop a higher public profile in the media, marketing their school to potential parents and the local community, as well as being responsive to local television, radio and newspaper interest in the potential arrival in the area of a new type of school.

Building relations with the local community

The quote in the previous paragraph from a primary free school head illustrates the link between media work and developing good relationships with local schools. In the view of many free school principals, this means not marketing in a way that could appear predatory to other local schools. The head quoted above continues:

> We were too nice to other local schools [which had made clear their opposition to the establishment of the free school] and we didn't recruit in other areas because we were afraid of being accused of creaming, an accusation that was being levelled at some other London free schools.

This is as much about building productive relationships with key local stakeholders as with the local community and local schools. This can involve principals in activities such as visiting other headteachers, liaising with the local authority and, for UTCs and studio schools especially, putting a lot of effort into building links with employers. Studio schools are required to have a business relationship manager. One head of a studio school found business partnerships "hard to pin down" and, as will be seen in Chapter 7, UTCs are finding that they have to appoint senior staff to build employer relationships and secure employer commitment to work experience and mentoring programmes. Several new schools have also mentioned putting leadership time into joining local sports partnerships and links with local sports clubs in order to access sports facilities.

Planning the curriculum

Designing the curriculum is an important component of the set-up phase, with a great opportunity to think through what young people need to learn for life in the 21st century. On planning the curriculum of the new school, most free schools have aimed for a largely traditional curriculum, although there have been some innovations in curriculum and pedagogy. This traditional approach has often been a deliberate feature of the design, since that is what the parents in the area have indicated that they want. In two secondary schools, Stour Valley Community School and Tauheedul Islam Boys' High School (TIBHS), for example, promoters and parents have actively sought a traditional curriculum.

One primary faith school has used its independence to design a curriculum to match the aspirations of the parents for a faith-based element in the curriculum. In the words of the head: "The curriculum is the way we are putting our values into practical reality." The Dixons Music Primary School, described in Case study 2 above, has developed an innovative approach to using music in the curriculum.

The head of a secondary free school spent a lot of time developing a suitable curriculum. The promoters had set out a basic curriculum design that she considered outdated and she amended it in time for the first meeting with the builders to inform the design of the building.

For UTCs, the curriculum framework is set out by the Baker Dearing Trust, but there is flexibility for each UTC to adapt this to local needs. Putting the curriculum into practice involves an immense amount of work for school leaders with local employers. The early appointment of the principal of Aston University Engineering Academy enabled the curriculum and the building to be planned sequentially. The chair of governors commented:

> We designed the education vision first, then the building. Many other schools have done this the wrong way round.

A specific curriculum planning challenge for leaders of UTCs has been levels of funding. UTCs are funded on the same basis as other academies and free schools, but they argue that their curriculum model is inherently more expensive in terms of materials, transport and staffing. The Baker Dearing Trust has made this point strongly to the Department for Education.

Developing, testing, assessing and adjusting the curriculum are significant dimensions of leading a studio school. Meshing the development of the CREATE[5] employability skills and the use of project-based learning with the development of core subject knowledge requires imagination, learning from student feedback and detailed planning, so this is not something that can necessarily all be done in the establishment phase of a studio school. In Tendring Enterprise Studio School, for example, a key feature of the first term was making rapid innovations to the approach to teaching and learning, as it is able to test and evaluate the effectiveness of particular innovations with students.

Case study 3: Da Vinci Studio School, Hertfordshire

The promoter of Da Vinci Studio School – the North Hertfordshire College – had developed an innovative approach to curriculum and learning, based on vocational education taking place in learning companies. The college has set up commercial entities, such as a restaurant, garage, a car-valeting service, hairdressing salon and fitness centre. The idea, which was in part borrowed from the Studio Schools Trust model, combines learning with students being paid for work undertaken. In addition, the college has been providing 14-16 courses in areas such as mechanics and child-care. Da Vinci's specialisms are in science and engineering and it was successful in recruiting to these courses when it opened in 2012.

The college will be opening a second studio school, in Letchworth, in 2013. The principal said:

> A big chunk of time goes on curriculum planning as it is important to get all the staff together to plan and integrate the project-based learning.

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5   The CREATE skills framework has been designed for studio schools and comprises a wide range of employability and life skills. CREATE stands for communication, relating to people, enterprise, applied skills, thinking skills and emotional intelligence.

Managing building projects

During the set-up phase, managing building projects takes an enormous amount of time – very often the time of the principal. Many of the schools in our sample are involved in multi-phase building work, ie an initial site refurbishment followed by moving to different sites, followed by more substantial building works. This means that the demands of project management (and defining how the building must support the education vision) will continue for up to four years.

One secondary free school benefited from having a chartered surveyor among the promoters and subsequently on the governing body, who lent his expertise to the development project.

Most schools, however, have to manage building projects with the promoters and senior staff they have. This generally involves long weekly meetings where all those involved – architects, representatives of the Education Funding Agency, planning authorities, project managers and school leaders – discuss (and often re-discuss) issues, and amend drawings, costings and timetables.

The first task is to find premises. For some of our sample, this was relatively straightforward, but for other schools it has proved extremely difficult. For one secondary free school in the North West region finding a site proved to be the main problem in the set-up phase. The burden fell largely on the promoter who commented: "Finding a site, appointing staff and the late signing of the funding agreement felt like catch-22."

The principal of another secondary free school has spent an enormous amount of time on the plans for temporary accommodation and on the building due to be completed in 2014. "No-one prepares you for any of this," she commented, "project management skills are critical."

Interviewees from studio schools have told us about the difficulties they have had in completing the building on time, with one example of a science laboratory completed on the Sunday immediately prior to the studio school opening on the Monday. They also mentioned the problems that they experienced in negotiating with the Department for Education over specialist equipment and the procurement process.

Case study 4: London Academy of Excellence, Newham

The London Academy of Excellence, a 16-19 free school in Newham, in part had to use temporary premises for its first half-term as the offices that had formerly been occupied by the children's services department were not ready in time to accommodate the opening of the school. The local authority was supportive of the free school, but there were tough negotiations on the lease and constant meetings on the complicated logistics of turning an open-plan office space into classrooms. Air flow and air conditioning, for example, had to be re-designed. The building work over-ran and the school's induction week took place offsite. Opportunistically, the school created a special programme for this period, including visits to universities and elsewhere. This programme proved so successful that the school plans to repeat it next year.

Managing funding issues

For the 2013 cohort, the Department for Education is providing a project development grant to help promoters cover costs in the set-up phase. The grant for mainstream schools is a set amount, while the funding for 16-19 schools, alternative provision and special schools is determined on a case-by-case basis.

For the 2011 and 2012 cohorts, however, funding problems are high on the list of problems that schools experienced in the set-up phase. This was because the funding agreement with the Department for Education had taken a long time to negotiate and therefore was finalised at a late stage. Furthermore, even when the agreement was signed, the amount of funding was limited and only given for specific activities that the Department, conscious of the need to safeguard public money, had approved.

Because new schools have not had a float from the Department, every item of expenditure has had to be claimed from the Department against receipts and has generally been paid six to eight weeks later. Yet the new schools had to go ahead and buy equipment in order to be ready for opening. One head of an all-through free school described the difficulty of "finding out what funding would be available and when, which

meant an enormous amount of self-funding in the early days." Another head of a primary free school had up to £10,000 of school expenditure outstanding on her personal credit card before opening. The promoter of a secondary free school racked up £9,000 on his credit card. This is extremely unsatisfactory, not least because the repayments are then to an individual, not the school.

Apart from the point about personal debt and exposure to risk, which is unacceptable, one of the major implications of not having the funding agreed until such a late stage is the inability of new schools to appoint staff, who are unwilling to hand in their notice in the absence of a secured post. Studio schools experienced similar problems with a late start to the funding flow from the Department for Education. This is exacerbated by the late signing of funding agreements, with one example as late as 31 August.

What seems to be required here, as for other new types of school, is not more money, but an earlier release date of the promised funding in order to support project planning and employment of staff to do the preparatory work. This lack of availability of funds in the establishment phase is a particular problem for school promoters in recruiting the principal in good time and enabling them to spend some paid time in the period before they formally take up their post on preparing for the new school.

The problems of delayed funding were exacerbated by the arrangements for making claims. One primary free school head described the problems created by "the financial processes set up by the Department for Education which are time-consuming and difficult to access."

Some schools described to us difficult budgetary changes that had been imposed on them at a late stage and that caused considerable extra work.

The Department has told the schools opening in 2013 that they will be asked for a breakdown of planned expenditure and a grant will be made in advance, which will need to recognise that schools have different requirements, but this should improve the situation somewhat.

Conclusion

Parental demand and filling a perceived gap in the curriculum are seen as the main motivations in developing plans for new free schools, UTCs and studio schools opening in both 2011 and 2012. In 2012 there were fewer independent schools becoming academies, but more chains of schools expanding by opening a free school. The personal mission of the promoters came through strongly as a motivating force in establishing these new types of school and imparting a clear vision and ethos to the institution from the outset. Promoters are also working on developing success criteria that reflect the broader ambitions that led to setting up the schools.

A high degree of motivation and commitment was certainly needed in order to make such a significant input of time and energy throughout the establishment period, during which there were invariably great frustrations, delays, pressures and an immense amount of work.

The main issues during this period have been staff recruitment, pupil recruitment, marketing and media, building relations with the local community, planning the curriculum, managing building projects and managing start-up finances. Figure 4.3 suggests the actions or enablers that are most likely to be effective in handling this challenging period effectively.

Figure 4.3 also summarises the difficulties that promoters and leaders of new schools to date encountered most frequently. At the heart of these problems have been the length and lateness of negotiations with the Department. Free schools, studio schools and UTCs have all been new programmes for the Department. Inevitably the Department has had to define and refine systems, making decisions as it went along. It may be that the changes made for the schools opening in 2013 will alleviate these problems.

Figure 4.3: Enablers and barriers for school leaders in setting up new schools

Enablers	Barriers
• Promoter allocating a dedicated person to oversee project planning for the new school (including the appointment of a headteacher). • Having a clear curriculum vision for the school. • Principals appointed to start full time at least eight months – and preferably a year – before the school opens. • Arranging for the new principal to be seconded – even if only part time – to start work on the new school immediately after appointment. • Adapting policies from an existing school. • Maximising support with logistics and back-office functions from the group organisation when a new school is part of a chain. • Using specialist organisations or individuals to help design the curriculum, recruit staff, project-manage building work and other tasks, where a new school is not part of a chain. • Putting early and intensive input into marketing and recruitment of pupils. • Building as positive a relationship as possible with other local schools and with the local authority.	• Late decision on approving a new school. • Late appointment of principal. • Insufficient project management support. • Delay in receiving project funding. • Failure and delay in identifying suitable premises and agreeing specification for building work. • Uncertainty over capital funding allocations for premises and equipment. • Over-detailed central requirements in terms of education plan and outcomes. • Late sign-off to the funding agreement.

5: Leadership in new types of school

The leadership of a new type of school, once it has opened, presents a fresh set of opportunities and challenges to principals and senior leaders. This chapter explores the very wide range of prior professional experience leaders bring to this task, the way that leadership teams work together in a new school environment, the evolution of leadership structures and dynamics over the first year of operation in a new school, and an exploration of how leaders are prioritising their time and capacity.

This chapter also looks in detail at the leadership opportunities in new types of school, which leaders have seized and are driving forward, coupled with some of the most pressing challenges associated with leading in these new school environments. Both of these are intimately linked to the unique context of new types of school.

Professional experience

The experience principals bring to the establishment of a new type of school is very varied. On average, the 45 school principals who responded to the relevant question on our survey brought around 20 years of teaching experience to the role and 3.5 years as a principal or headteacher of another school. However, these averages conceal a very wide range. The number of years of previous teaching experience ranged from 4 to 37, and the number of years of experience as a former headteacher ranged from 0 to 17. This wide variety is illustrated in Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2 below[6]:

Figure 5.1: Number of years' teaching experience (percentage of principals responding)
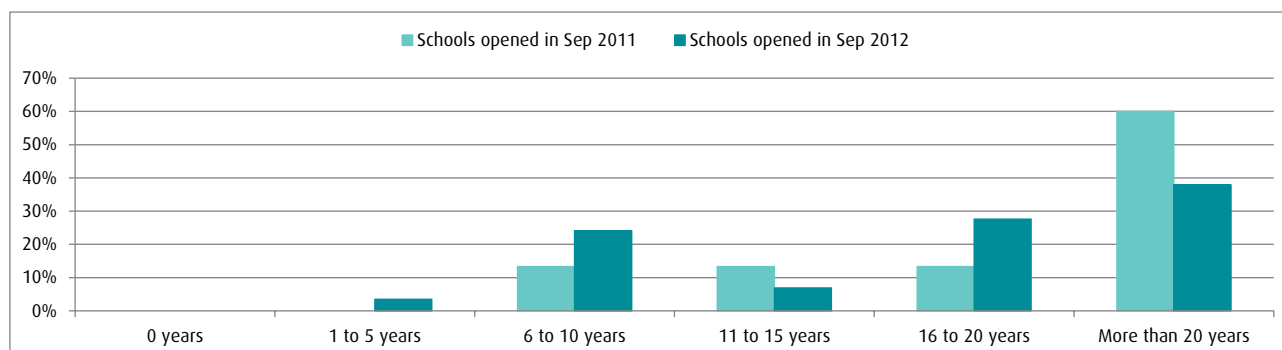
Figure 5.2: Number of years' experience as a headteacher/principal of a previous school (percentage of principals responding)
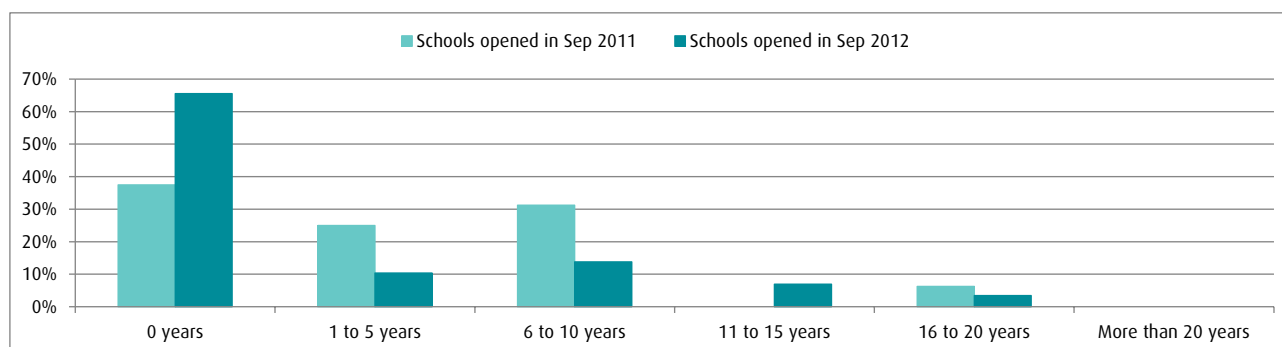
Note for Figures 5.1 and 5.2: Schools opened in 2011: based on responses to survey from 13 free schools, 2 studio schools and 1 UTC. Schools opened in 2012: based on responses to survey from 23 free schools, 5 studio schools and 1 UTC

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6   The figures in this chapter are presented in terms of percentages in order to facilitate comparisons between the 2011 and 2012 new school cohorts. However, it should be noted that the numbers on which the percentages are based are small.

The second striking feature that Figure 5.2 illustrates is the relatively high proportion of principals of new types of school who have not been a headteacher before. Overall, around 55 per cent of principals who responded to our survey reported that this was their first headship. This trend was particularly marked in schools that opened in September 2012, in which around two-thirds of those responding to the survey were leading a school for the first time. It was also a clear trend in studio schools: in all seven studio schools responding to the survey, the principal was in his/her first headship.

Many of those we interviewed suggested that, especially in a school that is not part of a broader federation or chain, the pressure on principals of new schools is eased if they have had previous headship experience, a finding that accords with the literature. It stands to reason that the challenge of establishing a new school may well be greater if the principal is simultaneously learning the job of headship for the first time. Having said this, some of those we interviewed, both governors and principals, also made the point that the experience of opening a new type of school from scratch is such a unique opportunity that no amount of previous headship experience will necessarily prepare one for it. As one promoter and free school chair of governors commented when reflecting on the experience of the principal of his school, "being chief executive of a charitable start-up means you have to do **everything**. Nothing prepares you for that."

Analysis of the survey results does not suggest that the degree of challenge experienced by new principals, the areas they found challenging, or the tasks taking up most of their time were significantly different from principals coming to the task of establishing a new school with many years of headship behind them.

Certainly, many principals who were new to headship felt that they had needed to draw on a very wide range of previous experience in establishing the school. Many commented that their experience as a deputy, for example in curriculum development, had proved invaluable. Some had also learned from roles that had a wider local, regional or national remit, having worked for example as an advisory teacher, subject expert or partnership co-ordinator across multiple schools. In a few cases those appointed to leadership teams also brought with them useful experience from outside the school sector. For example, one head had been a local authority councillor and this proved valuable in helping the school group to negotiate with the local council on planning issues relating to premises for the new school. Another had been a lecturer at a local university, thus bringing to the headship of a free school a network covering many other schools. Others came from a background in education consultancy or further education. Some UTC principals and senior leaders in particular brought their previous experience outside education, particularly in industry or business, to the task of school leadership. In responses to the survey, principals from all types of school cited a range of prior experience from outside education in fields including accountancy, engineering, the civil service and the media.

Some of the new principals who have come from federations or chains of schools have been 'groomed' or prepared for their new role, have support from an executive principal and sometimes bring other members of the leadership team and/or teaching staff with them. For example, the head of Perry Beeches II, a secondary academy, was able to recruit seven teachers from Perry Beeches Academy, where she had previously been associate head. As the school was cleared to open in September 2012 by the Department for Education only four months before opening, this helped to create a pool of high-quality teachers to ensure that the school ethos developed in the right way from the start.

The interviews and fieldwork suggested that it is not only principals of new types of school who are promoted into post. Many schools engaged in the research reported that other senior leaders in the school were also stepping up to a position of increased responsibility for the first time and that staff teams included a relatively high proportion of newly qualified teachers. In addition, one of the consequences of the late signing of funding agreements was, as described in Chapter 4, an inability to offer firm contracts to potential staff and this meant that schools often had to employ a higher than normal proportion of newly qualified teachers at the start.

Some free schools deliberately set out to recruit newly qualified staff, seeing this as an opportunity to create a dynamic learning environment, with a lot of people in the school ambitious to try out new ways of working and develop new skills. However, this also creates a potential fragility in some schools and, in an environment where resources are stretched, can lead to individuals feeling that they are having to take on too much, and learn too many new things, all at one time. Certainly the time required to support less experienced members of staff to grow into their new roles is a pressure felt by many leaders of new types of school.

For example, one principal of a secondary free school, who had herself been promoted into post, said that she felt that as a former deputy she had a lot of experience of bringing on and developing staff, but she had always relied on coaching-based models of support which can be time-consuming and was concerned that, with the current pressures of establishing the school, she could not always give the time to coaching that she felt was needed. None of her senior leadership team members had prior leadership experience. In this case the principal pointed to the invaluable support that she received from her executive head and the educational trust that had established the school, which offered additional leadership strength in depth.

Leadership structures

Progression of leadership structures in a new school

Most of the literature on school leadership structures is based on established schools. The schools in this study, however, were moving rapidly through separate phases of their growth and their leadership structures had to evolve to address the challenges of each stage, as Figure 5.3 illustrates. Leadership structure is dynamic, not static, if new schools are to be established successfully and then build a sustainable growth model that consistently delivers a high quality of education with all students achieving their potential.

In the set-up phase, the leadership of the new school generally falls to a small group of people: one or more promoters and often just one senior school leader, the principal. If the school is not part of a wider group, this represents an added challenge for the promoters and principal.

The first half-term is usually a frenetic period of activity, with day-to-day management taking precedence over long-term strategy. A number of the school's promoters will have become members of the governing body and will have moved away from the hands-on work they were doing in the set-up phase, though not all will be finding this shift easy. The critical relationship between the principal and the governing body will have begun to be forged.

As the first year progresses, more strategic conversations take place among senior staff and the working relationship between the principal and the rest of the senior leadership team develops. During the year, the governing body will develop its *modus operandi* and the chair and the principal will continue to develop their working relationship.

Most of the new types of school have started with one or two year groups and will grow year by year. Many will double in size at the start of the school's second year. Growing the leadership group through this period of transition will be a considerable challenge for the governing bodies and principals of the schools in this study.

**Figure 5.3: Timeline for opening a new school**
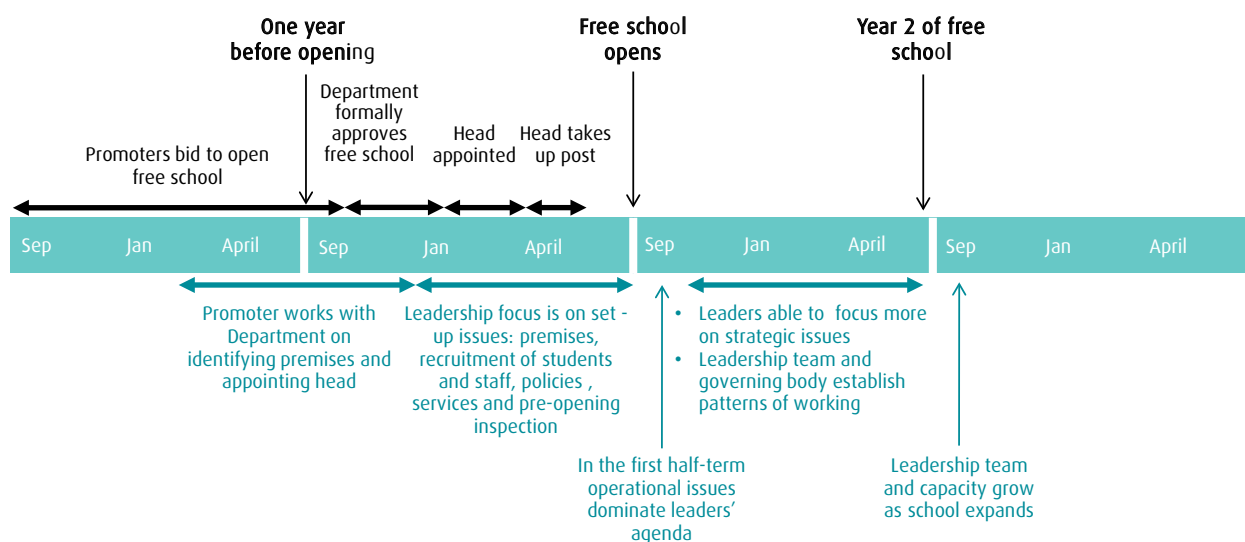
Leadership structures of schools opening in 2011 and 2012

Although schools opening in 2011 deployed a fairly wide range of leadership structures, the most common senior leadership teams were a principal plus a business manager, or a principal, vice principal and a business manager (see Figure 5.4). The size of the senior leadership team in schools responding to the survey ranged from just 1 to 10 members.

More of the schools opening in 2012 had a senior leadership team of four or more, with a principal, vice principal, assistant principals and a business manager. This closely resembles the normal shape of a senior leadership team in a maintained secondary school.

Figure 5.4: Leadership structures in schools opening in 2011 and 2012
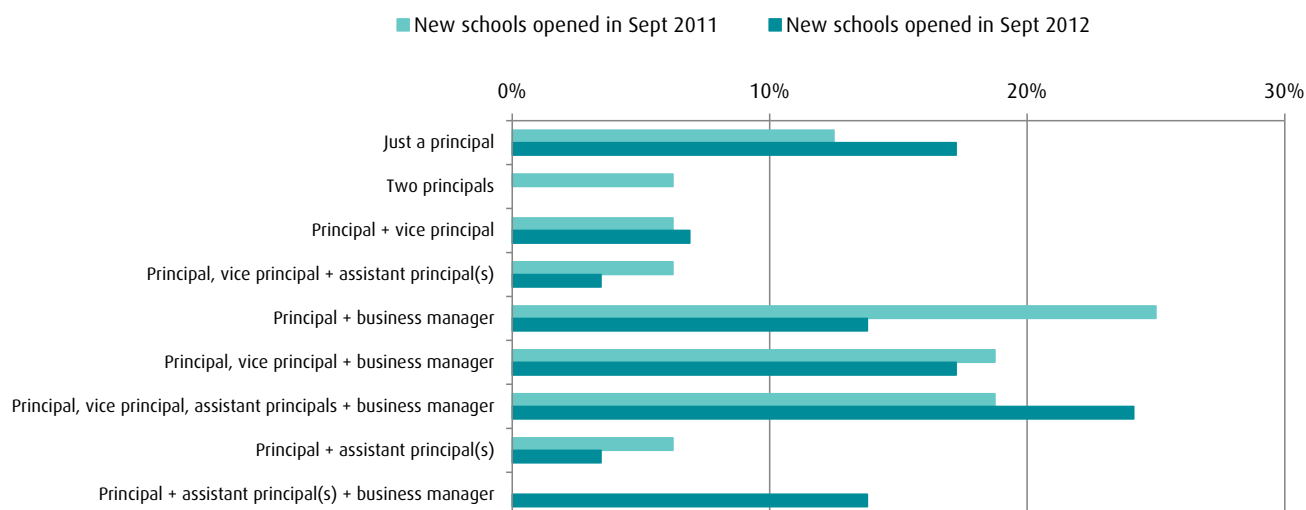
Note: Schools opened in 2011: based on responses to survey from 13 free schools, 2 studio schools and 1 UTC. Schools opened in 2012: based on responses to survey from 23 free schools, 5 studio schools and 1 UTC. Not all the posts counted in Figure 5.4 are full time.

How leadership teams work together

As in all schools, leadership teams are working together in new schools through a mix of informal and structured meetings. In some cases the emphasis is on the former, particularly in the early days of a school's existence. One secondary free school, for example, has started with a head and two assistant heads, one of whom is experienced in curriculum design. All three teach for part of the week and the assistant heads also have leadership of the major subject areas of English, mathematics and science. The three share an office and quickly abandoned scheduled meetings, dealing with matters as they arose. The head recognised that, as the school grew, they would have to move to more formal systems and that it could be challenging for others to join the founding leadership team after such a close working relationship had been forged.

One primary school head reported that the first half-term had been almost entirely operational in order to get the school functioning effectively. The focus shifted on a daily basis from IT issues to caretaker problems to health and safety, with the building work providing a constant backdrop of problems and challenges. By October half-term, these issues had mostly been sorted out and the senior leadership team was able to shift its attention to teaching and learning, observing more lessons and leading staff training sessions. The vice principal of a UTC similarly reported: "The first six weeks have been very operational. Since half-term we have had many more strategic conversations."

A typical balance between informal and formal working is illustrated in a free school where the senior leadership team meets for a short, informal get-together before the morning briefing that is held for all staff three times a week. The leadership team also meets weekly for a more formal session on Tuesday evenings.

Where a school is part of a group or chain, new heads can gain support from working with an established leader or executive head. For example, the principal of Woodpecker Hall and Kingfisher Hall primary academies and the executive principal of Cuckoo Hall form a senior leadership team for Cuckoo Hall

Academies Trust (CHAT). The team meets roughly fortnightly, typically for a whole afternoon. The meetings will cover performance management and progress of the schools, the quality of teaching and staffing-related issues. The aim is to try and build consistency of approach and performance across CHAT and this is underpinned by the three schools having a common curriculum approach (with an hour of literacy and numeracy in each class each morning) and standard data-tracking systems.

Another example is the Dixons group in Bradford, which has a senior leadership group comprising the heads of the four schools in the group and the executive principal. They meet for around two hours once a month and hold an away day from time to time. The agenda is a mix of operational matters (for example, common holiday dates) and teaching and learning issues (for example, a focus on literacy).

In studio schools, where the school may be part of, or linked to, a school and/or further education college – it is not uncommon for the principal to lead leadership team meetings for the studio school and also to be part of the broader school or college leadership team. Studio schools are generally being led by staff who have previously been assistant or deputy heads. Deputy head posts are often filled by staff who, because of the teaching and learning model used by studio schools, are designated 'senior learning coaches'. Several studio schools have strengthened the leadership team by bringing in or designating someone to oversee progress in core subjects of English, maths and science.

Allocation of principals' time

In a well-run, mature school, the management and leadership of the school are organised in a way that enables leaders to spend the largest amount of time on issues that they regard as most important. Our survey on how the leaders of the 2011 and 2012 cohorts were allocating their time was carried out towards the end of the autumn term in 2011 for the first cohort and in September and October 2012 for the second cohort. This revealed that the six issues both cohorts of principals regarded as most important matched very closely the six on which they are spending most time, albeit in a different order. This is illustrated in Figure 5.5 and Figure 5.6, and in both cohorts leading teaching and learning features strongly.

Figure 5.5: Ranking by principals of tasks in terms of importance and time spent on the task (2011 cohort)
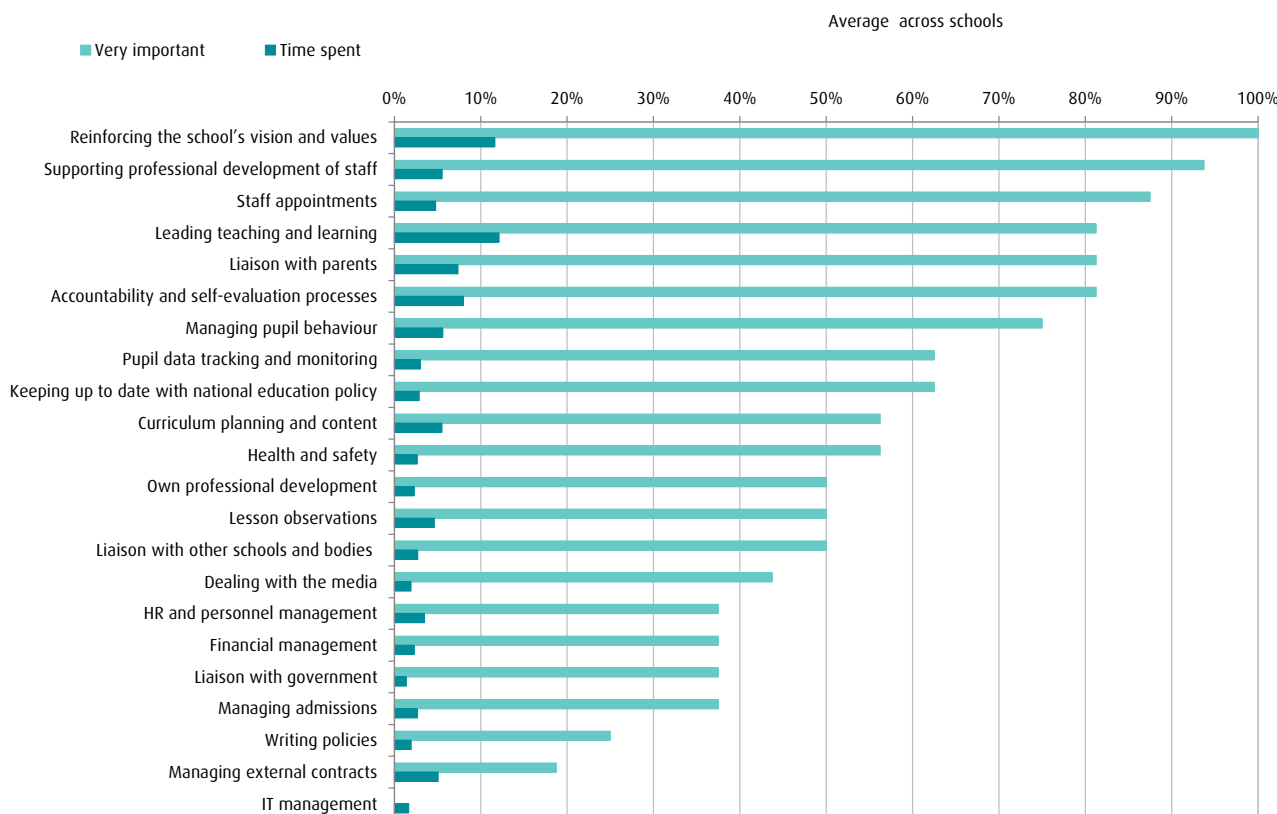
Note: Based on responses from 11 free schools, 2 studio schools and 1 UTC

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Figure 5.6: Ranking by principals of tasks in terms of importance and time spent on the task (2012 cohort)
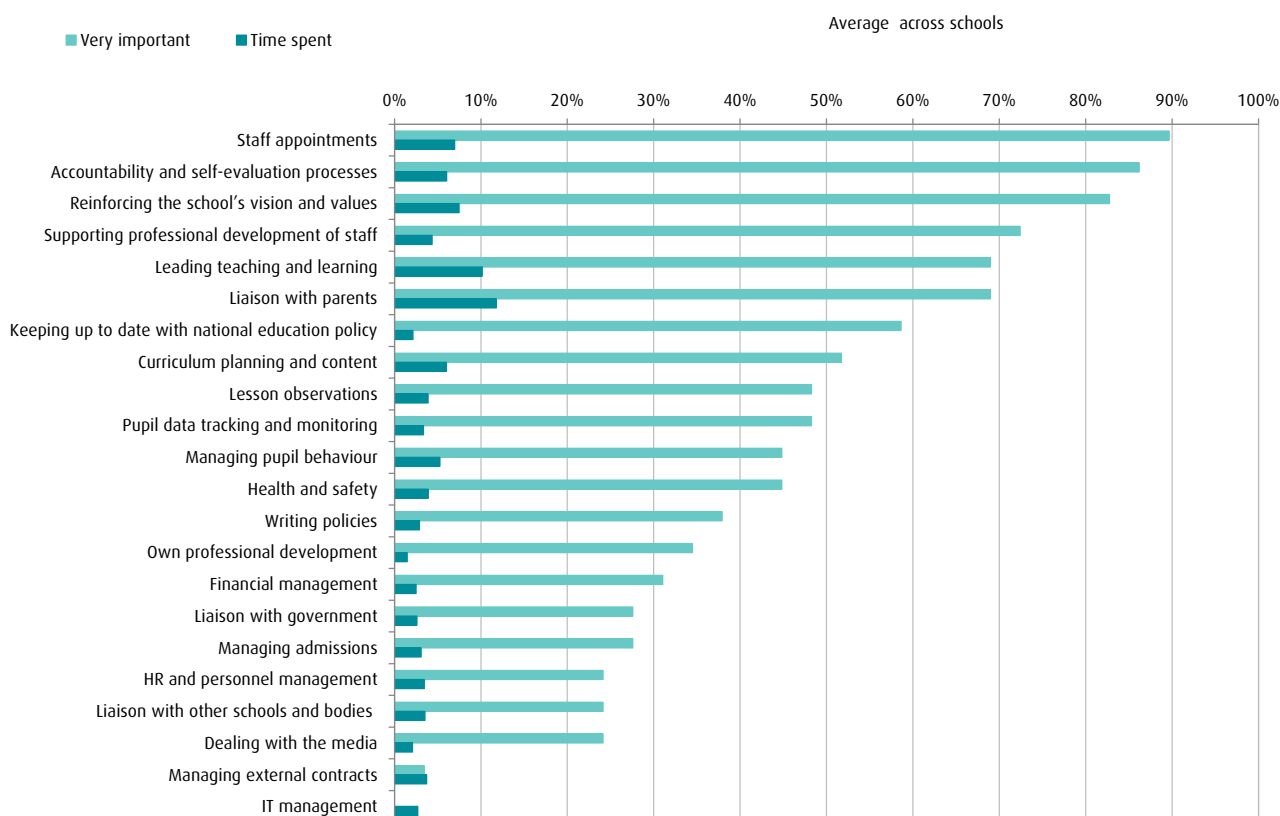
Note: Based on responses from 20 free schools, 4 studio schools and 1 UTC

In general, principals are spending the most time in the first year on issues they see as extremely important: reinforcing the school's vision and values, leading teaching and learning and liaising with parents. Staff appointments, accountability and school self-evaluation, and supporting the professional development of staff, are also regarded as very important and have a high proportion of time spent on them. Time allocation varies substantially from day to day and week to week. Even more than heads of established schools, leaders of new schools are constantly juggling priorities. For example, one head of a studio school described how "Data is huge this week", as the first batch of student tracking data had become available. But in another week, her time could be dominated by curriculum planning for a new project, external visits, meetings about the new building or HR issues, or indeed a combination of all of these matters.

The leadership of teaching and learning, lesson observation and quality assurance were priority areas for heads who spend as much time as they can on these tasks, although operational issues often reduce the time available for them. One primary head reported being in classrooms every day, observing and monitoring what was happening. Another said that she was spending more time in the second year on school standards and quality assurance.

One very experienced head of a primary free school had spent half her time on quality assurance and coaching and mentoring her staff since the opening of the school. With his school having doubled in size at the start of its second year, a secondary head is spending a lot more time on lesson observation, coaching and mentoring and curriculum, stating that: "the main thrust last year was getting the school off the ground. Now we are refining what we are teaching."

Challenges and opportunities of leading a new type of school and impact on the leadership of teaching and learning

It is clear from the survey data presented above that principals of new types of school have a clear and consistent understanding of which leadership tasks are important, and broadly they feel that they are able to devote time to those tasks. However, both the fieldwork and survey evidence gathered through this research have shown that achieving this focus on what is important, and realising the significant opportunities that establishing a new school offers, require constant prioritisation, flexibility and responsiveness in terms of leadership. The following section on the challenges and opportunities of leadership looks below the surface at how principals are spending their time and what they consider important, to understand fully the trade-offs, constraints and innovations that characterise leadership in new types of school.

As part of our survey we asked principals of new types of school to list the four key challenges and opportunities associated with starting a new school. We did not ask principals to choose from a list in this case, but instead invited them to provide free-text responses to the question. Having analysed the responses received, it was clear that there was a high degree of agreement among principals on what they perceived to be the challenges and opportunities that motivated them. Figures 5.7 and 5.8 and Table 5.1 below show the areas that featured in at least 15 per cent of the responses of either the 2011 or 2012 cohort.

Figure 5.7: Challenges of leading a new type of school
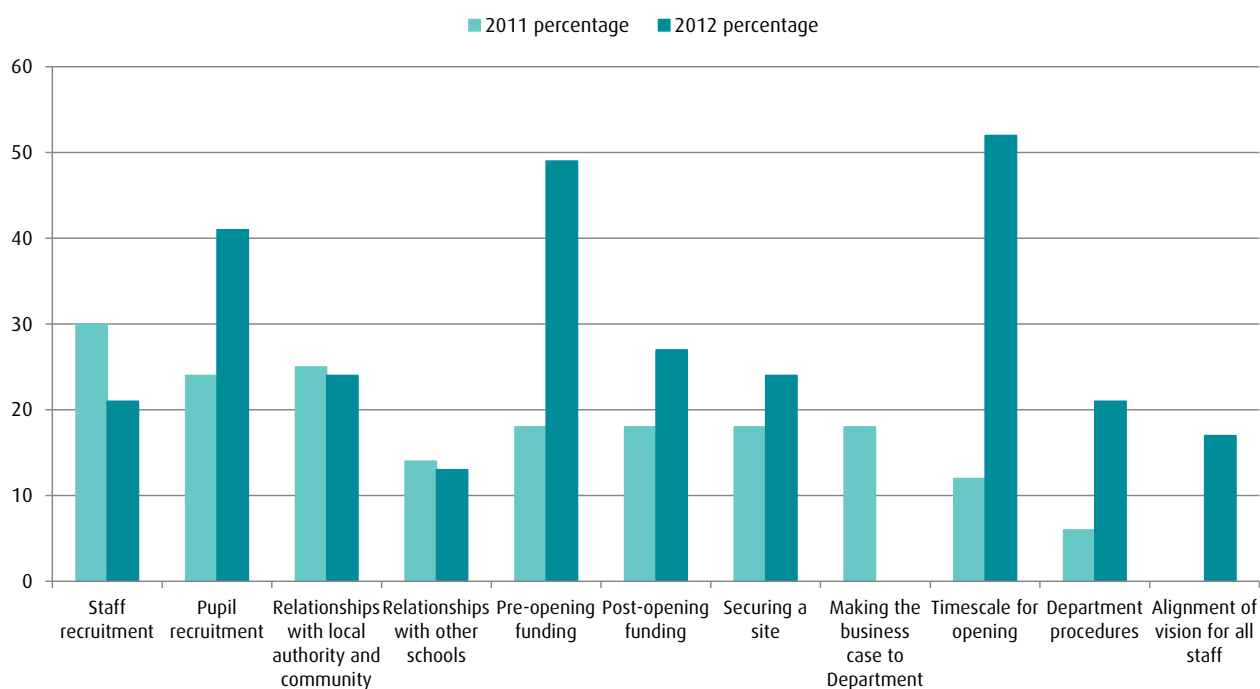
Note: Relates to free responses with more than 15 per cent of respondents from either 2011 or 2012 cohort. Schools opened in 2011: based on responses to survey from 13 free schools, 3 studio schools and 1 UTC. Schools opened in 2012: based on responses to survey from 23 free schools, 5 studio schools and 1 UTC

Figure 5.8: Opportunities of leading a new type of school
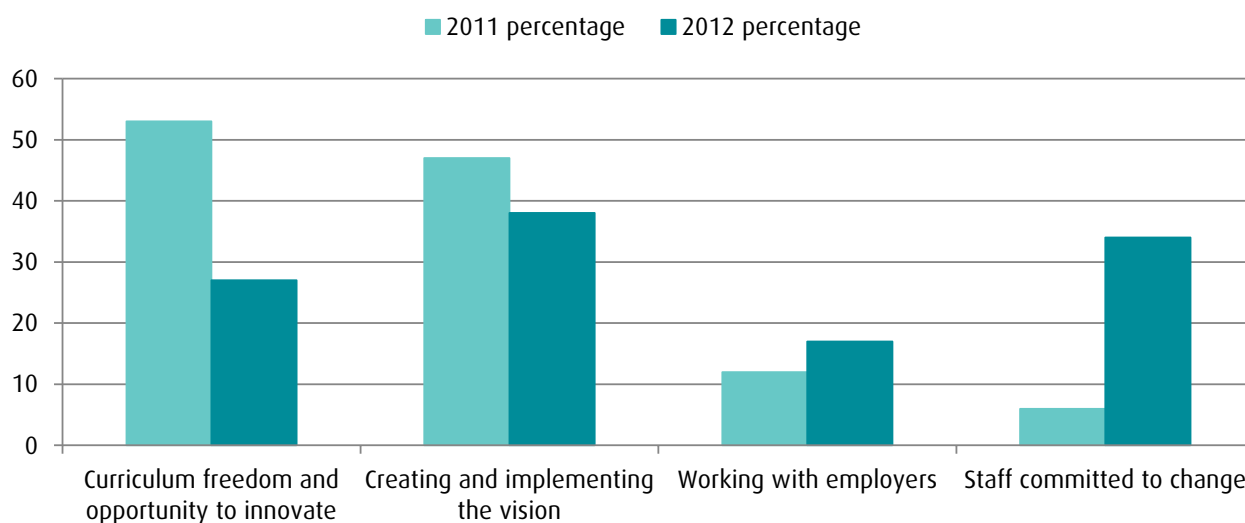
Note: Relates to free responses with more than 15 per cent of respondents from either 2011 or 2012 cohort. Schools opened in 2011: based on responses to survey from 13 free schools, 3 studio schools and 1 UTC. Schools opened in 2012: based on responses to survey from 23 free schools, 5 studio schools and 1 UTC

For the 2011 cohort, the main challenges mentioned in these free-text responses were staff recruitment, pupil recruitment and relationships with the local community and local authority. For the 2012 cohort, the main challenges were cited as the timescale for opening the school, funding (both before and after opening) and pupil recruitment.

The opportunities of opening schools of this type were viewed as similar between the two years. In both 2011 and 2012, principals saw the major opportunities as curriculum freedom and the opportunity to innovate, and creating and implementing their educational vision. Studio schools and UTCs cited working with employers as one of the main opportunities. The most important difference in the answers to this question was that one-third of principals of schools opening in 2012 mentioned the opportunity to appoint staff who were committed to the school's vision, whereas the 2011 openers often had to develop staff to ensure that they were working in harmony with the ethos and values of the school.

In order to understand fully both the challenges and opportunities associated with leading a new type of school, it is necessary to appreciate the contextual factors that make these schools, and hence the leadership environment in them, unique. Our fieldwork suggests that there are four broad contextual factors that differentiate the leadership environment in new types of school and that in more established schools. These factors are creating challenges and opportunities that are particularly impacting on the leadership of teaching and learning. Table 5.1 summarises the relationship between the context and the challenges and opportunities. These issues are then explored more fully in the following sections.

Table 5.1: How opportunities and challenges impact on the leadership of teaching and learning

Context	Challenges	Opportunities
In a new school you start from scratch, both in creating the school itself and the learning environment.	Addressing a lot of practical issues such as premises, contracts and IT which extend well beyond the opening of the school. Having no set way of doing things – no established policies and procedures to draw on. Designing and planning the curriculum and setting the culture and ways of working of the new school are also crucial in the early days. The cumulative weight of these tasks and the operational issues can squeeze out time for leaders to reflect and plan for the future, and provide time for development.	Creating a bespoke vision/ curriculum for effective teaching and learning. Transferring and extending a successful school improvement model to another school. Establishing new systems (for example, structure of the school week, organisation of curriculum planning time, practice of classroom observation) to support the teaching and learning vision. Bringing in a new generation of school leaders with passion and vision. Having the potential to create a new way of relating to parents.
New schools tend to be small organisations (due to funding constraints and starting with one or two year groups).	Having to share the above tasks between a small number of people (although chains and federations provide ways to distribute the workload). Leaders having to wear multiple hats and needing to turn their hand to anything. Having a limited number of leaders to act as role models. Having insufficient resources/ time for staff development and leadership development.	Taking advantage of a small environment to communicate and act on challenges in a more immediate and direct way. Creating close-knit relationships based on small senior teams that share a teaching and learning vision. Utilising small teams to try out, evaluate and amend innovative approaches to teaching and learning.
The concept and reputation of the school are unproven.	Recruiting pupils, particularly when the school's curriculum offer is very different from the mainstream. Dealing with heightened scrutiny and accountability, for example, the outcome of the first Ofsted inspection and the first cohort of results.	Starting with a blank slate can be liberating in defining what the school will be and what it will achieve. Bringing a distinctive educational offer to an area and using this as a catalyst for raising educational aspirations and broadening options.
It is a dynamic environment that is changing all the time (not least as a school grows year by year).	Maintaining and sustaining the early vision as the school grows. Adapting the culture as the school becomes bigger. Being flexible enough to respond to changes as they arise. Incorporating new appointments into what might be a close-knit leadership team.	Being able to alter the leadership structure and change personnel and responsibilities before systems and structures become fixed. Being able to appoint new staff to complement the skills of the early appointments. Having more time for instructional leadership.

Starting from scratch in creating the school itself and the learning environment

One of the defining features of establishing any new school is that systems, policies, processes, ways of working and the teaching and learning environment have to be designed from scratch and then put into operation. This is even more acutely felt in schools that are not only new but attempting to put in place a different concept of education or a very individual approach to teaching and learning, which is the case in studio schools and UTCs, and in some of the free schools we visited. A frequent remark made by principals and senior leaders interviewed was "there is no blueprint for what we are doing." This is one of the main factors that make the leadership of new types of school both immensely challenging and very rewarding.

Challenges

The key challenge associated with creating a school from scratch is how leaders distribute their time efficiently in order to give sufficient attention to the pressing operational needs of managing and running the school, for example, setting up systems, processes and policies, recruiting pupils, managing ongoing building and refurbishment projects, and dealing with the snagging issues associated with being in any new organisation, while also finding the time to give a high priority to the more strategic leadership of teaching and learning, setting and communicating the vision, quality assurance, coaching and mentoring, and curriculum design. The need to combine operational and strategic leadership under the pressure of opening a new school was described by one head of a secondary free school as being like "building the plane while it's flying." Some of the examples below provide very cogent descriptions of how these tensions are experienced by leaders on a day-to-day basis:

A small standalone primary school head says that he has difficulty in finding time for the leadership of teaching and learning with his largely inexperienced teachers, because of the constant pressures of urgent issues. Another head of a small school explains why he is in a similar position: "Because pupil numbers are below target and because we couldn't find enough of the right type of teachers for this school, my time allocation is a problem."

An all-through free school with a head, deputy head, assistant head and special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) forming the senior leadership team opened in 2012 with a full Reception class and a half-full Year 7. The set-up stage for this school was extremely tough, with major premises issues and a large amount of time spent on recruitment. As a standalone school, the full burden of establishing everything fell on just three people and in the first term the school leaders found it hard to move beyond the operational to the strategic because of pressures of time.

The same trend was also found in another secondary free school, which opened with a senior leadership team of head and deputy. The deputy rapidly became over-stretched on day-to-day management and an assistant head was recruited. In the second year, the tension between time for operational and strategic leadership was still evident in the leadership team.

Premises and buildings issues are rarely far from the surface in schools where heads are finding difficulty in creating time for strategic leadership and the necessary focus on leading teaching and learning. A primary school head said in October of the school's first term that the construction of a new school "is taking up more time than education functions at present."

Building and premises issues are not just restricted to the pre-opening phase. Many of the schools visited had opened on a temporary site, which had to be planned and equipped, while engaging with architects and builders about the development of new buildings on a different site, and the project management of decanting staff and pupils between buildings during the interim phase. It was not unusual for the expected project management of multi-phase building projects to last two to three years. The temporary nature of some of the accommodation and facilities can also lead to operational problems in the early weeks, with such basic needs as management information systems and telephony not being adequately met. Indeed, several of the research team's interviews with leaders of new schools were carried out with school leaders using mobile phones as the school landline was either not installed or there was only one landline.

The challenges of balancing operational leadership, strategic leadership and leadership of teaching and learning were apparent in a large majority of the schools involved in the research. However, they were often less acute in schools that were part of a federation or chain and had access to the wider resources and capacity of that organisation. Being part of a chain or federation could alleviate capacity constraints in a number of different ways:

— The parent organisation would often have established policies and procedures in place which the new school could take and adapt to its context, rather than starting entirely from scratch.

— The existence of an executive head in some cases enabled leadership tasks to be distributed more widely and discussions around the strategic vision and leadership of teaching and learning to be shared.

— Larger organisations, particularly established chains, often have central services in place to support facilities management, IT, contracting, and legal and HR functions, freeing leaders to focus more on the educational priorities of the school.

Having said this, even in schools that are part of much larger organisations, leaders continued to juggle the demands of the immediate with those of the medium- and longer-term, as the example below illustrates:

> In a primary school that is part of a chain and where there is a good deal of external support, the head is still very hands-on, having a teaching commitment, doing lunch duty, providing staff cover and other basic tasks, as well as having at least one substantial meeting every week on the design of a new building. Although he finds it difficult to spend enough time on leading teaching and learning when faced with day-to-day demands, he makes time to observe lessons, scrutinise data and monitor assessment.

In many schools involved in the research, including schools that were part of chains and those that were standalone, the acute pressures associated with managing day-to-day operational issues alongside strategic leadership and leadership of teaching and learning were often alleviated as the school matured. As one head of a secondary free school anticipated, "I will have to judge when to step back and take a less hands-on approach to leadership."

Opportunities

While creating a school from scratch poses some significant challenges for how leaders distribute their time and focus their energies, the flip side is that it is precisely this feature of establishing a new school that leaders find motivating and inspiring. Through the survey and the fieldwork it was clear that the chance to create a new institution, with a unique educational vision, culture and offer to pupils was the reason why many promoters, principals and other senior leaders had embarked upon the free school, studio school or UTC journey. The head of a primary free school echoed the views of many when she talked about the opportunity to "realise a vision for effective teaching and learning." For other leaders of new schools, the opportunity lies in being able to extend and transfer a successful school improvement model to another school, as described in Chapter 4.

For many leaders of new types of school, the chance to create something new and innovative is invested in the design of the curriculum. Leaders of studio schools and UTCs are particularly excited by the task of producing real curriculum change. The principal of one UTC described the opportunity to produce an "innovative, integrated, applied, academic, vocational and enterprising curriculum."

However, seizing the opportunity for such curriculum innovation takes time and effort. UTC leaders spent a great deal of time on designing the curriculum and then redesigning their courses in the light of the downgrading of the diploma, which was central to their offer to students. The principal of Aston University Engineering Academy reported:

> I put the diploma into the curriculum, then it was debased. So we have created our own diploma, with all Year 10 students doing City and Guilds certificate in engineering, systems and control, electronics, and engineering and innovation – four GCSEs in all.

The principal of JCB Academy said:

> We have had a different curriculum every year. Changes have been made following the Wolf Report on vocational education – for example, business is now studied as a GCSE course.

In studio schools the curriculum model requires progress in core subjects to be integrated with the development of the CREATE skills through project learning. Studio school leaders see it as their role to ensure that there is sufficient planning for the projects to work well. The process is time-consuming. The head of Green Hub Studio School has ensured that planning for the projects takes place 'off-timetable' and builds into the design of the projects the feedback from the individual and group coaching that the students receive. Timetabling long project sessions can also be very difficult if the studio school is part of a bigger secondary school and teachers are also working to a conventional timetable in the main school.

It is not just principals of studio schools and UTCs who see the opportunities for curriculum design as one of the real benefits of creating a new school from scratch. For many free school leaders, this was also a clear objective. One primary school head described the main opportunity of starting a new free school as "curriculum freedom to teach what is important as well as motivating and engaging for pupils." Another mentioned "the freedom to plan an exciting and relevant curriculum." In a third school the head described the approach of engaging parents in the design of the curriculum as "a time-consuming but worthwhile exercise."

It is also the case that some free school leaders bring a particular underpinning vision for the curriculum to their school from the outset. For example, a primary free school head was enthusiastic about the opportunity:

> to access high-quality instrumental tuition for all pupils free of charge, putting into practice our belief that music tuition can impact on educational outcomes throughout the curriculum.

Headteacher, primary free school

Another head celebrated the opportunity to "offer independent-style education for free", a comment reflected by heads of some other free schools.

Alongside the opportunities for leading the design and development of a new curriculum, leaders of new types of school relished the chance to develop the staff team and bring on a new generation of leaders with passion for what they are doing, shared commitment to the vision of the school, and an appetite for working in new and different ways. The head of one primary school said: "There is no resistance to change from a new and committed staff team," implicitly contrasting this situation with the leadership of change in an established school. The promoter of a secondary free school talked of developing "a cadre of passionate educators and giving them the chance to create something transformational", while a studio school head spoke about "the chance to set working protocols with staff free from national agreements."

New schools tend to be small organisations

The second important contextual feature associated with the leadership of new types of school is that they are often small organisations. Some of them are small by design – a number of free schools, for example, have explicitly espoused the values of being a small school as part of their educational ethos, and the studio school model is predicated on being small. But even those schools that are not small by design start life with a small proportion of their eventual student numbers in place. A key challenge for governors and school leaders therefore is how far they can afford to 'staff up' the leadership team from the beginning or whether they have to start small and then expand the team as pupil numbers grow.

Challenges

In nearly all new schools the diseconomies of scale of only having a single cohort of students mean that the budget for recruiting a leadership team is significantly constrained at the outset. Leaders frequently have to compensate for this by taking on more than one role, as is the case in small maintained schools. Among primary free schools it is particularly common for classroom teachers to take on additional responsibilities, such as phase co-ordination roles, and for the school to plan to appoint a deputy or assistant head when funds permit. The examples below illuminate what this means in practice for school leaders and their teams:

> One small primary school that has under-recruited has a leadership team comprising the head, co-ordinators of Key Stage 1 and Early Years (classroom teacher paid additional allowances for these responsibilities), and the business manager. They meet weekly. The school cannot afford a deputy or assistant head or sufficient administrative staff, but hopes to take on an assistant head as the school grows.
>
> A secondary free school that opened with a head and deputy, each line managing three heads of faculty, and a head of pastoral, has a structure in which, as the principal describes it: "everyone has a faculty and a pastoral hat."

Of course in very small new schools or in schools that have not recruited their full cohort of pupils and that cannot therefore afford to appoint all the planned staff, the implication is that principal has to carry out a wide range of tasks. This has the effect of amplifying the tension between operational leadership and the leadership of teaching and learning and more strategic issues. As one principal of a primary free school that had under-recruited pupils said: "I have to turn my hand to everything. There is a toolkit in the corner of my office."

Another consequence of having a leadership team consisting initially of just a head, or a head and an assistant head, is that there are few leaders for staff to look to as positive role models. There is a risk that, unless the school is part of a broader grouping or makes a conscious effort to work with other schools, it could be very limited in its formative stage in the experience, examples and learning it is able to draw on.

Studio schools and UTCs recognise from the outset that they will remain small, and well below the average size of a secondary school. Their budgets are severely pressurised by the expensive nature of their curriculum and the diseconomy of scale of not having a full student cohort to meet the costs. They are, therefore, conscious of the need not to spend heavily on management by making permanent appointments. In several cases, they use external consultants with school leadership experience to carry out tasks such as data analysis, support for teaching challenging students, and advice on leadership strategy.

Studio schools are small schools and this, coupled with the squeeze on post-16 funding, brings diseconomies of scale that constrain the curriculum, as well as limiting the size of a leadership team and the time available for strategic leadership and leadership development. The necessity of leaders taking on more than one role can be felt particularly acutely in the case of those studio schools that are part of a larger established secondary school. The research found that studio schools that are 'schools within schools' may face constraints in developing the full potential of the studio school model because leaders have to juggle their responsibilities in the studio school with leadership duties in the main school – "plate-spinning", as one studio school leader described it in an interview.

The literature on leadership in small schools, outlined in Chapter 3, highlights many of the same issues. Two of the specific challenges are listed by Mohr (2000):

1. The work has to be done by fewer people, and both leaders and teachers can become overwhelmed by the demands of distributed leadership. Principals can get caught between the demands of the school and the wider community.

2. Managing the day-to-day can result in insufficient focus being given to improving teaching and learning.

These challenges resonate strongly with the evidence from new types of school presented above. However, the literature is also clear that small schools afford opportunities that are much harder to achieve in larger school environments. These can be realised when leaders exploit the smaller scale to change how adults work together. It is these opportunities that are investigated below.

Opportunities

Although being a small organisation creates significant challenges in terms of the burden of tasks and responsibilities to be shared between very few people, it also creates some opportunities for different, more flexible and more responsive styles of leadership. One feature of small schools, which was frequently seen in the schools we visited, is the tight-knit nature of the leadership and staff team who see each other regularly and share a strong sense of common purpose.

The second feature of leadership in small teams is the short lines of communication which, despite the time pressures faced by all involved, can actually make the task of strategic leadership easier and more immediate. For example, one secondary school had a senior leadership team of principal, vice principal and heads of maths and English, both of the latter having other responsibilities for data and inclusion respectively. The very small size of the school, which had just two Year 7 classes, enabled the leaders and staff to focus on strategy and teaching and learning, including how to maintain the ethos of the school as it more than doubles in size in 2013. Because of the school's restricted budget, it employs a bursar and a data manager from other schools to work a small number of hours each week and this has helped maximise funding for other staff roles.

The third opportunity worth drawing out is the speed with which innovation can happen in a small school environment. The practicalities of getting leaders and staff together to discuss and put into effect new ways of working are more manageable in a small organisation. One studio school principal involved in the fieldwork, for example, described how he was able to have a full staff briefing three times a week and create a lot of space for joint planning rather than formal meetings. As a result they have been able to try out new approaches to teaching and learning, evaluate them quickly, and then amend them so that the experience of students at the school is constantly evolving. He described this process of innovation and flexibility as "completely different to a big secondary school."

The reputation and concept of the school is unproven

The third contextual feature that substantially influences the nature of leadership in a new school environment is that the reputation of the school, and in some cases even its fundamental educational concept, are unproven. This creates pressures on leaders in having to establish and market very rapidly a school's reputation, although the 'blank canvas' of a new school also creates opportunities to act as a catalyst for change.

Challenges

Pupil recruitment and/or managing admissions were the most commonly cited areas of challenge by principals responding to our survey. When this issue was tested further in the fieldwork, it became apparent that the crux of the challenge was in persuading parents to trust a school that had no track record, at the time of the admissions round may have had no buildings and no staff, and where key aspects of how the school would operate still remained unknown. The challenge of recruiting pupils could be particularly acute where the school was teacher-led, rather than arising from the initiative of parents or the local community.

Recruitment of pupils in such schools can be very difficult and the principals put recruitment and marketing firmly at the top of the list of challenges. Several principals had to put in an immense amount of time doing direct recruitment of pupils to schools by targeting parents individually, visiting them at home and promoting the school through community venues. Not surprisingly, several free schools did not recruit to capacity in their first year.

The challenges of pupil recruitment are in some ways intensified for UTCs and studio schools. Not only are these new schools aiming to persuade pupils and parents to invest their trust in a fundamentally different concept of education post-14; they are also asking young people to move schools at a point in their education when, in most local areas, there is not a built-in transfer point. Senior leaders who took part in the research pointed to the fact that breaking down barriers and establishing a distinctive culture is especially needed where students come from schools with very different backgrounds. In this respect, and in preparing students for a different style of working, it can be useful to bring in students at the end of the summer term for an induction week. In fact, some heads of studio schools and UTCs said that it was the young people who were the most powerful advocates in persuading their peers to transfer to a different style of learning and institution at age 14.

Being part of an established chain or federation to some extent mitigates the challenges associated with being an 'unproven' entity. Certainly, in terms of attracting both pupils and staff, the heads of free schools we spoke to that were part of a wider chain were able to trade on their already established reputation. For example, Dixons recruited pupils for one of its free schools from those parents who were not successful in getting into another Dixons' academy. However, the corollary of this is that established chains and

federations are very aware that new schools can be a risk to their reputation if they are not quickly successful.

The need for new schools to prove their quality quickly, be they standalone or part of a wider organisation, creates a second distinct leadership challenge and that is that the early measures of success, or otherwise, take on an immense importance. The time for preparation for Ofsted was a recurring theme in our interviews with schools at the start of their second year. In the absence of examinations and test data, the results of the second-year inspection are seen as vital in securing the reputation of the school. As the head of a primary free school said:

> There is great pressure to do well in the inspection as the ensuing publicity will affect our pupil numbers.

Headteacher, primary free school

A secondary school head, recognising that the usual data available to Ofsted cannot be produced by a school in its second year, has spent a lot of time assembling and analysing data for the inspection. The school principals greatly appreciate the provision by the Department for Education of an experienced adviser – often a retired HMI – to carry out a preparatory inspection and help the school prepare for the Ofsted visit.

Opportunities

For individual new schools, the fact that there is often no prior reputation and no preconceptions about the school's educational offer or its effectiveness, can be a liberation as much as a challenge. One primary free school head, for example, welcomed the opportunity to "start with a blank canvas." This can be an opportunity in terms of giving the leadership team free rein to define the school's vision and educational ethos. It can also be an opportunity to establish relationships with parents and the community in different ways. A number of respondents, for example, described how they have looked to engage parents in curriculum design or in helping to determine the strategic direction of the school through regular parents' meetings.

Being a brand-new school, without some of the legacy issues that are attached to established schools, also provides an opportunity for leaders to have an impact beyond the confines of their own school, pupils and parents. This is something that came out strongly in the research. One secondary free school, for example, relished the opportunity to be "a catalyst for change in the town" and another primary free school head felt the school had an important role in "regenerating the local community." Although free schools are very new, some could already begin to point to ways in which their presence and their willingness to do things differently were having an impact on the education offer more broadly. One head of a secondary free school pointed to the fact that the school offered a longer school day, believing that was wanted by parents and students alike, and that it would have a positive impact on student progress. Very quickly some other local schools have looked to ways to match the offer, when they saw its popularity.

It is also worth noting that many leaders of new types of school see their influence, and their ability to be a catalyst for change, as extending beyond the local or even the regional. The London Academy of Excellence, for example, sees its opportunity as "changing the local – and perhaps broader – educational landscape." The Free School Norwich has established a specialist unit for supporting children with dyslexia which it hopes, over time, might have a national impact on how these children are taught and supported to succeed.

The school is a rapidly changing and dynamic environment

The final contextual feature that the research has highlighted is how rapid the rate of change is in the first years of a new school. Of course all schools are dynamic places, and many headteachers will cite the rate of change, both nationally and locally, as a defining feature of educational leadership. However, there is something unusual about the rate of change experienced by a new school. This is perhaps most amply demonstrated by some of the primary schools that engaged in the research, which doubled in size between their first and second years, and where more than half the staff team in the second year of operation were new to the school. There was a very real sense in which leaders of new types of school were creating the school afresh each year.

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Challenges

This very rapid rate of growth, and hence change, poses some interesting leadership challenges. A change in leadership style and structure is required as a school grows from its initial small size, building more distributed leadership patterns and with the principal's role becoming more strategic. The two examples below illustrate a typical evolution of leadership structures and ways of working as new schools goes through this period of rapid growth:

One primary free school started with four teaching staff: the head and a senior teacher, who is the inclusion manager with a substantial teaching commitment, and two classroom teachers. The head and the senior teacher form the leadership team. As the school grows, the balance between leaders and classroom teachers will change. When the school reaches full size, the head hopes to have a senior leadership team of herself, a deputy head, an assistant head, phase leaders and an inclusion manager.

Another primary free school opened in 2011 with a senior leadership team comprising the head, deputy head and business manager. The school had 120 pupils and 20 staff, 5 of whom were teachers. The deputy had not previously worked in an Early Years environment and was learning about that before taking up the leadership role fully. The head and deputy met every week, discussing operational issues rather than strategy. Much of their time was spent around the school building, showing how things should be done and then checking that they had been followed up. A year later, the senior leadership team still comprised the head, deputy head and business manager, but the previous deputy had been replaced. In the second year, the head has been able to delegate more and focus on the strategic leadership of the school. Meetings with the deputy are more strategically focused and encompass key teaching and learning issues. As the school grows, the head will seek to increase the size of the senior leadership team to include a teaching deputy head, an assistant head leading each phase and a business manager.

Principals acknowledge the risks associated with this growth:

There is a risk that, as the school grows, you lose the sense of team and the clarity of the vision.

Headteacher, secondary free school

A key challenge will be how you take a small team and grow and develop it without losing the shared values and aspirations.

Headteacher, primary free school

Just as one of the opportunities afforded by being a small school is the chance to create a really tight-knit team with shared values, the challenge of being a rapidly growing school is that either this early vision gets diluted as more staff and leaders join, or that new staff can feel excluded from the 'club' of those who were part of the school from the start. Several free school heads described how they have focused carefully in the recruitment stages to ensure that they are bringing in people who subscribe very strongly to the school's emerging vision and values, and have then paid careful attention to the way that new staff are integrated into the school community.

The leadership challenge of managing growth and change, however, does not cease with recruitment and induction. The research evidence analysed above describes how finding time for staff development can be a real challenge where leaders' capacity is constrained and all leaders are juggling multiple responsibilities. This challenge can be exacerbated when the rate of change within the school is also very rapid. For example, one school leader of a primary faith free school learned that it was not easy to find the time to support staff "as they continue on the journey to establish a new school, since the speed we are moving at can leave some staff behind."

Opportunities

Despite the leadership challenges associated with very rapid growth and change, many leaders of new types of school saw the opportunity to reassess the needs of the school after the first year of operation and recruit staff specifically to meet the new and emerging agenda. This was seen as a core opportunity to both cement and augment their vision for the school. The head of Nishkam Primary School, for example, had taken responsibility for literacy in the first year, but had been able to hand it on to an experienced appointee in the second year. The opportunity to make new staff appointments as the school grows was also particularly important in those schools in which approval of the school came late, leading to a high proportion of inexperienced staff having been appointed to teaching posts in the first year of operation. In contrast, appointments for the second year were planned well in advance and more experienced staff could be recruited.

The growth of a school and the consequent appointment of additional staff and expansion of the leadership team enable leaders of new schools to achieve a better balance in the use of their time and energies; they are able to focus more on their role as instructional leaders. The example below typifies how leadership in a new school evolves and sums up the experience of many of the schools that were revisited as part of this research in their second year:

> In a secondary school, the operational pressures on the head lifted gradually during the first year, so that by February the head could say:
>
> I am running the school now. Before I was doing a lot of tasks that a headteacher would not normally do. It was all hands on deck at the beginning. You can't have anyone on the leadership team who is too important to move the tables.
>
> Nine months later, with the school in its second year and a much bigger staff, the head is still spending time on operational issues such as the management of cleaning and catering staff, but is able to focus more strongly on teaching and learning and maintaining the ethos of the school.

New school leaders also relished the opportunity to change their leadership structure and style as the school evolved. One primary free school head said that after the first year of operation she felt she needed to "reflect on everything she thought she knew about leadership" and use this as an opportunity to consider how she adapts her leadership style to different circumstances. Others have taken the chance to reconsider how they structure their leadership team and apportion tasks, as in the example below:

> One UTC has decided not to increase the size of its leadership team as the school expands. By its second year, the JCB Academy's senior leadership team comprised the principal, two vice principals, the head of post-16 and the finance officer, with Professor Bob Pendlebury, an ex-JCB director, attending the monthly strategy sessions. In its third year, the leadership team will be reduced in size. The principal commented: "It was important in the initial stages to have two deputies. Now, as a small secondary school, one is more appropriate."

Conclusion

The key message that emerges from the analysis of leadership during the first year of operation of a new school is the requirement for flexibility. The way that leadership teams work together is dynamic, and evolves as the school matures. Individuals bring a wide range of prior experience to the task and deploy that experience flexibly to meet the demands of the new leadership environment. How leaders spend their time changes week by week, as the immediate priorities shift, although clearly maintaining a focus on key longer term goals.

The evidence presented in this chapter suggests that the context of new types of school, and the fact that they are completely new institutions, often small, without an established track record, and subject to rapid change, profoundly affect the nature of their leadership. Certainly the mix of these contextual features creates real challenges for leaders. Principals and their leadership teams need to negotiate the

balance between the operational and strategic; frequently have to take on a number of different roles simultaneously; must focus on rapidly establishing a good reputation for the school; and should be prepared to change and develop their approach to leadership as the school grows and matures.

But the very same contextual features that pose these challenges for leaders are also the source of a wealth of opportunities that it is clear that leaders of new schools relish. Leaders are inspired by the chance to design a school from scratch, moulding the curriculum and learning environment to achieve their educational vision; they are also inspired by the opportunities to build up a close-knit staff team, with common purpose and values, highly committed to the particular vision and ethos of the school. The small school environment enables strong communication and rapid innovation; and leaders are finding ways to act as a catalyst for change in their immediate school environment, among other local schools, on a regional basis, and in some cases even on a national stage.

Another way of thinking about managing these challenges and opportunities is to relate them to the three concepts at the heart of the National College's leadership curriculum for school leaders: educational excellence, strategic leadership and operational management. These concepts have been a constant theme in this chapter and leaders of new schools would recognise these three key roles.

In most maintained schools, leaders would expect to be able to balance their leadership focus across these three areas. However, Figure 5.9 illustrates the particular challenge facing leaders of new schools. In the set-up period and in the first half of the first term of their new school, their agenda is dominated by the demands of operational management and this sets the context for the skills and attributes that they need to deploy. The challenge for them is to ensure that operational habits do not become so entrenched that they are unable to move to a better balance as the school develops during its first year. Some leaders are acutely aware of this issue and are ensuring that the leadership of learning and strategic leadership are kept firmly on the agenda. Others have yet to make the transition successfully to a more holistic understanding of their role.

Figure 5.9: Challenges facing leaders of new schools in adapting their leadership role and style as the school moves through its opening phase
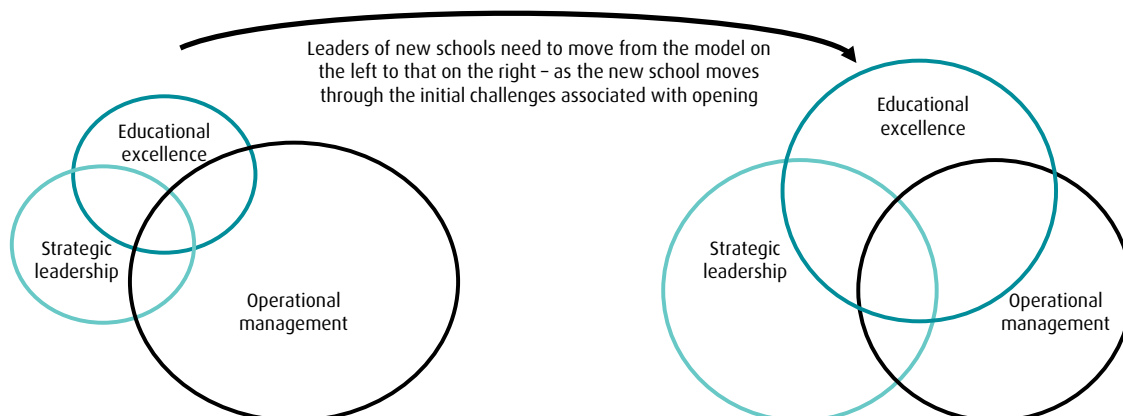
6: Role of promoters and governors in the leadership of new types of school

This chapter starts by looking at how the role of promoters of free schools changes as the school is established and moves to having a governing body. It goes on to describe and examine how the structure of free school governing bodies and the issues they face depend on whether the school is free-standing or part of a larger group or chain.

The chapter also describes the role of parents on governing bodies and arrangements for training governors. It concludes by drawing out the distinctive dimensions of governance relating to UTCs and studio schools.

In the establishment phase

In the establishment phase, promoters focus on issues necessary to get the school up and running. When the school is established, governing bodies turn their attention to support and challenge, monitoring progress towards performance measures. However, the evolution of the governing body role is not always smooth and free from difficulty, as governors who were very hands-on in the establishment phase of the school sometimes do not find it easy to step back and take on a more strategic role.

From establishment to opening: the evolution of the governing body

The structure of governance of new types of school depends on whether the school is free-standing or part of a group. This section discusses the governance of standalone schools and is followed by a section on schools in groups or chains.

Standalone schools seek a governing body with a range of skills and knowledge. Governing bodies of the new types of school often bring a range of very high-level professional and business skills and most, but not all, have considerable educational experience. Governing body structures are relatively simple, with generally a small number of subcommittees. This may be because of the small size of the school or because the governing body has made a considered decision to limit the number of subcommittees.

Where the governing body includes the original school promoters, they tend to be more hands-on in both the vision-setting and in some cases the day-to-day running of the school than an average governing body would be.

A huge amount of time has to be put in by promoters who want to establish a free school. One leader of the establishment of a parent-promoted school estimated that, between the date of approval of the original idea and opening, he received some 14,000 emails about the free school. "It is a full-time job and then some," he said. Much of the workload comes from the level of detail into which the promoters have to immerse themselves, with contracts to be signed off on IT, HR and, most time-consuming of all, the premises. These are very large and detailed technical documents.

Problems can arise from the level of detail required by the Department for Education:

> Because the free school governors have started the school, they are very hands-on in the establishment phase, putting ideas into action and helping with marketing, for example. It can then be difficult for them to move away from the micro-management they exercised during set-up. The Department expects the plan for the school to be too detailed, for example a decision to set in maths in Year 7.

> Headteacher, secondary free school

Having worked on this level of detail, some governors find it hard to hand over the detailed work to the head when s/he is appointed.

In another secondary free school, the head reports that the governors have had to learn to take a step back, with the role of the governing body evolving from building the school to a less hands-on and more strategic leadership role:

> [I] had to have an early discussion with [the promoter] about who runs the school, although he recognised, as soon as the pupils arrived, that professional skills were needed.

Headteacher, secondary free school

The London Academy of Excellence (LAE) was established by a consortium of eight independent schools, led by Brighton College. The former second master (equivalent to a deputy head) of Brighton College co-ordinated the bidding and set-up phases of the project. The headmaster at Brighton served as the original chair of governors, overseeing the securing of temporary and permanent sites, the appointment of LAE's head and, with the head once he was in post (though he was not full time until three months prior to opening), the development of ethos, curriculum and systems. However, when the school opened, he handed over the leadership of the large governing body, which comprises three trustees, representatives of the eight sponsoring schools and people with individual expertise in finance, law and higher education, to the former head master of Harrow and now chairman of the Independent Schools Council. This reflects the fact that, once established, the role of the chair in terms of leading the governing body and supporting and challenging the headteacher was inevitably different from the chair's key activities during the set-up phase.

At one primary free school, however, six weeks after the school opened, the promoters are still meeting once a week and making decisions about the running of the school that would normally be made by the head. When this proposer group is increased in size and is constituted as the governing body, it will need to clarify roles.

Schools in a group, chain or federation

The governance of schools that are part of groups is different from that in standalone schools. This section looks at governance arrangements of schools that are part of groups and the resources that promoters bring to the running of the school.

Free schools that are part of a federation, chain or group include on their governing body representatives from the promoter group, and strategy is set at group level. If a free school is part of a multi-academy trust, accountability for performance ultimately rests with the group and the school's local governing body has limited responsibilities.

In some cases of schools in a group, individual schools continue to enjoy considerable autonomy. The principal of a free school in a chain stated that: "Although E-ACT oversees the school, there is considerable autonomy for the principal, for example in terms of developing the curriculum model." [Aldborough E-ACT FS]. While the principal is able to exercise her autonomy, the school receives half-termly visits from an E-ACT adviser and the chair of the governing body of the school is an E-ACT director. Its governing body members include the chair of a local NHS Trust, an ex-HMI and an employment lawyer.

Faith schools bring a set of values and strategy to a free school but, where there is an overarching faith group, the educational decisions may be left to the principal. The head of a primary faith free school observed: "The chair of governors has imposed no educational vision, leaving this to me."

Where free schools are part of a broader federation or multi-academy trust, the governance arrangements need to be clear about what is determined at trust level and what it is for governors of the school to decide. Some free schools in this situation are following the example of more established academy chains (see Hill et al, 2012) and establishing formal protocols that set out the respective roles and responsibilities of the different layers of governance. The Cuckoo Hall Academies Trust provides one such example (see Case study 5).

Case study 5: Woodpecker Hall Primary Academy and Kingfisher Hall Primary Academy

Woodpecker Hall Primary Academy was the first school to be founded by the head of Cuckoo Hall Primary School, Enfield, with the aim of meeting local demand for the highly successful Cuckoo Hall model of teaching and learning. It opened in 2011, and Kingfisher Hall Primary Academy followed in 2012. A new secondary school is also planned. The Cuckoo Hall Academies Trust (CHAT) is the overarching governing body and recruits teachers centrally for the three schools, with staff on a CHAT contract and able to be deployed according to need. The governing body of Woodpecker Hall concentrates on operational issues, with the CHAT board having overall responsibility for strategy. The relationship between the two schools is formalised in a memorandum of understanding (MoU). The original head of Woodpecker Hall left the school (on maternity leave) and it is now being temporarily led by one of Cuckoo Hall's experienced deputy heads. The existence of CHAT enabled a relatively seamless transition that would have been more difficult in a standalone school.

The strategic leadership team of CHAT is working on developing a common format for reporting data on school performance and progress to governors of the three schools.

Case study 6: Tauheedul Islam Boys' High School (TIBHS)

Governors at TIBHS are appointed by the governing council of the Tauheedul Free Schools' Trust. They are keen to be involved in the life of the school and attend meetings with architects and builders, bringing their professional expertise into the discussions. The principal says that the governors are extremely focused and knowledgeable about education and engage with the school in a much more hands-on way than in a mainstream school. Operating as part of a multi-academy trust, TIBHS believes that it benefits from a focused:

— performance management culture, with high expectations for all learners

— strategic planning approach and strong operational management

— curriculum and assessment framework, with a ranking system for all students in each subject

— implementation of a teaching strategy and pedagogical model (implemented in all Tauheedul Schools)

— quality-assurance programme undertaken by a teaching standards assurer

— support programme for teachers and faculties, provided by other schools within the trust

Case study 7: Nishkam Primary School

Nishkam Primary School, which opened in 2011, shares a governing body with the Nishkam High School, which opened nearly a year later. Both are part of the Nishkam School Trust, which has three schools and a fourth in the planning stage. The sponsor of the schools is the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha (GNNSJ) and the aim of the school is to be multi-faith, with the vision of enabling each child to pursue his or her own faith. The Nishkam Primary School has a strong governing body, which includes the trustees of the GNNSJ, a medical doctor who chairs the body, a financial expert, an experienced educationist and a staff governor. The headteacher says that "an army of volunteers is in the school at weekends, cleaning, painting, etc. The support from the community is wonderful."

Case study 8: ARK Atwood Primary School

ARK Atwood Primary School was one of two ARK free schools opened in London in 2011, the other being ARK Conway Primary School. The ARK infrastructure provided a great deal of support to the heads in the set-up phase, especially on finance and buildings issues.

ARK provides the overarching governance of all its schools and the ARK Atwood local governing body has a degree of autonomy within overall ARK policies. The head of education support at ARK schools is chair of the ARK Atwood governing body, but keeps the roles separate. The chair and the head speak regularly.

The accountability, challenge and support to improve come through the ARK network and systems, with all schools being monitored every half-term, including lesson observation and data analysis, and support being provided by ARK's subject specialists.

Governing bodies and parents

The governing body of an academy must have a minimum of two parent governors, elected by secret ballot. UTC and studio school governing bodies must also include a minimum of two parents. New schools recognise that a full complement of parent governors on the governing body has to wait until the school has grown and there are no stipulations laid down by the Department for Education as to how soon after opening the election of parent governors has to take place.

It can be difficult for teacher-led schools to find community and parent governors at the outset and these categories of governor will be added later. Reach Academy: Feltham, a free school opened in 2012 where the head was one of the promoters, has a highly committed chair of governors who leads a company running residential study courses. Its governing body includes a lawyer, a school finance director, an accountant and two ex-teachers. This is not yet as representative of the local community as it will be, but local governors and parent governors are being brought in. The aim is to keep the governing body small.

Free schools need to promote good relationships with parents, not least because they need parents as active promoters of the school in the area if the schools are to fill their places in future years. This is especially the case where the new schools are teacher-led and do not grow from the work of a local parent group.

In schools in which parents were the promoters, these parents have to distinguish between their involvement in the planning of the school and the need for them to hand over its operation when it opens. Nonetheless, they may have areas of expertise that will benefit the school. When this works well, says the head of a secondary parent-promoted free school, "parents set the expectations but want you to lead the school". As the school grows, the promoters have to know when to step back and how to offer a different type of support. Principals need to ensure that they support this change sensitively, so that ongoing parent and community support can be fully harnessed in the right way.

Parental engagement at ARK Atwood Primary School is particularly strong, with a well-attended parents' forum taking place before every governing body meeting. The governors also run surgeries for parents.

Training of governors

The promoters and governors are at least as important in free schools, UTCs and studio schools as in sponsored academies. To fulfil this role effectively, the governing bodies of standalone schools, in particular, need external support and training.

Governing bodies need to have skills and knowledge on premises and finance, and may need training in these areas. However, it is almost certainly in the area of school performance that training will be most important, especially in standalone free schools, where the governing body is the critical line of accountability, there being no other backstop except the Department for Education itself.

This may well be the first experience of school governance for many, and several schools in our sample had organised training for their governing body, since no external training appeared to be available. Where schools are part of groups, this training is provided by the group to the individual school. The experience

provided by the school also makes the governors better informed as the school becomes more established. One primary faith school head commented:

> [My] relationship with the governing body is improving in terms of the strategic development of the school, because the governors are now better informed about how a good school operates.

<div align="right">Headteacher, primary faith free school</div>

As in other schools, a good model for governor training is to have shared sessions with the senior leadership of the school, that are externally facilitated.

The governing bodies of UTCs and studio schools include more people with experience of education than many of the free schools, with university and FE college employees well represented as part of the promoter team on the governing body.

Governing bodies of UTCs

The requirements for governance of UTCs are set out by the Department for Education, with a major role for the university and business promoters, who give considerable support to the school principal. The principal of the JCB Academy explains:

> The school is very important to JCB, so they have a huge interest in its success, led by Sir Anthony Bamford, the chairman, who often asks the JCB governors how the school is going.

<div align="right">Principal, JCB Academy</div>

The Department stipulates that the governing bodies of UTCs must have a majority of university and business governors.

Aston University Engineering Academy is a major project for Aston University:

— The university pro-vice-chancellor is chair of governors of the UTC and has been involved in planning from the outset.

— Other university staff are trustees and on the governing body.

— University staff have helped the UTC to make IT and HR plans and processes.

— University students work at the UTC on placements as part of their degree course.

— University facilities are used, especially for sport, by the UTC sixth formers.

The UTC principal states:

> There is an edge to the Aston University governors connected to risk and reputation, which is reducing as the school becomes more established. The business governors are very challenging too.

<div align="right">Principal, Aston University Engineering Academy</div>

The governing body of the Black Country UTC contains a lot of educational and financial expertise from Wolverhampton University, Walsall College and local industry. The governors have a deep knowledge of education and industry and are well placed to challenge, as well as support, the UTC.

For Aston and Wolverhampton universities, as for JCB and other businesses heavily committed to promote or work with a UTC, the staff involved with the UTC consider that the institution's reputation is strongly associated with the success or failure of the UTC. The reputational risk that they feel that they have taken in associating their name with the UTC can lead to over-involvement in day-to-day decisions. However, there is evidence from JCB that these governing bodies become more strategic as their confidence grows in the school's performance.

Governing bodies of studio schools

Business also plays a strong role in the governance of studio schools. This helps to cement links with local employers and ensures that not only can the studio school benefit from good corporate business practice, but that the work of the studio school is aligned with the needs of the local economy and labour market.

Some of the early studio schools were essentially schools within a school. This meant that their governance was incorporated within the governance of the federation of schools of which the studio school was a part. For example, Green Hub Studio School is situated on the site of the New Line Learning Academy, near Maidstone in Kent. The studio school provides the academy's post-16 offer, although technically the school is part of the Cornwallis Academy sixth form – one of two other schools that, along with New Line Learning and a children's nursery, form the Future Schools Trust.

The government now requires all studio schools to be free-standing academies and a significant number of them are being promoted or sponsored by further education colleges. In a number of these cases, the studio school does have its own governing body, but comes within a broader governance umbrella set up by the college. For example, the governing body of the Barnfield Skills Academy contains a mix of educational, financial and business expertise. It has a strong role in the setting of targets and monitoring progress and has wide decision-making powers. However, the governing body of the Skills Academy works within, and is accountable to, the overall strategy of the Barnfield Federation, which comprises a much broader group of sponsored academies, converting academies and free schools.

Compared with other secondary schools, studio schools are small institutions (typically they are not expected to have more than 300-400 students) and often do not therefore have the infrastructure necessary to carry out all their strategic functions as a secondary school on their own. Consequently, they lean quite heavily on their promoter institutions, with which they may have service level agreements for the provision of a range of services. For example, the Barnfield Skills Academy found the teaching and learning team of the Barnfield Federation very useful, especially in the run-up to its Ofsted inspection. Federation support also covers data analysis, marketing, HR, finance and premises.

The nature of these arrangements could potentially result in studio schools not having the degree of autonomy that the government intends, particularly if the studio school is situated on the same site as its parent body. However, most studio schools are acquiring new purpose-built premises, often at a separate location, and it is likely that this will help them to develop their own distinct identity and sense of autonomy.

The governance of studio schools may also be affected by expansion plans. For example, the governing body of the Da Vinci Studio School in Stevenage was originally set up just to relate to the school. However, its sponsoring FE college decided to open a further studio school in nearby Letchworth and then another local secondary school decided to join the two studio schools as part of a broader school improvement initiative. As a result it became necessary to form a multi-academy trust and move to a two-tier model of governance, with an overarching governing body for the trust and governing bodies for each of the three individual schools.

Conclusion

Governing bodies of new types of schools have a key role to play in the development of the school. As the new school opens, promoters become part of the governing body and take on a different role, moving from what may well have been a very hands-on involvement with the school to a more strategic role on the governing body. It is not always easy for them to judge how to do this, while remaining strongly involved with the school's early development, but it is important to get it right so that the proper relationship between the school principal and the governing body can be built from the opening of the school. The level of detail required from promoters by the Department for Education in the set-up phase can make it difficult for promoters to distance themselves from operational decisions when the school has opened.

The structure of the governing body depends on whether the school is standalone or part of a group or chain. In the latter case, there will be two levels of governance and, as well as support across many aspects of the school's work, the overarching governing body will set the strategy within which the local school governing body will work.

There is an important relationship between the governing body and the parents of pupils in the school, especially in the early days when the school particularly needs the parents to act as its ambassadors in the local community. It is not always practical for schools to elect parent and community governors at the outset and in some cases schools choose not to elect all their parent representatives in the first term to ensure that, as the school grows, parents of subsequent year groups are represented on the governing body.

Training is important for governors of new types of school and, with governing bodies of standalone free schools being the only line of accountability for the performance of the school, apart from the Department for Education, there should be a particular responsibility on them to ensure that they are trained in all aspects of governance. Schools that are part of groups will be receiving training from the group.

Governing bodies of UTCs appear to be particularly strong, with the universities and businesses promoting the schools attaching considerable importance to this aspect of their work.

7: New types of school and their partnership networks

A school's main external relationships are with other local schools, the local authority, businesses and community organisations in the area. Admissions are a key issue in determining relations with other local schools and, after the new school is open, principals may, or may not, work in harmony with other local heads. Relationships between new types of school and their local authority are very variable. School-business links are being developed by many of the new schools, notably the UTCs and studio schools, for which this is a core part of delivering their curriculum.

Relationships with other local schools

The picture of relationships between new types of school and their neighbouring maintained schools is very variable, depending on the supply and demand for school places in the area, the timing of the admissions process, the existing local networks of the new school head and the attitude of the local authority. Most free school principals want their school to be part of the local family of schools, but recognise that circumstances mean that this is not always possible. In some areas, relationships improve over time. Where a standalone free school, which is often a very small institution, has poor relations with other schools, this can leave the free school isolated and unable to draw on the resources of other nearby schools or to relate to what is happening in education locally. In some cases, other schools refuse to take part in sports fixtures with the free school, further isolating it and restricting its scope.

Particularly for new schools in areas where there had been vociferous opposition and adverse comments in the media, building relationships with the local community and with other schools has been extremely difficult. In many cases, principals recognise that only time will start the healing process of the divisions caused during this initial period and there is evidence that this process has begun in some areas during the latter part of the first year of the new school.

Admissions

Admissions are a touchstone issue for local relationships. This is especially the case where free schools have opened in areas where there is no shortage of school places or where a school has been earmarked for closure.

In some cases, the free school principal sees the school being part of the local family of schools, but as one secondary free school principal acknowledged:

> It was a bumpy ride with other secondary schools to start with – in part accentuated by the late admissions to the free school disrupting the normal admissions process.

Principal, secondary free school

In other cases, headteachers felt that dealing with difficult local relationships was a significant obstacle. For example, dealing with a campaign against free schools, with opposition to plans and negative comments from local groups and other schools, was "a distraction from the task of setting up the school" in the view of one respondent.

In one secondary free school, there was tension with a neighbouring secondary school when it became apparent that the maintained school would lose nearly 50 children from its Year 7 intake owing to parents choosing the free school. With the appointment of a new head at the maintained school, the free school head, who had worked in other local secondary schools, has been able to build bridges. There will, however, remain a lot of competition for pupils in the area, which is dominated by faith schools responsible for their own admissions criteria.

Another primary free school head described the challenge of "dealing with a local authority which is ideologically opposed to free schools."

Where a new free school is doing its first admissions process later than local maintained schools and academies, this causes problems for relationships between schools, since pupils and parents have to change their original choices and withdraw from another school to take up a place at the free school. The timing of the admissions process is one good reason why free schools normally approach their local authority to administer the process on their behalf.

Relationships between secondary free schools and local maintained primary schools are often different, since they are not in direct competition for pupils. For example, one secondary free school head reported that the local primary schools "have been fabulous" in providing Year 6 classes for teaching applicants to teach at interview and allowing their halls to be used for evening meetings for local parents.

The executive principal of Dixons Academies, who is also chief executive of the Bradford Partnership which operates collegiately in the city, visited other schools to explain the context in which Dixons Music Primary School and Dixons Trinity Academy were being established. With pressure on primary school places in the area and city-wide admissions arrangements being used to recruit the initial cohort into Year 7 of Dixons Trinity Academy, other local schools understood the situation. Dixons Music Primary School is a member of the local primary cluster and the Dixons secondary schools are already part of the Bradford Schools Partnership, which provides challenge, scrutiny and support.

There is a different set of issues with studio schools and UTCs, which admit students at age 14. In some cases recruitment at 14 is relatively straightforward and uncontentious, but in others it is resulting in real tensions between schools.

Admission at 14 is having little impact on relationships with other schools in those studio schools that are 'schools within schools', such as the Durham Studio School, which admits most of its students from its own school or federation. This is also the case where the studio school is effectively a key (though not the only) post-16 option for the Year 11 students at that school.

However, studio schools that are not schools within schools, but are attached to an FE college generally have a wider catchment area, but may draw a significant number of students from schools nearby. This can lead to tension with other schools – particularly where secondary school numbers are in decline – as those students transferring to UTCs and studio schools are leaving their school at the end of Year 9 and thus creating gaps that cannot be filled in the Year 10 groups in their previous schools. Where relationships between local schools and the local authority are strong and heads are accustomed to working together, these potential tensions can be managed in a way that is seen as less threatening. During the establishment of Tendring Enterprise Studio School, for example, a local group of headteachers, the local authority and the academy sponsor were in dialogue and planned collaboratively for three years before the school opened, to give it every chance of success.

Similarly, if a studio school is seen by local schools as a place that supports progression to employment and addresses the needs of local students who want a more interactive curriculum, other local schools may well take a positive view of the establishment of a studio school, especially if the studio school also attracts students from beyond the immediate locality. However, relationships can deteriorate if the studio school seeks to expand or if the college promoting the studio school is seen, rightly or wrongly, to be predatory. In one instance a local head visited the principal of a studio school and accused it of "taking my kids". Another head at a parents' session accused the further education college promoting the studio school of "poaching our students."

UTCs are subregional rather than local schools so they draw students from a wide area, which reduces the effect on any one school. However, UTCs do not tend to have strong relationships with other local schools. The head of one UTC said: "A lot of our issues are different. We have our own policies and terms and conditions of employment." This makes it important for UTCs to build relationships with each other and with other schools elsewhere.

After opening

Many free school heads attend local headteachers' meetings, though not always at first. In one city, all the maintained school secondary heads except one were publicly opposed to the creation of a new secondary free school, but the free school principal now attends local heads' meetings.

The head of one London primary free school has been told by other local heads that he cannot attend their meetings, even though the local authority had asked the promoter to open the school. Another London primary free school head has, after an initially frosty period, been invited to attend local primary heads' meetings.

One small primary school that was saved from closure by becoming a free school has found that relationships with local primary schools, whose pupil numbers are adversely affected, are extremely difficult. Isolation for such a small school that is not part of any group is a major obstacle to progress.

One of the secondary free schools in this study is in an area where maintained secondary schools are strongly opposed to the establishment of free schools there since there is no shortage of secondary school places and the pupil numbers in neighbouring secondary schools are likely to be adversely affected. The capital investment in free schools is a further source of frustration in an area badly hit by the withdrawal of Building Schools for the Future (BSF) funding. The head of this secondary free school, who had taught for 10 years in the county, has built relationships with other local schools and attends the area heads' meetings. There are still tensions, but there are examples of co-operation, such as school business managers sharing information.

The head of The Free School Norwich feels that the school is becoming accepted by other primary schools and it has joined the local sports partnership.

Where demographic demand for school places grows and other schools are able to fill their places, opposition from maintained schools to new free schools in their area is reduced.

A secondary free school in the North West region has met hostility from the local authority and the head has found that:

> the attitude of local primary heads depends on how independent they are from the local authority. One local primary head refuses to work with us. Others are co-operative.

Headteacher, secondary free school

Some free schools (both secondary and primary) have strong partnerships with local independent schools. For example, dyslexic children in one free school are helped with their reading by older pupils from an independent school. The promoters of the London Academy of Excellence (LAE), a 16-19 free school in Newham, are 8 independent schools, and the bidding and initial set-up phases of the project were co-ordinated by the former second master at Brighton College. The school's curriculum is based around traditional A levels with the aim of getting sixth formers into Russell Group or equivalent universities. The school's policies and curriculum structure drew on those of the independent sponsor schools and the governing body includes representatives of all eight sponsor schools. More than half the teachers at the LAE are newly qualified or unqualified, so lesson observation and professional development are high priorities for the school leadership. Expertise for A level teaching is drawn from the sponsor schools:

— Brighton College supports the teaching of economics.

— Eton College provides an English teacher for three days a week.

— Caterham School is leading on modern foreign languages.

— Highgate School is observing maths lessons and providing feedback.

— Roedean supports history.

— King's College, Wimbledon, supports science, in particular practical science and the training of LAE's technician.

- City of London Boys' School provides a co-ordinator of sports one day a week.

- Forest School provides an English teacher (for 2 days per week) who is also the head of university guidance.

We found a number of instances of free schools working with maintained schools and academies on staff professional development and leadership development. One head of a primary faith free school stated: "I have matched staff with teachers in outstanding schools." Teachers in the free school and the outstanding maintained school observe each other's lessons.

The Krishna Avanti Primary School in Leicester shares a site with a Roman Catholic (RC) comprehensive school, with which good links have been established. The RC school students came into Krishna Avanti for Diwali, two of the RC sixth formers do a work placement there every week, and the free school performed its nativity play in the RC school theatre. The head of Krishna Avanti attends the local heads' meetings and is also building links with other local primary schools, with a visit from a Church of England (CoE) primary school to see the Krishna Avanti Diwali celebration and the Krishna Avanti pupils doing a carol concert in another Church of England school, which was attended by local parishioners and Krishna Avanti parents.

There appears to be little networking between free schools, and the head of one primary school, which opened in 2012, said that "it would be good to have a community of practice among free schools." The New Schools Network could be in a position to facilitate this, but its role is to support promoters in developing free schools and its responsibilities cease when free schools sign their funding agreement. Although he has a good network within the ARK family of schools, the head of ARK Atwood recognises the need to maintain an outward-looking approach and has contacts with the Constable Education Trust, which is opening another free school locally. Most other free school heads do not seem to have made connections with other free schools, perhaps through lack of time in the busy set-up period and first year of existence of their school.

However, a head of a primary faith school said that "a good local network is more important to have than a wider national network of free schools."

There is considerable contact between the principals of UTCs, both through the Baker Dearing Trust and independently. The first cohort of UTC principals has held seminars to support the second cohort.

The head of one studio school said that he spends time networking with other senior leaders of studio schools, sharing resources to develop project-based learning. The Studio Schools Trust brings leaders from studio schools together, as well as hosting an annual conference.

Relationships with local authorities

Local authority attitudes to free schools vary from "hostile", "difficult", "not supportive", "ideologically opposed" and "quite resistant" to "very good" and the statement: "We have a strong partnership with the local authority, whose officers have been absolutely brilliant."

Where local authorities are opposed to proposals for free schools in their area, they can cause major problems for the free school in finding a site. One local authority in the North West region was bitterly opposed to a new free school and was unwilling to sell the site and buildings of a vacant school that could have been converted at a reasonable cost. The free school will now have to find another site and build from scratch.

Proposals for several secondary free schools in a county area have met with strong local opposition on the grounds that there were surplus places in other local secondary schools. The local authority and other secondary schools were resistant to the opening of the free school, which adversely affected the local authority's transport provision, although this was subsequently resolved through discussion.

One head of a primary faith free school said:

Support mechanisms for free schools need to be more accessible. Local authority schools have local networks, whereas a free school can feel isolated and does not have similar access to local information or training.

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In response to additional demand for school places in the area, a local authority approached a leading chain and asked it to open a primary free school. The school's relationship with the local authority is therefore good, although the local authority took a long time to work out what services the free school was entitled to and how much it should pay for other services.

Hertfordshire local authority had a plan for a new primary school in Hatfield, but it chose the free school route as a way to access capital funding. There has therefore been no opposition from the local authority to the establishment of Hatfield Community Free School, whose head states: "Hatfield Community Free School is part of the local family of schools."

A London local authority has supported a free school in its area, providing the school with some excellent people to join its governing body.

Some free schools have purchased school improvement and other services, such as support for newly qualified teachers, from the local authority. This is a service that Stour Valley buys from Suffolk, because of its quality, but the school buys other services from a neighbouring local authority, Essex. Other free schools have bought into commercial consultancy services for specific school improvement issues.

Relations between new schools and local authorities can be complex – partly positive but also with underlying tensions. For example, in one area local schools and the local authority objected to the admission arrangements of a new free school, which was to be part of a group, in particular in relation to giving children of staff at the school priority as part of its oversubscription criteria. The schools' adjudicator rejected the appeal, but did require the school to sort out some administrative deficiencies in the operation of its admissions arrangements. The group also considered that the local authority had ignored the resources available within the school group in considering how to deal with problems in local primary schools. Despite these tensions, the chief executive of the new school group and the director of children's services meet regularly for a constructive dialogue.

Relationships with others

Whether schools are maintained, independent, UTCs, studio schools or free schools, they need to develop relationships with a range of other organisations in their area. On both local and national issues, at a time when education policy is fast moving, it is easy to become out of touch with developments. Nationally, principals of new types of school use professional associations for information and networking. As one head of a secondary free school acknowledged: "There is a danger of becoming isolated." Schools need to access local information too and, where free schools are opposed by other schools, they can easily become isolated and the ensuing lack of information available to them can be a major obstacle to progress.

In seeking to develop, schools need access to excellent practice elsewhere, as well as to professional advice and challenge. Schools that are part of a group look first to other schools in the group for partnership. The executive principal of Dixons Academies has started Dixons on the path of adopting joint practice development across the schools in the group.

However, many free schools recognise that they need to look beyond the locality for external support. The head of Stour Valley, for example, gets professional challenge from two heads, one serving and one retired, who evaluate data and accompany the head on learning walks and lesson observations. She comments:

> You always need external challenge. That never goes away. The minute you think you don't need it is when performance starts to slide.

Headteacher, Stour Valley Community School

Hatfield Community Free School will be joining a local teaching school alliance, but other new schools do not appear to be joining these partnerships yet.

All good schools have a strong relationship with their local community and many free schools are forging such links. In the first year of one new secondary free school, when teachers had space on their timetable, they were encouraged to make local links. Free schools that have been established in response to community and parent views have to find ways, such as local forums, of keeping in touch with what the community wants.

Case study 9: Perry Beeches II, Birmingham

The principal of Perry Beeches II, a secondary free school, has put a lot of effort into building links with the local community as a way of providing students (particularly those that come from households where neither parent works) with an understanding of what it means to be a professional. Taking advantage of the central Birmingham location, the principal has managed to involve:

— the Assay Office (located over the road from the school), which has agreed that students can tour its offices, with the potential for further partnership work

— a local law firm, which will provide mentoring for students and a partner to serve on the school's governing body

— an architects' practice, which will provide work experience opportunities

— the school's insurer, who is sponsoring a science award for post-16 students

— the local church, which will provide a venue for the school's Christmas fair, and the school having a lead role at the church's carol concert

— the People's Orchestra, which uses the school for rehearsals, with the potential for pupils to join the orchestra

In conjunction with the Jewellery Quarter Heritage Group, the school is planning to take on the maintenance of some neglected gardens dedicated to soldiers who fought in the Crimean War. In addition, the central location means that it is possible to take students to many of Birmingham's museums and other cultural centres.

Tauheedul Islam Boys' High School hopes to grow strong links with local businesses and has already developed good links with local and national sports organisations. As part of its tender document for design and build, the school is establishing links with builders and architects. One of the criteria to be addressed in bids is the additional value that the company can bring to the life of the school.

The Free School Norwich is developing a curriculum based on links with local businesses and sports providers.

Studio schools and UTCs have developed very strong links with business and have found that the studio school and UTC labels help with this. But these relationships are time-consuming and resource intensive: Aston University Engineering Academy will appoint an assistant principal to develop and co-ordinate partnerships; Barnfield Skills Academy and Durham Studio School have also appointed partnership co-ordinators. In Durham, this post has been filled on a part-time basis by an ex-company director, who is also the chair of the board of the studio school.

Studio school leaders report difficulty in translating employer commitments at the bidding stage into firm offers of paid work placements for the students, which is a key aspect of the studio school model. One studio school leader described how he had had to do a lot of work "to keep employers warm". Commitments are mostly leading to general work experience opportunities rather than paid placements. This has forced studio school leaders to be innovative and to come up with other solutions. These include setting up businesses to serve the public such as hairdressing, fitness centres, car valeting or sweet shops (in which the students train and work), or to meet the needs of other parts of a school or college federation by providing a pizza service. Another example includes students providing a social media service for small employers, with the employers being invoiced for the service and students being remunerated for their input.

In order to gain the most from relationships with employers and put them on a sustainable basis, Aston University Engineering Academy has developed a partnership learning plan with each of its business partners. The vice-principal states: "The partnership learning plan is part of trying to build sustainable partnerships with industry and to avoid problems when one key employee leaves, for example."

These partnerships have directly enhanced the curriculum. The principal of the Black Country UTC asked employers to help to both plan and deliver the curriculum, so that students can build the skill set that is required of business employees.

Conclusion

In order to provide its students with a rich education and its staff with a strong programme of professional development, a school should be outward-looking and have strong links with other schools and its local community. As much as any other kind of school, the new types of school in this study seek external relationships to enhance the quality of education they provide. In one respect – links with business – UTCs and studio schools are taking school-business engagement to a new level.

There is a mixed picture of new schools' relationships with other schools and with the local authority, often turning on the issue of admissions and the extent of the effect on other schools of the new school's arrival on the local scene. In some instances, relationships with other schools and with the local authority improve over time. If they do not, it could be damaging to the education of children in the free school, which will be isolated and could easily become out of touch with recent developments, locally and nationally.

Free schools do not yet have a network of their own, whereas UTCs have the Baker Dearing Trust to bring them together and the Studio Schools Trust also promotes contacts between its member schools.

8: Professional skills and development of leaders of new types of school

In this chapter, we start by identifying the skills and qualities needed by effective leaders in maintained schools and compare them with those needed by the leaders of new schools. The chapter also looks at how new schools are currently accessing professional and leadership development support before moving on to consider what support is needed by new school leaders and how this might be provided.

The skills and qualities required of leaders of new schools

There is a rich literature on effective school leadership. However, in 2010 the National College commissioned a study on how the world's top school systems were building leadership capacity for the future. Based on an international survey and interviews with experts, policymakers and leaders of school systems, the report (Barber et al, 2010) identified a set of practices that effective leaders share, and a common set of beliefs, attitudes and personal attributes that they possess. The results, which are built into the design of the National College's leadership curriculum for school leaders, are shown in black type in Table 8.1 below. The text in red type highlights the differences and additions to reflect the tasks and attributes identified in our in-depth interviews with leaders of new schools.

Table 8.1: Practices of effective new school leaders and their beliefs, attitudes and personal attributes

Practices	Beliefs, attitudes, and personal attributes
• Building a shared vision and sense of purpose. • Setting high expectations for performance. • Role-modelling behaviours and practices. • Designing and managing the teaching and learning programme. • Establishing effective teams within the school staff, and distributing leadership among the school staff. • Understanding and developing people. • Protecting teachers from issues that would distract them from their work. • Establishing school routines and norms for behaviours. • Monitoring performance. • **Marketing and** connecting the school to parents, the community **and media**. • Recognising and rewarding achievement. • **Recruiting staff and establishing staffing structures and systems.** • **Project managing arrangements for a new school to enable it to open on time.** • **Managing revenue funding flows and negotiating capital budgets.** • **Managing local and national stakeholders and relations with other schools.**	• Focused on student achievement; putting children ahead of personal or political interests. • Resilient, **showing stamina and energy** and persistent in goals, but adaptable to context and people. • **A good listener**, willing to develop a deep understanding of people and context. • Willing to take risks and challenge accepted beliefs and behaviours. • Self-aware and able to learn. • Optimistic and enthusiastic. • **Entrepreneurial with a strong capacity to innovate.** • **Decisive and able to take important decisions against tight deadlines.** • **Able to constantly juggle competing pressures and demands.** • **Articulate and persuasive in championing the school and negotiating resources.**

Source: Barber et al, 2010 (amended by the results of interviews with leaders of new schools)

The additional skills are not unique to the leadership of new schools, but most interviewees considered that there were differences, at least in emphasis, in the range of skills and qualities in comparison with those needed by the leaders of maintained schools. However, several principals of new types of school thought that the differences should not be over-emphasised: "Many of the leadership skills needed are the same as for any other school," said one principal of a secondary free school. Another perspective that reconciled these different positions came from a third group of principals. They suggested that the skills and qualities required are the same as those needed by the head of a maintained school, but with enhanced skills, particularly in the establishment phase, in promoting vision and values, project management, capacity to innovate, financial, media and political skills. An analysis by another of our interviewees drew parallels between leading a new school in its early phase and leadership of other schools:

> The skill set has many similarities with that of the head of a primary school. In terms of stakeholder relationships, the skills are those of a special school head.
>
> Stakeholder

There was also a recognition that the balance and focus of leadership skills needed would evolve over time as new schools matured.

In terms of the beliefs and attributes needed by new school leaders, resilience, flexibility, risk-taking, an entrepreneurial approach and the ability to juggle different tasks and responsibilities were the attributes most commonly highlighted. The sections below describe the key skills and attributes that leaders of new schools most frequently referred to in interviews with the research team, and discusses how the skills and attributes interact with each other.

Vision and values

The vision and values of new schools are set by the promoter and the principal working together. The head then has the task of making them real as the new school is developed. In part that is achieved by appointing other leaders and staff who share the values, in part by establishing the systems and behaviours on which the new school will operate and in part by modelling the values in practice.

It is here that starting small, as most new schools do, comes into play. It is easier for a small leadership team to make an impact in terms of vision and values, so long as its members are united and committed to practising teamwork qualities. The head of a secondary free school, all of whose experience had previously been in the secondary sector, said:

> I feel like I have become a primary head because we are a small school and everyone has to be prepared to do everything. All staff have to be flexible and I have told them that, in a small team, excellence comes to the surface very quickly and there is nowhere to hide.

Headteacher, secondary free school

Another secondary free school principal emphasised the teamwork point: "Leaders of new schools need to be team players – willing to muck in, but also to develop a strong team ethos among the staff."

Establishing the vision and values may also involve working intensively with parents, particularly in the early weeks of a school's life, so that they understand the approach to the curriculum, the standards of behaviour considered acceptable, the requirements for school uniform and the arrangements for homework. For some new schools, this included visiting parents at home. Several new school leaders described how they sought to enlist parents as champions of the school's mission and ethos.

Project management

Chapter 4 illustrated the importance of project management skills in the set-up stage of a new school. The skill lies partly in bringing different strands of preparation – admissions, funding, premises, staffing and curriculum – to a point where the school can open on time. Flexibility is needed to adapt to a constantly changing situation as, for example, architects' plans evolve, admission numbers vary and financial allocations are amended. Resilience is essential as leaders have to be persistent in resolving problems. Part of being an effective project manager also lies in new school leaders harnessing their knowledge and experience. As the head of a secondary free school explained, the Department for Education project manager may lead the school building project, "but the interior comes down to me – it needs educational experience to get it right." This head, who had formerly led schools in the independent sector, commented:

> In the private sector, architects charge extra for changes to the specification and the school pays. In the public sector, there is no such extra funding available, so the specification has to be exactly right and there is little or no room for flexibility after that.

Headteacher, secondary free school

Capacity to innovate

Creating a new school provides the opportunity to develop a new approach to schooling, as Chapter 4 identified. However, the capacity to innovate also extends to the operation of the school. For example, several new schools are using premises that were formerly office buildings, and their leaders have had to be innovative and imaginative in seeing the potential of these buildings and adapting them to create new types of learning space. Sometimes leaders have had to improvise and seek partnerships, for example with local sports clubs to provide PE and sports facilities for their students.

Innovation has also had to come to the fore when the unexpected happens. For example, the London Academy of Excellence was unable to open on the scheduled date as building work had over-run. The head and other leaders quickly developed an induction week, which involved taking sixth formers (in tutor groups) on visits to Russell Group universities and places of cultural interest. Not only was this valuable in setting aspirations, it also enabled staff to get to know students and the sixth formers (who had come from a geographically and educationally diverse range of schools) to bond and begin to understand the ethos of their new school. The necessity to keep innovating continues even when the school is up and running, and that means new school leaders constantly having to adapt and bring different skills into play. As one primary free school head explained, "my skill set changes by the season as the school develops."

Financial management

Leaders of new schools have generally had the support of business managers, but sometimes this has not become available until the school is up and running. In the set-up phase, being able to manage the cash flow while waiting for project funding to come through, construct a school budget and constantly juggle capital spending as building plans evolve are skills that new school leaders may require. The principal of the JCB Academy, whose school was partnered with a Deloitte employee in the Deloitte Olympic Partnership programme, reported that the partner "was surprised to find how financially savvy people were at the school."

Media and marketing

Chapters 4 and 5 illustrated the necessity for leaders of new schools to be able to clarify early on what they and the promoters think represents the unique identity and brand of the school that will help to attract students and staff. This then needs to be backed up with both conventional presentation skills (for example, producing a school prospectus and talking at open evenings) and also new skills and an entrepreneurial approach. For example, being able to organise leafleting at supermarkets, using social media, appearing on local radio and fielding questions from national newspapers become part of the 'must-have' skills of new school leaders. The exercise of these skills is all the more demanding because, as one secondary head pointed out, "these are especially needed to talk about a school that hasn't yet opened."

A new type of school also has to develop a brand image in order to attract pupils and staff. This requires the principal to have good marketing skills, for which most school leaders require training. New schools need to explain their distinct mission and, in the case of studio schools, they have to communicate clearly to parents and employers how the studio school mission differs from the experience that young people can have through apprenticeships.

Political and stakeholder management

Leaders of new schools are operating within a delicate political context. Local authorities and other schools may be lukewarm or hostile to the creation of a new school. It can be "a distraction from the task of setting up the school," says the leader of a primary free school, and another that "dealing with a local authority which is ideologically opposed to free schools" can be a real challenge.

In this context, stamina and resilience become key qualities. In addition, being able to communicate the vision is a key skill and taking time to listen to concerns is an essential attribute. One free school leader stressed the importance of "being completely open" about a promoter's plans in order to build confidence.

The need to obtain a site and then convert or build new premises mean that leaders of new schools will inevitably become involved in the planning process. As well as finding their way round the planning system, this may mean negotiating with planning officers, consulting residents and seeking to address objections in order to secure support.

Stakeholder management also requires understanding the local community within which the school is located, especially when this is in an area of deprivation; for example, understanding the needs of students who are carers or considering what arrangements should be made for religious observance.

Particular skills for leaders of UTCs and studio schools

Principals of UTCs and studio schools particularly highlighted the importance of stakeholder management skills and the ability to work well with employers. A seminar with promoters of UTCs endorsed the value of the skills and qualities described above, but also highlighted the importance of people management skills and resilience.

Studio school and UTC leaders raised the issue of whether different skills are needed for leaders to establish a school from those necessary to run one. At least one studio school has used different leaders for different phases of the operation. In the commercial world, new production factories will generally be set up by specialists, who then hand over the running of the factory to others when it is ready. Schools do not enjoy the economies of scale necessary to have the staff to do this, although it remains to be seen whether any of the pioneers of the 2011 and 2012 opening new schools will, after the school is established for a year or two, move on to set up other new schools. It could also be the case that, in future, groups of schools employ start-up specialists, moving them around as the group expands, and employing other people as principals when the school is established.

In the studio school model, the centrality of group and individual coaching and peer-to-peer assessment for students mean that leaders need to be skilled in leading effective practice in this area. The leadership skills used at studio schools reflect the different approach taken to teaching and learning. According to one principal: "the studio school's approach combines the development of creative and employability skills with core learning and this requires a different set of skills from maintained schools", particularly in relation to following a curriculum that combines the development of core subject knowledge with practical, applied learning through projects.

Current provision of professional and leadership development for leaders of new schools

New types of school are often in an isolated position and have to make special provision to ensure that staff have access to a sufficient quantity and quality of professional development. One of the issues for small schools is that it is more difficult for them to allocate the resource to release staff for training, especially where budgets are tight and the pressure, particularly in the first term, is on operational issues and just ensuring the school is working smoothly. As one primary head told us: "I would want to have more external stimulation and I would want the National College to help. But I can't be out of school more at the moment". Another head described the limitations of trying to provide professional and leadership development out of a total budget of £3,000, around half of which had to go on statutory safeguarding and health and safety training.

Despite these pressures, most new schools are finding the means to provide access to various forms of professional and leadership development. In many cases there is dedicated time within the school week for staff training and development and senior leaders are assigned specific development responsibilities. In terms of external support for development, Figure 8.1 summarises the four most common sources of support that were reported to the research team.

Figure 8.1: Forms of professional and leadership development support used by leaders of new schools

Forms of professional and leadership development support used by leaders of new schools

Using coaches and mentors

Buying into a development programme

Working with other schools and school leaders

Networking with other leaders of new schools

Using coaches and mentors

Principals recognise the need to look outwards for professional development, both for themselves and for their staff. The services of coaches and mentors have been widely used. For example, one secondary free school principal was finding great value in the coach provided as part of his involvement in the Future Leaders programme. Another free school head was using a consultant who acts as "coach, mentor, school improvement partner and fixer all rolled into one." Many interviewees commented favourably on the College's provision of a coach. For example, the head of a small primary free school had greatly appreciated coaching from the National College and had also found it valuable to be paired with an experienced head.

Buying into a development programme

New school leaders, like other school leaders, are buying in training and support from the diverse market of professional and leadership development providers. Examples of how new schools were accessing external support included programmes and courses delivered by the National College's licensed providers, partner colleges and universities, professional associations and commercial providers of training and consultancy.

In terms of what this means in practice, one secondary free school is sending its head of English on the Future Leaders National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL) (Leading Impact) programme, which is licensed by the National College. At another secondary free school, all staff are studying for an externally accredited Master's degree in teaching and leadership. The head of one primary free school said the National College's online resources had been a useful development resource for the senior leadership team.

Working with other schools and school leaders

Drawing on the resources of other schools can take a number of forms. For example, the Dixons secondary academies in Bradford, including its secondary free school, are very much part of the local Bradford Schools Partnership which provides challenge, scrutiny and support. The London Academy of Excellence, as described in Chapter 7, is using the resources of the independent schools that are promoting the school. Hatfield Community Free School is forming links with a teaching school alliance.

New schools that are part of groups or chains are able to draw on the wider resources of the group for professional development and leadership training. Having access to a central teaching and learning team has been indispensable for the studio school and free school in the Barnfield Federation. In another chain, the executive principal was using the establishment of two new free schools as the trigger for adopting joint practice development across the schools in the group. In another school group, the free school and its parent promoter partner school have co-ordinated their calendars and timetables to facilitate joint teaching and learning mornings across the two schools. The head of ARK Atwood free school is able to meet other ARK primary heads in London regularly and attend all ARK headteacher meetings every half term. ARK heads are also involved in monitoring each other's schools and this provides "great CPD".

Networking with other leaders of new schools

UTCs have a good professional network through the Baker Dearing Trust, while studio schools look to the Studio Schools Trust for joint work in this area. These networks are valued very highly. The JCB Academy has been hosting seminars for prospective UTCs and has been liaising closely with recently opened UTCs. One studio school leader described how important it had been for her to be able to network with senior leaders in other studio schools and draw on the resources of the Studio Schools Trust in developing project-based learning for the school:

> Networking with other studio schools is proving to be one of the most effective forms of leadership development support.

Principal, studio school

Both the Baker Dearing Trust and Studio Schools Trust hold regular workshops and conferences for their respective member schools.

For free schools, however, the work of the New Schools Network only extends up to the point at which the school signs its funding agreement. Thereafter the school has to find its own partnerships for support and training. Some free schools are able to tap into ways of networking with other schools, but it is far from being universal. One secondary free school head was using his membership of the Future Leaders network to visit other schools and receive training on specific issues, such as media handling.

Priorities for developing professional and leadership development

Our survey indicates that principals of new schools would value a wide range of support, as Figure 8.2 illustrates. There was no appreciable difference in the priorities identified by leaders of 2011 and 2012 free schools.

Figure 8.2: Number of principals stating that the following professional development support would be very useful for themselves and for future principals of new schools
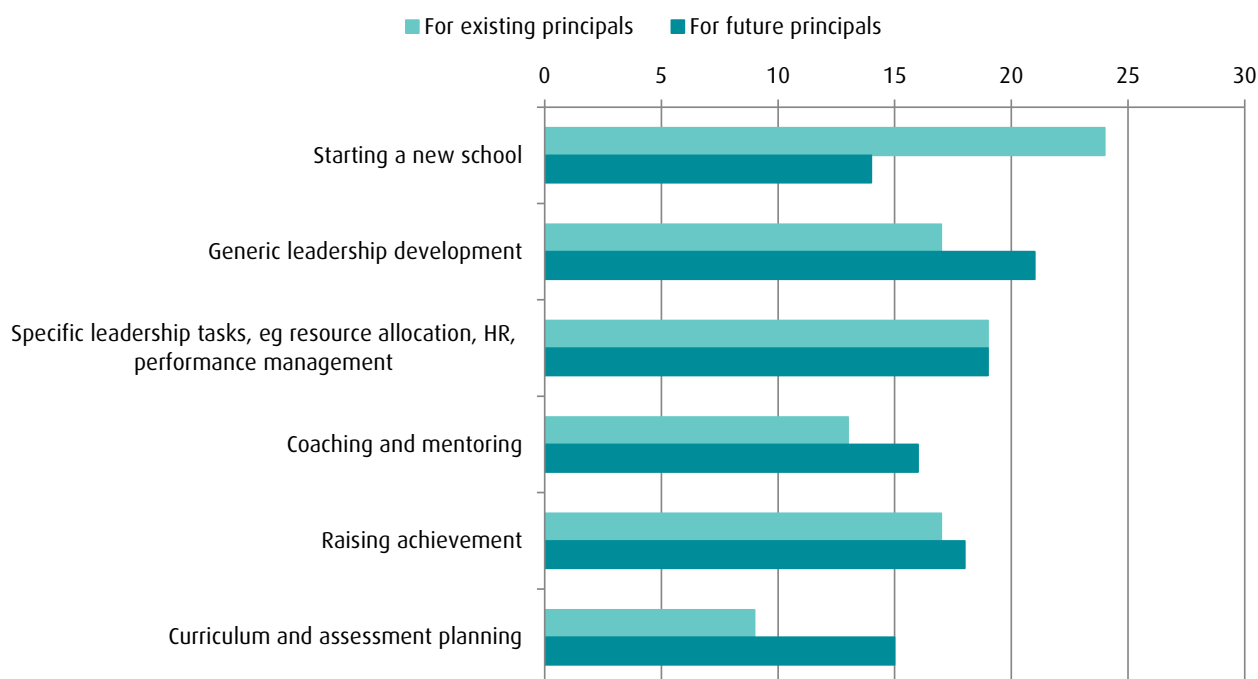
Note: Schools opened in Sep 2011: based on responses from 13 free schools, 2 studio schools and 1 UTC. Schools opened in Sep 2012: based on responses from 21 free schools, 4 studio schools and 1 UTC

Starting a new school

Chapter 4 and the sections on vision and values and project management skills above described the wide range of tasks and challenges involved in establishing a new school. Providing practical training and support on the steps that need to be taken, the hurdles to be cleared and the processes to be put in place would cut the learning curve for promoters and new heads alike. As the leaders of some studio schools told the researchers, an induction programme for new leaders would be valuable. The head of a secondary free school suggested it would be valuable to run sessions for promoters to "demystify the processes and procedures", particularly for those promoters not familiar with the education system.

There is also a case for this training to cover the experience of leading a small school. A promoter of a secondary free school, who is a former secondary head, commented:

Leadership of a small school is very different from leadership of a large school. There is very little available on leading a small secondary school.

Promoter, secondary free school

Generic leadership development

Many members of leadership teams of new schools are young and in their first senior leadership post. They need a wide range of support and development, as the challenge facing young heads in this position is immense. They are not only starting out on their first headship but also opening a new school (often in a climate of hostility) and recruiting pupils before they have a building secured. Moreover, they are doing this with limited resources against a tight deadline. Principals with previous experience of headship, like their counterparts in US charter schools, have commented that they are pleased to have that experience behind them when starting a new school. One secondary head commented: "The job of starting a new school is huge. I am glad that I am not having to learn how to be a head at the same time."

There is, therefore, a need for more basic leadership advice about running and leading a school, which should precede other forms of leadership development, such as coaching. As one secondary free school head put it: "Formal training in being head of a new school would be useful." The modules of the National College's leadership curriculum might well be an obvious starting point for first-time heads who do not have the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), particularly as the curriculum now includes two modules specifically designed for free school leaders (see below).

The need for generic leadership development support is not just confined to heads. At one new school, for example, the senior leaders, apart from the head, are on a leadership team for the first time and tend to react more as heads of department. Too many things were being escalated up to the head to resolve. The new senior leaders needed training and development support around pathways into leadership.

Specific leadership tasks

Some specific leadership and management skills were commonly identified by leaders of new types of school as being important. Future leaders in particular will, depending on their background and experience, need to be trained in a wide variety of specific skills and knowledge including HR, financial management, curriculum development, performance management and data analysis. Other topics for training and development that would be potentially beneficial include: staff appointments, self-evaluation, managing external partnerships, project management, growing a leadership team, success criteria and accountability.

Leaders of UTCs and studio schools identified the need for specific leadership development in understanding the skills that employers value (for example, through work-based placements), opportunities to share information with leaders of similar schools, and support in understanding how to develop entrepreneurial skills and manage risk-taking.

A workshop with studio school leaders identified specific training on marketing, PR and communications as being important, "so that studio schools are as proficient as the independent sector in 'selling' themselves," as one participant commented.

Coaching and mentoring

New schools, which are usually small at the outset, have to build a leadership team over time, with leaders changing job descriptions. This requires adaptability and versatility on the part of the senior staff. The advantage of working in a small, rapidly growing school environment is that it provides opportunities that would not be available to a teacher with narrower responsibilities in a larger, more established school. As one principal explained:

> The school's rapid development is providing tremendous CPD for the staff, who have the opportunity to take on responsibilities earlier in their career that they otherwise would not have had.

Principal, secondary free school

However, coaching and steering leaders in their new roles would help them to avoid pitfalls and accelerate learning.

Studio school leaders also saw the potential for mentors, like a school improvement partner, who could support and challenge the governing body of a new school.

A coach to assist with some of the more practical aspects of running a new school would be valued. One primary school head said that she would welcome a coach or an experienced head with knowledge of the legalities and nuts and bolts of running a school. "You don't know what you don't know," she said, a phrase also used by the head of a new secondary school. Although the Department for Education had provided her with a checklist, she still found herself resorting to the internet to learn about basic issues, such as how to claim back the cost of milk for pupils.

Raising achievement

Leaders of free schools come with a mission to raise achievement and attainment, but they also face some specific challenges. For example, some free school principals have a background in independent school leadership and they recognise that they need training in aspects of maintained school leadership and practices, such as the Ofsted framework.

Studio schools use project-based learning for a significant part of the week. This approach will be less familiar to many Ofsted inspectors, so studio school leaders thought that it would be helpful to identify an HMI with a studio school background to help them prepare for Ofsted inspection.

In some free schools it is not just the head who is new to leadership, but the other members of the leadership team that are in senior positions for the first time. In this context they may require support with developing a shared and consistent approach to classroom observation or self-evaluation judgements. "Self-evaluation is a leadership priority" was the verdict of one secondary free school leader after a conversation with the school improvement partner the school was using.

Curriculum and assessment planning

As Chapter 4 and the earlier part of this chapter described, an increasing number of free schools (and all studio schools and UTCs) have a distinctive curriculum model. This requires particular skills but, as one UTC leader observed, few young school leaders have experience of curriculum planning and most will need to be supported in leading curriculum design and evaluating curriculum strategies.

Succession planning

Succession planning was not identified through the survey as being a major development need, but Chapter 3 has described how it has been a key challenge for charter schools. They have had a fairly rapid turnover of principals and only half of charter schools have had succession plans in place. It is no less a challenge for the schools that are the subject of this study, particularly as some are led by principals who see their role as being start-up leaders. In a few of the new schools that had opened in September 2011 the research team found that when they revisited the school in the autumn of 2012, there had already been a change in the leadership team. It was also clear that several schools were heavily reliant on the skills and leadership of just one or two members of the leadership team. If they were to leave, the school could face serious challenges.

This problem was thrown into even sharper relief at one new school where the promoter had insisted on the senior leadership team being on a contract where each side only had to give one month's notice if they wished to terminate employment. The promoter wanted to avoid the risk of having to pay potentially large sums in the event that a leadership appointment did not work out, but did not seem to realise how vulnerable it would leave the school should the head decide to give in his or her notice, for example, at the end of July.

Planning for succession and growing sufficient leadership capacity is a priority for all new schools, especially in small schools and in those with a distinctive ethos. Some new schools are beginning to address this issue, but in others governors and leaders are still at this stage preoccupied with making the operation of a new school effective.

Succession planning is much easier to organise in groups of schools than in standalone schools. School groups and chains are able to deploy leaders from other schools in the group if there is a sudden problem in a school (as Chapter 6 illustrated) and to provide emerging leaders in new schools with wider leadership experiences across the group. Chains also have the economy of scale to be able to commission or run bespoke middle leadership development programmes. Standalone new schools will generally be too small on their own to bring on a cadre of new leaders and give them the breadth of experience that will equip them fully for future leadership.

Implications for the future of leadership development for leaders of new schools

We have highlighted above the issues and areas in which new schools and their leaders need development support. As important as the support that is provided is how that support is offered and delivered. In Chapter 3 we set out some lessons from the research evidence that are relevant to new schools. In particular, the research highlighted the value of specially designed training programmes for charter school leaders that had provided focused hands-on support, based on:

— support in real-world situations and task-based learning

— shadowing or working under successful principals, followed by mentoring

— flexible access to training on courses during the summer, or online courses

Our research has confirmed that this is the type of support that most new school leaders are seeking. The following ideas provide examples of the forms of support that might be considered.

Support in real-world situations

The induction training proposed above would provide an initial platform for managing the reality of what it is like to set up a new school. The National College has already included in its leadership curriculum for NPQH two optional modules on leadership of a free school: one on freedoms and constraints, and the other on reputation and relationships. They are practically focused and provide valuable resources around which licensees could build a broader offer of induction training.

Induction training, one secondary free school head suggested, could be supplemented by the National College and its licensees developing a list of people to whom the heads of new schools could turn for advice and support on specific issues, as and when needed. A question and answer clinic was also suggested as being potentially useful.

There is also strong support for the Studio Schools Trust continuing to facilitate opportunities for studio schools to network, share skills and evaluate new practice. Sharing and spreading the learning among colleagues tackling similar issues are greatly appreciated.

There were several suggestions as to how this approach could be extended and made relevant to the leaders of free schools. One head of a free school opening in 2012 noted that the Department for Education had not brought together the heads of cohort 1 and 2 schools and, although it had held one meeting for cohort 2 heads, this had been devoted to information giving. A secondary free school head said: "Networking opportunities between heads of free schools would be useful." Another head said:

> It would be helpful if there was more formal linking across new schools and the sharing of processes between new school heads, including heads-designate.

Headteacher, primary free school

A number of free school leaders pointed to the example of Future Leaders, which provides its alumni with an excellent network of experienced leaders and peers who are in similar situations. This is the sort of network that could be more widely facilitated.

Shadowing or working with successful principals

The action of the National College in providing coaches for new leaders of schools is widely valued. As the new school expansion gains momentum, it was suggested that the National College and its licensees should develop a programme to pair up heads of new schools with heads of similar new schools in previous cohorts. This may be more relevant to leaders of standalone free schools than those that are part of groups or chains, but it is an offer that could potentially be made to all those appointed to lead new schools.

Another option would be to provide free schools with a list of experienced school leaders skilled in coaching new leadership teams, in the same way that the College offers support to all first-time headteachers through the local leaders of education/professional partners model.

Flexible access to training

The advent of new schools means that the National College, together with licensed providers, will need to be responsive in terms of the content of its leadership development programmes. It may, for example, be beneficial to offer short, bespoke programmes that draw on existing modules to support leaders appointed to middle and senior leadership positions for the first time.

Studio school principals suggested that the National College leadership curriculum should include an optional module on the leadership of vocational education. The lessons from research on leading curriculum and classroom innovation, described in Chapter 3, would provide a good starting point for developing such a module that would be useful for leaders of both UTCs and studio schools. Linked to that idea, attendees at a workshop of studio school leaders said that they would welcome the setting out of a clear framework of skills required to lead studio schools, as this would help leadership teams to assess their strengths and weaknesses and identify gaps.

In addition, helping new schools to think about and address succession planning is an important task falling within the remit of the College and, increasingly, teaching schools. This would entail both supporting new types of school in their succession planning work and providing an overarching structure in which the development of future leaders of new types of school becomes part of the framework of succession planning across the schools sector. Linking new schools to teaching school alliances and their work on succession planning and leadership development would also seem to be part of the solution to this challenge.

In addressing these challenges, it will be vital to offer forms of training and development that are practical and encourage reflection, but do not require senior staff to spend a lot of time away from their schools. New schools will be in their early years and will almost certainly be small schools, so they will continue to find it challenging to make available the resources for staff to spend significant amounts of time away from the school. This means development has to be highly relevant and capable of being delivered through a combination of online, local and/or networking sessions. The National College could have a role in working with its licensed providers to ensure that they were offering development and support in ways that meet the needs of leaders of new schools.

Conclusion

The skills and attributes required by leaders of new schools have much in common with those of school leaders working in other contexts. However, particularly in the set-up and early days of leading a new school, there is a premium on the skills necessary to establish and communicate the vision for a school and on managing and juggling a demanding set of operational pressures.

The organisation and delivery of professional and leadership development opportunities need to reflect this understanding, but also be sufficiently flexible to adjust to the evolving leadership development agenda of new schools as they recruit staff and welcome their first cohort of pupils. Figure 8.3 takes the timeline of a new school's evolution used in Chapter 5 and applies it to the leadership development agenda. The timeline has been adjusted from that shown in Chapter 5 to reflect the longer lead-in time that leaders of new schools should have to set up a school, following the policy changes by the Department. The bottom half of Figure 8.3 summarises the leadership development needs and focus at different stages in the life of a new school as it moves from conception to full functioning.

Leaders of these schools may begin by being preoccupied with initial and pressing development needs and support, but should ensure that the issues flagged up on the right-hand side of the timeline are addressed early on in the life of a new school. Those responsible for commissioning and delivering leadership support need to ensure that their programmes are flexible enough to meet the emerging needs of this new and growing cohort of leaders.

Figure 8.3: Leadership development agenda of new schools at different stages of their development
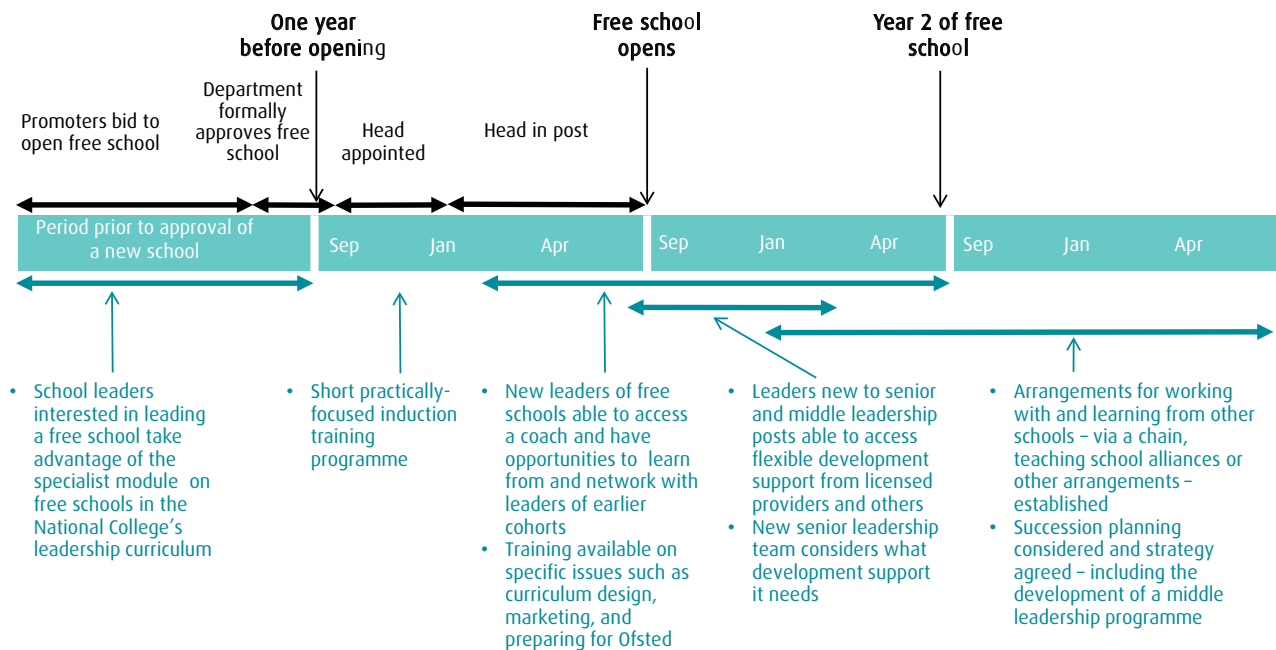
9: Recommendations

Introduction

The experience of leading the establishment of new schools in England mirrors to a remarkable degree the experience of leaders in other education jurisdictions, as described in Chapter 3. In formulating its recommendations the research team has, therefore, drawn on the lessons from abroad as well as reflecting on the findings from the survey, the fieldwork and discussions with stakeholders. As explained in Chapter 1, it is too early in the life of these schools to reach definitive judgements on the effectiveness of their arrangements and practices, but by drawing on the evidence of what is known to be effective practice we believe these recommendations will, if implemented, provide a stronger framework and context for new schools to make an effective and successful contribution to the school system.

The recommendations are grouped under five headings, relating to the respective responsibilities of promoters and governors; school leaders; the National College; the Department for Education; and other stakeholders.

Recommendations for promoters and governors of new schools

— Promoters should identify a dedicated person to oversee project planning for the new school, including the appointment of a headteacher.

— Promoters should consider the skills needed by the head of a new school (as set out in Figure 8.1 above), and should further consider the skills needed to set up the school and to run it successfully.

— When the set-up phase of a new school is ending, the promoters should reconsider their role and in particular consider carefully the optimum composition of the governing body and the best person to chair it, bearing in mind that it may not necessarily be appropriate to use the same personnel as have been involved in leading the project in the set-up phase.

— Groups and chains should consider the optimum balance between group policy and school-level autonomy and should draw up formal protocols that set out the respective roles and responsibilities of the different layers of governance.

— While new schools should try to have parent representation on the governing body at the earliest opportunity, they should take advantage of the flexibility to delay elections until the school is well into its first term, and may wish to postpone the election of further parent representatives until the following year, in order to avoid all parent representatives being parents of pupils in the school's first year group(s).

— New schools should be encouraged to use the local authority to administer their admissions.

Recommendations for leaders of new schools

— Leaders of new schools that are not part of a school group or chain should consider using credible specialist organisations, individuals or other schools with a strong track record to help with designing curriculum, recruiting staff, project managing building work and other set-up tasks.

— Leaders of new schools should make every effort to explain to other local schools the background to the establishment of the new school and should seek to work constructively with other local schools and headteachers, including participating in local heads' meetings.

— Leaders of new schools should ensure that all staff have access to professional and leadership development opportunities that include engagement with other schools.

— Senior leadership teams should ensure that the school's timetable enables them to have sufficient time for strategic discussion and reflection, and for leading teaching and learning, as well as managing operational issues.

— Leaders of new schools should ensure that they receive external support and challenge on professional issues and school standards, whether through another leader in the school group or chain or through appointing an appropriate individual outside the school to undertake the role.

Recommendations for the National College

— The National College and its licensees should consider offering an induction training programme, in partnership with the New Schools Network and the Department for Education, for all heads of free schools, supplemented by the National College ensuring that its existing offer of local leaders of education/professional partners for first-time heads is well publicised to leaders of new schools who could benefit.

— The National College should build on its coaching programme by offering to pair heads of new schools with leaders who have experience of setting up new academies or opening new schools in previous cohorts.

— The National College should encourage principals of free schools to establish how best to facilitate networking opportunities similar to those available to studio schools and UTCs.

— The National College should ensure that its leadership curriculum remains responsive to the needs of middle and senior leaders appointed to a leadership post within a new school for the first time. It should also work with its licensed providers to ensure that development programmes build on the existing modules for leaders of free school to address the everyday practicalities of running a new school (such as marketing, and recruiting students). This should be made available through a combination of online, local and/or networking sessions to both prospective and new leaders of new types of school.

— The National College should assist leaders and governors of new schools to plan for leadership succession and should provide particular support for those new schools that are not part of a group or chain by facilitating links to teaching school alliances.

Recommendations for the Department for Education

— The Department for Education should maintain the practice, as applied for the 2013 cohort of free schools, of formally approving the establishment of new schools at least a year in advance of opening, in order to:

  · enable principals to be appointed and to take up full-time appointment at least eight months before the school opens

  · enable new schools to carry out their admissions process at the same time as other schools

— As part of the process for approving a new school, the Department and the Education Funding Agency should agree a critical path for securing and converting the premises for the school, to inform decisions about whether the opening of a new school should be delayed when significant slippages occur.

— The Department for Education and its advisers should require from the promoters of free schools a less detailed plan, concentrating on the strategic aspects of plans for the school and not requiring the promoters to specify details that should properly be the role of the principal when appointed.

— The Department for Education should advise new schools of the importance of training for all governors, especially in the role of monitoring and evaluating school performance, risk assessment and the implementation of school improvement measures.

Recommendations for others

— In the interests of young people, local authorities should seek to develop productive relationships with new types of school being established in their area.

— Leaders of free schools, UTCs and studio schools should be invited to attend local heads' meetings in order to promote collaboration and partnership working between different types of school serving the same area. In the interests of the young people in the area, both new school heads and the heads of existing schools should work to develop good relationships.

— The Studio Schools Trust and the Baker Dearing Trust should continue to facilitate and develop opportunities for studio schools and UTCs to network, share skills and evaluate new practice.

— In its inspection of teaching and learning in studio schools and UTCs, Ofsted should take into account the different style of learning.

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Appendix 1: Schools survey

School details

Name of free school / UTC / studio School	
Name(s) of sponsors/promoters	
Is the principal one of the promoters?	Yes / No
Planned age range of the school	
Number of pupils in first year	
Planned total number of pupils	

School leaders

1. How were the principal and other school leaders recruited? Please put an X in the appropriate boxes.

Recruited by	Principal	Other school leaders
Advertisement		
Headhunter		
Other means (please specify)		

2. Professional background and experience of the principal

Qualified teacher	Yes / No
Length of teaching experience (years)	
NPQH achieved	Yes / No
Previous experience as a school head/principal	Number of years:
	Number of schools:
Previous experience on a school leadership team	Number of years:
	Number of schools:
Type of employment experience outside teaching (where any)	

Role of school leaders

3. Please indicate the number of each type of post on the school's senior leadership team

Post	Number (FTE)
Principal	
Vice principal	
Assistant principal	
School business manager	
Other (please specify)	

[Note: FTE = full-time equivalent]

4. Please indicate the importance of each aspect of the role of the principal in the following activities. (Please grade from 1 to 4, where 1= of no importance; 2 = of little importance; 3 = important; 4 = very important.)

Own professional development		Liaison with parents		IT management	
Supporting professional development of staff		Keeping up to date with national education policy		Liaison with government	
Leading teaching and learning		Accountability and self-evaluation processes		Liaison with other schools and bodies	
Lesson observations		Health and safety		Dealing with the media	
Curriculum planning and content		Staff appointments		Writing policies	
Reinforcing the school's vision and values		HR and personnel management		Managing admissions	
Managing pupil behaviour		Financial management		Other (please specify)	
Pupil data tracking and monitoring		Managing external contracts		Other (please specify)	

5. What percentage of the principal's working time each week is spent on each of the following tasks? (The percentages should add up to 100.)

Own professional development		Liaison with parents		IT management	
Supporting professional development of senior staff		Keeping up to date with national education policy		Liaison with government	
Leading teaching and learning		Accountability and self-evaluation processes		Liaison with external bodies	
Lesson observation		Health and safety		Dealing with the media	

Curriculum planning and content		Managing pupil behaviour		Writing policies	
Reinforcing the school's values		HR and personnel management		Managing admissions	
Pupil data tracking and monitoring		Managing external contracts		Other (please specify)	
Staff appointments		Financial management		Other (please specify)	

Establishing the school

6. Please indicate the importance of the following motivations for starting the school. (Please grade from 1 to 4, where 1 = of no importance; 2 = of little importance; 3 = important; 4 = very important.)

Parental demand in the area	
Expanding a successful chain in a new area	
Catering for a particular faith community	
Attracting new and/or more diverse pupils to an existing school	
Filling a perceived gap in curriculum in local schools	
Existing school converting to free school	
Other (please specify)	

7. Please indicate the ease/difficulty of the following stages of establishing the school. (Please grade from 1 to 4, where 1 = very difficult; 2 = difficult; 3 = easy; 4 = very easy.)

Securing the land/premises		Setting out the prospectus		Building a relationship with other local schools	
Negotiating with the DfE		Managing finances: start-up capital revenue		Designing the curriculum	
Completing DfE application		Managing admissions		Dealing with the media	
Appointing staff		Building a relationship with local community		Other (please specify)	
Recruiting pupils/students		Achieving the vision on a tight timescale/budget		Other (please specify)	

[Note: DfE = Department for Education]

Challenges and opportunities

8. The **four main challenges** in starting to operate a new school of this type are:

9. The **four main opportunities** in starting a new school of this type are:

Support from the National College

10. What leadership development from the National College would be most useful:
    for the school principal?
    for other school leaders?
    for future leaders on the staff?

(Please grade from 1 to 4, where 1 = of no use; 2 = of limited use; 3 = useful; 4 = very useful.)

Leadership activity	Principal	Other leaders	Future leaders
Starting a new school			
Generic leadership development			
Specific leadership tasks, eg resource allocation, HR, performance management (please specify)			
Coaching and mentoring			
Raising achievement			
Curriculum and assessment planning			
Other (please specify)			

Appendix 2: List of participating schools

The project team is grateful to all the free schools, university technical colleges and studio schools that assisted in providing evidence for our research. In particular, we acknowledge our debt to the following schools at which we carried out interviews, either on visits to the school or by telephone:

Free schools

Opened in September 2011

Aldborough E-ACT Free School

Ark Atwood Primary School

Bristol Free School

Krishna Avanti Primary School

Moorlands Free School

Nishkam Primary School

Stour Valley Community School

The Free School, Norwich

West London Free School

Woodpecker Hall Primary Academy

Opened in September 2012

Barrow 1618 Church of England Free School

Dixons Music Primary School

Dixons Trinity Academy

Greenwich Free School

Hatfield Community Free School

Kingfisher Hall Primary Academy

Kings Leadership Academy, Warrington

London Academy of Excellence

Perry Beeches II - The Free School

Reach Academy: Feltham

Tauheedul Islam High School for Boys

Tiger Primary School

University technical colleges

Opened in September 2011

Black Country UTC

JCB Academy

Opened in September 2012

Aston University Engineering Academy

Studio schools

Opened in September 2011

Barnfield Studio School

Durham Federation Studio School

Green Hub Studio School

Harpurhey Studio School (closed as a studio school in summer 2012 and re-opened as an academy)

Opened in September 2012

Da Vinci Studio School of Science and Engineering

Tendring Enterprise Studio School, Clacton-on-Sea

Appendix 3: Membership of project advisory group

The project advisory group met three times. Its members are listed below.

Stakeholders

Peter Mitchell, Baker Dearing Trust

David Nicholl, Studio Schools Trust

Charles Parker, Baker Dearing Trust

Elizabeth Phillips, Studio Schools Trust

Rachel Wolf, New Schools Network

School principals

Thomas Packer, West London Free School

Jim Wade, JCB Academy

Sue Attard, Hatfield Community Free School

Department for Education

Robert Cirin, Team Leader, Research & Evaluation

Annie Nayyar, Policy Advisor

National College

Jane Doughty, Director of Design and Development, Leadership Development

Toby Greany, Acting Executive Director, Leadership Development

Craig Heatley, Support Officer, Research and Development

Michael Pain, Senior Manager, Policy & Public Affairs

Research team

John Dunford

Robert Hill

Natalie Parish

Leigh Sandals

The National College exists to develop and support great leaders of schools and children's centres – whatever their context or phase.

- Enabling leaders to work together to lead improvement
- Helping to identify and develop the next generation of leaders
- Improving the quality of leadership so that every child has the best opportunity to succeed

Membership of the National College gives access to unrivalled development and networking opportunities, professional support and leadership resources.

We care about the environment
We are always looking for ways to minimise our environmental impact. We only print where necessary, which is why you will find most of our materials online. When we do print we use environmentally friendly paper.

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