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FAITH UNITY AND VISION woodard schools










Establishing a new school and getting it

right from the start

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About SSAT

SSAT, the Schools, Students and Teachers Network, began helping transform education in England in 1987. Back then our role was to support and nurture the first City Technology Colleges. As specialist schools and then the first academies came into being, our brief was extended to supporting them as well. That work, underpinned by our 'by schools, for schools' ethos, laid the foundations for many of our activities today... the innovative leadership and teacher CPD programmes, the commitment to thought leadership and research, and, of course, the network of school leaders and innovative teachers which still drives all that we do.

About Woodard Schools

Woodard Schools is a family of schools founded by Canon Nathaniel Woodard in the mid-nineteenth century as a direct consequence of the founder's concern to transform his contemporary society through the provision of quality Christian education to the emerging middle classes. Since that time the corporation has attracted state maintained (Affiliated) and other independent (Associated) schools into its fellowship, along with academy schools, and Woodard Schools is a unique expression of Church of England schools in the nation. The founder's vision of the family of schools as a society is characterised by mutual support, help and encouragement.

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Foreword

Bill Watkin, Operational Director, SSAT &
Chris Wright, Director of Education,
Woodard Schools

There has always been a need to review the schools stock, to close surplus or excessively dysfunctional schools, to expand provision to meet need, or to meet our global society's changing needs in innovative and creative ways.

1. Recent demographic changes have led to a shortage of school places in England and new schools are being opened in order to address the shortage of capacity.
2. The recent focus on rigorous vocational education, the aim of which has been to develop a generation of, for example, 21st century engineers and technicians, has accompanied the opening of university technical colleges, studio schools and other specialist schools.
3. The principles of parental choice and a belief in a consumer-led, rather than producer-led, education system has opened up the possibilities for a wide range of interest groups to launch new schools with very different characteristics.
4. The notion of a self-improving system, promoted by the government over a number of years, and readily adopted by many school leaders, has led to outstanding headteachers and school operators opening new schools which will share their vision, aspirations and relentless focus on standards.
5. There are economic factors which drive the opening, closure and merger of schools, both in the UK and abroad. Some schools are seeking to reinforce their reputational and financial positions by opening new schools, by acquiring and transforming others, or by expanding their operations abroad.

Whether it is to give parents more choice, children a better education or society a more suitably qualified and skilled workforce, there is a growing appetite, need and opportunity to open a new school.

In most cases, this means establishing in advance the business and education cases for the new school, securing the engagement and support of communities and policymakers, and building the essential founding blocks for future success and sustainability.

New schools must overcome a unique and challenging set of hurdles and must consider some demanding questions:

- How can you promote with confidence a vision and a belief in standards if you have no history or track record or evidence to which you can point?
- How do you recruit the best leader for a school that does not yet exist?
- How can you recruit teachers to a school that does not cater for all year groups?
- How can you build the best governing body for a school that does not yet exist?
- How can you recruit your first cohorts of pupils?
- How can you plan your budget and structures when you do not know how many pupils will walk through the doors on day one?
- How can you offer a full, broad and balanced curriculum, when you only have small numbers of pupils and, therefore, a small budget and a small number of teachers?
- How can your pupils develop and show leadership skills with no older pupils from whom to learn or younger pupils to whom to model leadership qualities?
- How can you build effective networks and relationships with other schools, community groups and external agencies which are all essential before the school is even open?

And, as the school goes through its early years of growth, it must address yet more questions:

- How will the inaugural community of pupils and staff adapt to the new cohorts each year as more staff are appointed and more pupils arrive?
- How will you be held to account by the authorities with no historical data or year-on-year progress evidence to demonstrate impact?
- How will young and inexperienced teachers, as the only teacher of their subject, lead their subject and make strategic decisions, with no immediate colleagues on whom to call and with whom to discuss?
- How will you manage in temporary accommodation and how will you manage moving into a new building mid-year?
- How will you make best use of space and resource, when as you occupy your new building, you will only inhabit a small proportion of the space?

The answers to these and many other questions will inform the success or otherwise of your new school.

This publication brings together the insights, experiences and expertise of school leaders, operators and authorities from a wide range of contexts within the maintained and independent sectors. Whether from headteachers, CEOs of MATs, leading academics, commercial experts or policy advisers, there is here a wealth of ideas, strategies and practices that should help you to find your answers to the questions.

And getting it right from the start will ensure you deliver the very best education for all the young people who deserve nothing less than the best.


Getting it
right

Why set up a new school?

Natalie Evans

The New Schools Network was established to support those who seek to open a free school, providing support and guidance through the planning and application phases. Consequently, this article will focus on the free school programme, but many of the principles associated with the establishment of a new free school apply, of course, to all new schools, whether state maintained or independent, in the UK or abroad.

It seems strange now to think that when the free school programme was introduced in 2010, some questioned whether anyone would be interested in starting a new school. Five years on, parents, teachers, charities and others have seized the opportunity. Over 360 free schools are now open or have been approved to open, with the Department for Education (DfE) receiving more than a thousand applications to start a new school since 2010.

So, why have so many people come forward to take up the opportunity to start a new school?

At one level, a pressing need for school places in many parts of the country has made it imperative. Free schools are helping to tackle the places shortage - once they are all full they will be providing more than 200,000 new school places, overwhelmingly in areas where they are most needed. Nearly three quarters of all open or approved mainstream free schools are in areas with a projected lack of places in the future and this figure is even greater for primary schools, the age range with the most pressing current shortage.

But free schools are about much more than simply meeting this basic need. At a time when we are more aware than ever of how our education system compares to others around the world, they have provided a mechanism for challenging the status quo – both in terms of raising standards and how these improvements are delivered.

It has unleashed the entrepreneurialism of school leaders as never before, enabling some of the country's most effective schools to expand their impact; like in Birmingham, where the hugely successful Perry Beeches School has now opened a further three schools that follow its model; or extend their reach, like in south London, where Graveney School, one of the capital's most popular secondary schools, has now opened a primary.

Teachers have embraced the chance to open innovative new schools, often inspired by the success of those abroad, which offer fresh solutions to old educational problems. Thanks to the free school policy, we have seen teachers introduce the first state funded bilingual schools; schools which deliver project-based learning across the entire curriculum, and schools which teach maths in a similar way to schools in Singapore.

It is especially gratifying to see these efforts focused on the most disadvantaged. Currently, free schools are eight times more likely to be located in the most deprived local authorities in England than in the least deprived and this is in large part due to teachers, including dozens of Teach First ambassadors and Future Leaders, deliberately targeting their schools at the students who need them most.

The policy has also allowed those with an interest in education to get more directly involved in the running of schools than ever before. Many new schools have been set up in close collaboration with industry, operating curricula which deliver the skills necessary for future careers and engaging experts in the field. As a result, we now see schools such as East London Arts and Music, a 16-19 school in Tower Hamlets, set up by award-winning urban music artists with the support of major music labels to widen access to the creative industries. Or Discovery School in Newcastle, a 14-19 school that focuses on the industries that are helping to regenerate the North East.

Other schools have been set up by charities, universities and community organisations, as a means of furthering their mission in society. For example, the Big Life Group, linked to the Big Issue magazine, has set up a primary school, which will deliver high-quality education and childcare to families in one of the poorest parts of Manchester. Everton, Bolton Wanderers and Bradford City are examples of a number of football clubs that have embedded their role in the community by leading the creation of new schools. And universities including Cambridge, Birmingham and Exeter have all now founded their own schools to help prepare the next generation of students.

Free schools have also led to greater bridges being built between the state and independent school sectors. Some of the most high-profile independent schools, including Eton, Westminster and Brighton College have taken the opportunity to open new schools, re-engaging with their original mission to educate a wide range of children. This now means that free schools like the London Academy of Excellence, a sixth form in east London which shares teaching with a group of independent schools and New Islington Primary, a primary established by Manchester Grammar School, are leading the way in showing how the independent school sector can best collaborate with state schools.

In making the most of the academy freedoms, free schools have also shown an appetite for trying to bring popular ideas from the independent sector into state schools. A 2014 survey for the DfE found that almost three quarters offer or plan to offer an extended day to extend learning time, like Greenwich Free School, where a longer day means that children spend around a third more time learning, or offer more extra-curricular activities, like Gildredge House School,

which has more than 50 activities on offer before and after school. Around a third have taken advantage of their freedom to hire staff without qualified teacher status (QTS), like East London Science School, which brings scientists straight into the classroom, and almost 80% have adapted or plan to adapt the national curriculum, like Reach Academy Feltham, which teaches its year 7 students twice as much English and maths to help them catch up with their more affluent peers.

But though these new schools are extremely diverse, they are all underpinned by a belief that the best way to raise attainment for all children is by delivering high-quality education. Opening up the ability to start a new school, or petition others to do so, has broadened access to high-quality state education and empowered communities that were previously frustrated by a lack of school choice or by the low quality of options on offer to them.

Of course, setting up a new school isn't easy and though the process for opening a free school has been refined in every year of the policy, a number of key challenges remain. Chief among these is finding and developing a suitable site. Though free schools cost less on average than schools built under previous initiatives, it has still proven extremely challenging for the government to find value-for-money site options, especially in urban areas which often have the greatest need for new school places. Uncertainty over school sites often also leads to another common issue: recruiting pupils early on in the school's life. Though most free schools end up being extremely popular, expecting parents to select a school as a first choice for their child before they have a track record, a building or possibly even a headteacher is a big ask – one which can really only be overcome by the vision and integrity of the school's founders.

But the fact that new schools have now been established all over the country, by proposer groups of all different backgrounds, shows that no one with the right mix of skills, vision and talent should be discouraged from wanting to start a school. Reflecting on the work of my charity, which has given advice and support to around 75% of all the free schools open today, it's possible to pick out several factors which successful free schools have in common, no matter where they have come from.

First, having a clear, simple vision for the school and what it will achieve is absolutely vital. The best free schools start at the end point of their vision

and plan backwards: thinking through every aspect of what it will take for the children in their care to achieve it. They are also able to explain it in simple terms: if a proposer group can't sum up their vision in a few lines or agree on what they are, then they don't share the same goals. They of course need to be flexible – for example when acknowledging the principal's role in running the school day-to-day – but they don't compromise on the fundamental values of the school. At all times they are driven by a sense of moral purpose, what is in the best interests of the children they serve, rather than ego or self-recognition.

Secondly, successful free school proposers think ahead; grounding their proposals at the application stage in the reality of running an open school. They plan carefully for transition, both in terms of people, where the skillsets required for designing, starting and then running a school can be very different; and in terms of operations, where they often focus on the fundamentals which will get the school off to a solid start before introducing more radical innovations. In this way they can ensure that the school is well prepared for whatever comes next, rather than just thinking about what has to happen now.

Finally, and underpinning all of this, they take the opportunity to challenge their own thinking and their own levels of expertise. The best proposers take the process seriously at every stage and seek robust feedback on their thinking, no matter what their background. They learn lessons from others who have been through the process before them and are realistic about what they can do themselves, building a highly skilled team around them and drawing on their ideas to design a really great school.

Starting a new school offers a huge opportunity to those who want to improve the life chances of young people. I hope that after reading this essay and those that follow it, you will think seriously about taking this up too.

Natalie Evans became director of New Schools Network in January 2013 having previously been chief operating officer. Prior to this she was deputy director of Policy Exchange. She was recently made a working peer and her previous roles include head of policy at the British Chambers of Commerce and deputy director at the Conservative Research Department.

www.newschoolsnetwork.org

Getting the vision right

Getting the branding right

Isabella Donnelly

Establishing your brand

The principles of setting up a new school are akin to a business start-up: establishing what sort of organisation you wish it to be (vision for learning); research and analysis (identifying your niche); business plan and blueprint; budget; location; resourcing (staff and pupils); branding and marketing.

This chapter looks at the theme of branding and its importance in the life cycle of the school and its long-term success. Most importantly is the link between brand and reputation as a new school you are creating and conceiving both.

Every school is a brand; while this has not traditionally been the understanding of educationalists, it is increasingly becoming so. With social media and an unprecedented amount of information available publicly, stakeholders are coming into increased contact with their brands and therefore play an increasing role in defining their brand values. Stakeholders are no longer passive consumers; they are commentators on the brand and will likely determine an organisation's relative success or demise.

In general, visioning provides an opportunity for organisations to imagine their future state, agree shared goals and generate fresh thinking to respond to their changing environment. A compelling vision is reflected in the brand (put simply, the school's logo and identity) ensuring you stand out from your competitive set and distinguishing your school's benefits, values and pupil 'experience' - this is your brand promise.

Schools and education have never operated in isolation from community and society, to paraphrase Max Weber, the German sociologist, philosopher, and political economist whose ideas influenced social theory and research and

the entire discipline of sociology – schools determine society as much as they are determined by it. Society, and parents specifically are no longer prepared to take the word of 'experts' but expect to be informed about and involved in the decisions made – whether it is about buying a car, treatment from a doctor, or the education available to their children. A school that is not an active and a positive choice in its community will swim upstream to change things in the future. The relationship between school, community and society is so closely interlinked that if a school gets it right from the beginning it will create a virtuous cycle.

Successful organisations build their brands from the inside-out. By engaging with stakeholders on the future vision of the school and communicating key messages and unique selling points (USPs) effectively you will sustain a positive internal culture in which there is a consistency of message and a common purpose. This in turn will reap rewards externally by ensuring effective communications; building the school's public profile, developing brand advocates through loyalty and thereby establishing an 'outstanding' reputation.

Most parents want to be genuine partners in their children's education and this is not confined to a particular social or cultural group. Local businesses and communities have a vested interest in education in its broadest sense and also want to be part of a school's life. There is unprecedented access to information – parents can make 'informed' choices from desk-based research and then they add a coating of 'word of mouth' and final decisions are made, brands are built and reputations either enhanced or broken. Society has become less deferential – informal sources of information about new schools (word of mouth, talking to parents/relatives etc.) are more important to parents, as 'formal' sources are non-existent in the short term.

Launching your brand

Successful and outstanding schools share particular characteristics in marketing terms: they know where they are going and how they are going to get there (vision); they understand that they are on a journey together and ensure that the whole school community is informed (buy-in and engagement); they share a fundamental awareness that they are strengthened by their partnerships (genuine engagement); they know that while parents have access to an abundance

Reputation management + Brand enhancement = Positive public profile

of information, the one they rely on beyond all others is word of mouth (reputation); they understand that parents have the right to choose the school to which they want to entrust their child; they realise that reputations are hard won and easily lost; and at the heart of everything they do is to change the lives of young people.

In creating a new school, you may have more to prove than existing schools in your chosen geographical area. Point of difference and what makes you stand apart from these other schools are also important considerations while shaping your vision. The starting point for all successful organisations is data analysis and market research – desk and field; there should be no shortcuts.

Prior to working on a vision, we recommend a full research project from a marketing perspective; look at future pupil demand; demographic trends, transport links and competition. This latter point will be the most crucial because it will give you the foundations for developing your brand. An audit of your competitors is another essential piece of desk research: this could include

reviewing their curriculum offer, online public profile including website, brand image, KPIs and current communication methods. While undertaking the desk research, get out into the field – test your own 'product' and begin to win hearts and minds.

In our experience confusion still exists between vision and mission and as this is the foundation of all future marketing work we share our definition: vision defines the desired or intended future of your school in terms of its overriding strategic direction, and mission defines the fundamental purpose, i.e. what you do every day – the pupil 'experience'. Point to note: stakeholders, particularly prospective parents, buy into the vision of the school, i.e. how will my child be prepared for the next chapter of their life after seven years as part of your organisation?

One of our schools described their vision as: 'An exceptional school with a culture of scholarship and outstanding achievement for all'. You may have created your vision; now describe what is the central 'big idea' for your school – this should be one word that encapsulates your school's values and the feeling or emotion that you want every pupil/parent and staff to experience every day. If as a school you are living and breathing your values then you will achieve your vision. Our case study school's 'big idea' was 'Inspired'.

With vision agreed and established, and key messages and USPs identified for marketing purposes, you will now be able to assemble your brand starter kit: logo, typeface and colour palette. Those that have planned ahead will know to have worked on verbal and visual messaging through 'tone of voice' and photography for the purposes of creating the all-important website and prospectus (even though the school prospectus is no longer statutory, parents still expect some form of 'takeaway' following a visit). Channels of communication will be the next challenge; the traditional and the new.

In establishing the foundations you are now ready to launch your brand. Ideas for consideration include: launching teaser campaigns to release the brand, building your database and networks, development of your recruitment strategies (staff/pupils), devising and implementing communication channels and letting people into your school (physically and metaphorically – newsletters, press/media, online, events). Be creative – what networks can you enhance/create?

What community events can you take part in? One of our schools tapped into a local network by offering a local Turkish radio station an office on the school premises in return for a regular radio slot – this gave the school access to hundreds of local parents on a daily basis.

Understand that parents are thinking about their child's education all year round – being talked about positively from the outset is key and getting to decision-makers and influencers in your community using existing networks (face to face and online) and creating your own will ensure you are successfully building your school's profile.

LEARNING THE LESSONS

In working with a wide range of schools in this ever changing education landscape, there are some lessons we have learned from different stakeholder perspectives; we share these in the form of points/questions for your further consideration. In our experience, schools are generally good at communicating through their internal school communications, however there is now a need for change and for schools to be extrospective and to embrace how this can support the brand enhancement and reputation management of the school.

- The importance of reputation: from interviewing thousands of pupils and parents across England, we know that reputation is in their top five.
- Clarity, consistency and integration of key messages are fundamental to success.
- Parents make their decision based on the pupil experience, Ofsted, exam results, school accreditations/awards. What will you replace your lack of track record or professional endorsements with?
- Education beyond the norm: the general public may need educating/convincing as to the kind of school you are opening.
- How are you going to build parental confidence in your school? As you are probably starting small, you will have a limited parental network. An established school will have 100s if not 1000s on roll, so how are you going to get your message out to a wider community?

- Understand the importance of the school website as your 'shop window' to communicate to the widest range of stakeholders and first port of call of all prospective parents, staff, businesses and wider community.
- How are you taking advantage of new online media? From the world of marketing we bring you a new cutting edge piece of technology that is coming to your area soon – 'bluetooth buses' – a new advertising technique that will allow retailers to trial beacon technology in buses with passengers receiving location-based messages on their smartphones with opportunities to purchase new products and receive coupons/discounts – this could revive the high street. Is this a future profile raising opportunity for schools?
- Building networks is about more than winning hearts and minds but also building your brand. Get to decision-makers and influencers – including local MPs/councillors, business groups, rotary clubs. Find networks that work for you and your school – they are sometimes in the unlikeliest of places.
- Pupil recruitment lead-in times are at least a year: understand the admissions process.
- Continue to be innovative as that is the name of the game with schools always looking at new ways to retain/increase school rolls as they themselves evolve.
- How do you build a positive presence in the community and in the media? Don't leave this to chance. Extend your network links beyond the expected (families/staff/community): the list is infinite and ensure you communicate with them all regularly – this is easier to do because so much is online – make sure you are part of the online revolution.
- In developing your brand identity, use cost effective marketing tools and techniques; post videos on YouTube, post teacher recruitment adverts on LinkedIn.
- Change is inevitable, the evaluation of change can only ever be retrospective and so those responsible for the success of a school have to plan for the future based on their experience informed by the insights

of political, economic, social and technological trends. Know where to tap into this information locally, nationally and internationally and get ahead of the curve.

If you understand the above you will have a better chance of managing your reputation in the longer term as you will have all bases covered. This is not something you do once but is part of the fabric of the school – communicating excellence should be your mantra, in the same breath as delivering teaching excellence.

Isabella Donnelly is managing director of Grebot Donnelly Associates Ltd, a leading marketing and PR consultancy specialising in the education sector, working with and training over 1000 schools and supporting the establishment of new schools across England.

www.grebotdonnelly.com

Living your vision

Honor Wilson-Fletcher

The vision for your school is your glue and the foundation of your brand. It underpins the logic of your curriculum and all your decision-making, engenders loyalty, frames your successes, strengthens and heartens the team when a school goes through tough times, and drives you all to do more, every day, for the young people you serve. It helps people understand why you do what you do – and makes them want to work with you to achieve more. A strong vision and brand may also be like marmite – not everyone may automatically like it – but everyone will be clear about what you are trying to achieve and will respect you and understand the quality of what you do.

Setting up a new school is like planting a woodland from saplings or laying out a garden. You are planning for the long-term, and your vision should encompass the lifetime of the school, not just its early years. The team involved in the early stages of the life of the school are its first set of custodians, and should be able to visualise and prepare for a mature school beyond their tenure.

Keeping your thinking and communications clear and as simple as possible is important – you have a wide group of stakeholders, over many years, who need to continue to believe in and subscribe to your vision. The education sector tends to be linguistically complex, full of jargon and (sometimes) a shifting sea of policy. At its heart, we are all trying to do something very important, and quite straightforward. Try to distil your ambitions to bring out that which is distinctive, long-lasting and explicable to the largest number of your stakeholders.

Are you sure that all the decision-makers around you agree and have real mutual understanding about your vision for your school? Test out every area and thrash out disagreements or unformed ideas early in your process – you cannot afford to proceed without absolute and shared clarity of purpose. Unclear or

compromised thinking will have a negative impact on your school after opening.

Vision and identity or branding can support each other, or get unhelpfully tangled together. If you are lucky enough to be building or refurbishing a space for your school, you will be considering how the physical space you have available relates to your vision and conveys and supports your aspirations for your students – but the brand for your school should emerge naturally from your educational needs, rather than be imposed. Your brand encompasses everything from your curriculum to the way your school looks. But keep things practical – your school should look how it needs to look – just like any other high-quality place of work or industry. The Aldridge Foundation believes strongly that young people have a right to study in high-quality spaces, and that this can have a real impact on their engagement in and outcomes from their learning experiences. We are involved in state education, our schools are publicly funded, and are therefore civic assets. We believe that we should work harder to make schools engaging community resources. This will have an impact on how they are designed. They don't have to be palaces – this can make them intimidating, which is actively unhelpful – and they should not be reminiscent of the schools which provided very mixed memories of education for some local residents. But our reception and security arrangements, for example, need to allow for a wide range of people to feel welcome, every day, because this is core to our values as an organisation.

The parallel processes involved in setting up a school require considerable energy and practical focus. You will be juggling policy writing, curriculum

planning and student recruitment with, most likely, distracting but important approvals meetings about the colour of chairs, tables and doors (which will all be, annoyingly, slightly different colours from each other). But all of these require dedicated attention, contribute to your overall vision and will underpin your values if coordinated effectively. Attention to detail is crucial. Incredibly loud hand dryers installed in an open-plan school could be invasive and unbearable for some students, undermining an otherwise calm and welcoming environment. If you have facilities managers making decisions during your development phase – they need to be just as clear about your vision for the school as everyone else.

The experience of your brand and values will be judged by a huge variety of people in any number of ways. But you might want to ask yourself:

- Have you identified your most important stakeholders?
- Is your vision distinctive, clear and engaging for your most important stakeholders?
- What kind of welcome will your school offer – not on its first day, but EVERY day? Not just to its students but to everyone who walks through the door, or calls you, or visits your website?
- What will the tone of experience for your students be in school?
- How will students behave towards each other? How will you ensure this?
- How will staff behave towards each other? How will you ensure this?
- What will local community members say about their contact with your students and staff? How will you make sure that this happens?
- Is your school one that all staff are going to want to come and work in every day? How are you going to ensure this?
- Are the working spaces for students and staff different? If yes, why? Does this relate to your vision?
- Have you challenged your own established practices in the way in which you have gone about designing this school?
- Is your governing body a really good fit with your values?
- Have you configured your budget in a way that allows you to express and secure your values through your daily work?

- Have you ensured that ALL staff, not just teaching staff, are going to be able to 'live and work' the values that you espouse? How?
- Will you be able to recruit on the basis of your vision and values? How?
- What WON'T you do, on the basis of your vision and values?
- If you selected any one of your core policies, would your vision and values become immediately clear?
- How will you know that your school has succeeded? What is your long-term aim? Has this been shared with everyone?
- Everyone can embody your values, but not everyone is a natural communicator. Who will act as spokespeople for your values and your brand?

Honor Wilson-Fletcher is chief executive of the Aldridge Foundation. She has led the foundation's growth from a single school to sponsoring five academies, two studio schools and two university technical colleges located across England and serving children at primary, secondary and sixth form level.

The Aldridge Foundation is an educational charity that helps young people to reach their potential and improve their communities, principally through the sponsorship of entrepreneurial academy schools and colleges.

www.aldridgefoundation.com

CASE STUDY

The Aldridge Foundation is the charitable sponsor of a small national group of schools – from nursery and all-through provision to 14–19 technical colleges. We're slowly growing in size and diversity. While we all know we share some strong values, we wanted to secure those values for the long-term by agreeing a simple, very ambitious long-term goal that we could all adopt, be held to account for, and which would make sense for any school joining the family and for any member of staff joining any of our schools.

We recently got together our principals, discussed what we believed in, what mattered to us most, and here's what we have agreed to deliver for the future:

- By the age of 25, all Aldridge graduates will have experienced an outstanding and enjoyable education and be able to sustain the life of their choice. They will be independent, thriving economically and making a real, positive contribution to their communities.

We are now setting about applying robust accountability measures to every part of this statement so that we can start to deliver on it, and so that our academies and schools can begin to move towards making this long-term commitment to their students and families from September 2015. This will involve us looking closely at everything from careers advice (obvious!) to being clear about how we define 'choice' and 'thriving economically' (much less obvious!). The process has made us look very closely at what we believe in, and what level of accountability we are prepared to carry for those beliefs. It means we will have to look at some quite unconventional performance measures and subject ourselves to external scrutiny, not just in examination results, and that we will need to have a very strong alumni network in order to know what our students are doing at the age of 25 so that we can assess our success over time. This is pretty daunting, but really exciting at the same time.

Whether you are a single-form primary or an enormous all-through academy, the same rules apply. A strong vision and long-term goal should be very ambitious indeed, make you nervous, be highly motivating and feel true to the organisation. Your vision should be underpinned by accountability and substance – and plans. If you have grand ambitions – make them public and stick to them and make sure that your leadership and governance team are all in the same place with you to make your vision a reality. Never, ever try and 'impose' your vision on an unwilling or unconvinced organisation or community – you have to find a way to take people with you.

LEARNING THE LESSONS

My point about 'taking people with you' isn't a lesson that's exclusive to the Aldridge Foundation – or to the education sector – I have seen the damage done when this doesn't happen in organisations of all kinds. 'Being visionary', for that matter, is not the same as having a vision that can be shared and sustained by everyone who has a right to a stake in your school. A brilliant idea is only brilliant if you make it work for your students, and your stakeholders, in your school and your community. The importance of collaborative working and respectful communications in setting up a school cannot be underestimated.

I have also witnessed severe anxiety and fear of change in a community, fuelled by those who may not subscribe to a particular vision for education, and can see how hard it can be to initially overcome, even with the most careful and collaborative approach to communications. That's where your ambitious and robust vision and goal comes in again. Ultimately, you will be judged on how well you have put that vision into practice - on what you achieve for the young people you serve – and in the meantime, even in the face of local challenges, the clarity of your vision and goal will keep you driving forward as a team.

A university sponsoring an academy: two organisations with a congruent vision

Professor Michael Worton, CBE

As University College London's (UCL) international reputation grew over the past 15 years and as its national and international partnerships increased in number, we began to realise that, as a British university, we needed to focus more on partnerships in the UK and especially our local community, and this led us to think about how we could contribute more to secondary education in our local borough of Camden.

Already, in 1999, we had created an innovative Partnership for Excellence with City and Islington College, a special partnership that continues to this day. However, important as this partnership continues to be, by 2005 UCL felt that it should be doing more in its home borough than the conventional outreach and widening participation work that it had been doing for years. At the same time, tutors across UCL were increasingly concerned that students, even those with the highest A-level grades, were arriving insufficiently prepared for university study, with the result that departments across UCL had to provide remedial teaching. Of particular concern was the fact that the secondary curricula did not encourage independent thinking and enquiry-led learning, and while our various interactions with schools through masterclasses, taster courses, summer schools, student mentoring, etc. were helping both pupils and their teachers to understand better what university study entailed, we realised that something more in-depth, more ambitious and more sustainable was required.

The main drivers to sponsor an academy were: (a) our desire to show leadership in education and to stress the importance of the secondary and higher education sectors working together in a mutually enriching way; (b) our desire to make a greater contribution to Camden; (c) our conviction that we were in a position to use our expertise to help to bring about real change in the secondary curriculum and especially (d) to explore ways of extending the curriculum in maths and science to situate modern language learning at the heart of the curriculum in our globalised world; and (e) to extend our commitment to widening participation, both by doing more to encourage young people to set their sights high and gaining deeper and honest feedback about our own engagement activities from the secondary sector.

The two main foci in our thinking were the curriculum and the ethos of the future academy. The key curriculum decisions were that the UCL Academy should be a specialist school in maths and science with language teaching well embedded and delivered as a priority. We were committed to establishing an academy that had at its core a mission to secure high performance and raise aspiration, and so we determined that the underpinning ethos of the academy would be a commitment to unlock the potential that lives in every child and to develop them as individuals, thereby nurturing self-esteem and confidence.

Global citizenship

UCL defines itself as 'London's global university', and as sponsor, we were keen that the academy should support all students to develop responsibility for their learning, ensuring that they continue throughout their time at the academy to be challenged and stimulated by their learning. We therefore wanted to develop innovative pedagogical approaches that improve access to the key stage 3 and 14-19 curriculum, including the use of new technologies and virtual learning environments.

We were also determined that the pupils' learning should take place through the exploration of both practical and theoretical exemplars – and through teamwork and group projects and discussions. The principle of pupils taking responsibility for their learning, both individually and collectively, was central to our vision, and this led ineluctably to our certainty that the academy should operate on 'stage not age' principles, with pupils moving through the curriculum levels as they are ready and not necessarily when they reach a particular age.

At UCL, we constantly strive for excellence and we are committed to making a difference in the world, both in our local community and in countries across the world. Our educational aim is therefore to provide an environment that reflects these values and helps our students to develop personally and as

social beings as well as growing intellectually. Studying at UCL thus takes place within a framework of education for global citizenship, and we wanted this concept of global citizenship to be a defining feature, even the key USP, of the UCL Academy.

For us, 'global citizenship' involves providing an education that actively prepares students to respond to the intellectual, social and personal challenges that they will encounter throughout their future lives and careers. As sponsor, we wanted the academy to provide a learning experience that would lead the pupils to an understanding of social responsibility, global citizenship and leadership, and we wanted them all to become:

- critical and creative thinkers
- ambitious – but also idealistic and committed to ethical behaviour
- sensitive to cultural difference
- willing to assume leadership roles: in a group of friends, in the school, in the family, in the community and later in the workplace.

The academy's location in the heart of London, one of the world's most diverse and dynamic cities, was, of course, an enormous advantage, but we also had an ambition that the academy would become a flagship for global citizenship and designed a framework whereby the academy would:

- embed the concept of global citizenship within and across the curriculum and teach subjects within their social context
- promote the concepts of the 'world citizen' and the global market through a programme of twinning and sponsored links and conferences
- use new technologies to establish everyday trans-world contacts for pupils to enhance their learning of individual subject areas
- build a world 'family' of schools to support and enhance pupils' development
- develop with UCL a programme of volunteering to enrich the pupils' experience and extend their understanding of society
- develop a high-profile programme to involve pupils in the running of the academy
- seek to develop the academy as a nationally renowned centre for citizenship education.

The UCL Academy opened in September 2012 with 180 students in foundation (year 7) and 125 students in level 3 (year 12), and it will reach its full capacity of 1150 students by the autumn of 2016. There is still a lot to do, but the principal and her staff, the governors and, crucially, the pupils have already established a vibrant ethos of global citizenship.

A long road…

Having decided in 2005 to seek to sponsor an academy, UCL approached Camden Council, which faced a need for new secondary school places over the next five years. The proposal was greeted with enthusiasm by the executive of the council and we swiftly developed an excellent working relationship with the officers of Camden's Children Schools and Families service; this relationship was to prove invaluable over the next few years. However, there was strong political

opposition to academies in general and to the UCL Academy in particular on the part of some elected members of Camden Council. It should be said also that some colleagues in UCL itself were opposed to the idea, either because they had political objections to academies or because they were concerned at the level of resource (human and financial) that UCL might have to commit to the academy project – and some even feared that the academy represented a potential reputational risk to UCL.

We decided that it was important to engage in many public meetings and discussions with interested groups and individuals in order to explain our plans and to dispel many misconceptions, e.g. that we wanted to create an elite, selecting school, whereas we had said repeatedly that we wanted to create a comprehensive school or that UCL Academy students would more easily gain entrance to UCL itself, even though again we had consistently stressed that there would be no compact for admissions between the academy and UCL.

Time-consuming and often stressful as these meetings were, they were enormously helpful in sharpening and clarifying our vision and in alerting us to issues of which we had not been fully aware. While the political debates continued for some considerable time, the meetings that we held in venues across Camden and in UCL itself drew many interested parents who wanted to talk about specific issues in our plans. After several parents told us that they found it hard to speak in the public meetings because they were intimidated by others who insisted on debating political and ideological points, we set up a website to explain our position, giving an email address so that people could ask their questions that way and get an answer promptly, and we also offered to meet interested parents in small groups or even individually; these proved immensely popular.

At the same time, we were consulting internally with staff and students at UCL about the general concept of the academy and about practical ways in which the UCL community could contribute to it. From these discussions emerged a plan of how UCL as sponsor could provide practical as well as conceptual help on an ongoing basis.

This plan included:

- masterclasses, lectures, other activities led by academics who are working at the cutting edge of their fields
- collaboration between UCL Academy staff and academics to develop the taught curriculum
- access to UCL's libraries, laboratories etc.
- UCL students to act as role models, buddies, classroom assistants and mentors
- support for older students with the process of applying to university, including the opportunity to talk directly with admissions tutors.

A third strand of our consultations was with innovative educators in the secondary sector in Camden and elsewhere, with special inspiration coming from many curriculum discussions with Patrick Derham, then headmaster of Rugby School, and from the Perspectives model developed there which marries science with philosophical debate (See *Liberating Learning: Widening Participation*, edited by Patrick Derham and Michael Worton (University of Buckingham Press, 2010). We were particularly lucky that our academy was to be a new school, which gave us the opportunity to think through what kind of building is needed for 21st century school education. We examined innovative uses of space, notably the 'superstudio' approach, which we had seen giving excellent results in Denmark, Holland and Australia, and discussed these ideas with our UCL architecture and educational psychology colleagues as well as with Camden officers, the design consultants and architects with whom we had worked on other buildings.

We owe a massive debt to everyone with whom we talked over the seven years of planning and designing. We learned massively from all the discussions, which were hugely enjoyable as well as alternately inspiring and challenging. However, we had widely underestimated the amount of time that the consultations would take; this was probably one of our biggest mistakes.

But it was a glorious moment when the academy was formally opened by its spiritual godfather, Lord Adonis, with the hall full of the year 7 and year 12 pupils

proudly wearing their uniforms. All was well. And then... the 2013 AS results proved to be disappointing. This was a severe blow, as was the far from glowing 2014 Ofsted report. However, the staff and the pupils responded marvellously, 'taking it on the chin', and resolved to learn individually and collectively from the setbacks. And everyone shared in delight at the truly excellent 2014 A-level results achieved by our first ever sixth form students.

In the 2014 DfE league tables, the UCL Academy is the highest performing maintained mixed school in Camden.

Most new schools do not have a seven-year planning period, but if there was one single thing that kept us on our marathon track, it was the belief that we had the chance to do something truly innovative which would make a real difference to secondary education in Camden and beyond. It would thus have been shameful to give up when things got tough.

We are very proud that UCL was the first university to be sole sponsor of an academy, but we know that in reality it is the shared creation of hundreds and hundreds of people.

Professor Michael Worton is emeritus professor of arts at UCL, where he was vice-provost 1998-2013. He led the creation of the UCL Academy, as well as setting up UCL's campuses in Australia and Qatar. He speaks throughout the world on education, internationalisation and global citizenship. The UCL Academy is a fully comprehensive school in London specialising in mathematics and science, which opened in September 2012.

www.uclacademy.co.uk

A vision grounded in moral purpose: shaping your school for your pupils

Kat Pugh

The St Marylebone CE School is a high-performing, non-selective, inclusive and comprehensive secondary school, serving pupils of Christian faith, any other faith and no faith at all. We serve a very diverse, multifaith and multicultural inner London community, with 47% of our cohort on free school meals and 49% with English as an additional language. Our performing arts specialist status is at the heart of the school's energy and aspiration, placing great emphasis on what the arts contribute to the development of young people – not as leading stage stars, but as curious, confident, skilled, spiritually aware and socially attuned, independent thinkers and citizens. As one of the first schools to become a national teaching school, we take a leading role in developing and sharing best practice and shaping the teachers and education leaders of today and tomorrow. As one former HMI recently remarked: 'At St Marylebone, possibility is everything.'

In September 2013, The St Marylebone CE Bridge School opened. At a formal ceremony, a group of GCSE music scholars accompanied a group of year 7 pupils with special educational needs (SEN), singing in harmony, conducted by an Oxford-trained music teacher. Three of these year 7s had never sung before that month. Two had never performed in front of an audience. One had been, until two weeks before, a selective mute. The Speaker of the House, Sir John Bercow, spoke of his own experiences of SEN and heralded the opening of the first specialised provision in Westminster for secondary-age pupils with SEN in speech, language and communication.

The school is an affiliate to St Marylebone; it is its own trust and company, with its own governing body – but it is born out of the same zeal, vision and sense of possibility which fuels our 'outstanding' mainstream secondary. It is a special free school – one of the first in the country. Now in its second year of operation, with 12 pupils in each year, The St Marylebone CE Bridge School (SMBS) is in its own (temporary) premises with a flourishing team of educators and specialists. It is doing what we set out to do: supply a gap in local provision for pupils with these needs, so that they do not get lost in mainstream nor limited by a special school experience which does not recognise their individuality. Getting this far has taken stamina and resilience worthy of a 'learning character' article in itself.

A pinch of SALT is not enough

At a St Marylebone governors' meeting in 2011, we were discussing how the school just didn't have the resource nor expertise to attend fully to the needs of students with such specific SEN within a mainstream setting. It was not that we didn't want to; rather, we had noticed the value and impact of employing two full-time speech and language therapists (or SALTs) to support these students – but felt that this was not enough. Speech, language and communication needs (or SLCN) are not always the primary need of pupils with learning difficulties. However, tackling these needs is often the only way to unlocking the ability and thinking of these pupils. It does not take a specialist to see this: if you cannot order and articulate your thoughts, indeed if you experience these thoughts in no linear form whatsoever, how will you ever be able to make sense of yourself and the world? It does, however, take a specialist to enable order and articulation in these young minds.

'We cannot afford a unit for these students – it risks isolation and exclusion from the mainstream,' was the concern.

'And the SALTs are needed all over the school, not just for students with statements,' added another.

'What if we set up a free school for them?' suggested our teacher governor. The eyes of our (now former) headteacher lit up. And from there, the journey began.

Bidding for best

Submitting a bid to become a special free school (or any free school) is no Sunday afternoon-at-laptop exercise. We set out our vision, our qualification to fulfil it, our proof of the need for the school, our entire curriculum, our enrichment programme, expected outcomes, key performance indicators, evidence of support from primary schools, local authority verification of need, a staffing structure, a sample timetable, an assessment framework, a governance structure, a financial plan, audit schedule and budget.

LEARNING THE LESSONS

The set-up, opening and operation of a new school is an adventure. The essentials, we learned, were:

- a clear project plan
- well-delineated roles and responsibilities
- the full understanding and commitment of the governing body
- regular communication with the EFA and local authority
- active promotion and publicity in the local community to ensure the nature of the school is understood
- visits to primary schools to develop relationships with SENCos and potential students for the school
- careful recruitment.

Having laid out in the bid the school's vision and ethos with such vigour, our common understanding of it was strong. As such, we were well placed to make sure these essential actions aligned with our central purpose.

1. For us, this was at once enriched and complicated by the new school's affiliation with St Marylebone (the mainstream secondary). Our vision for the new school was underpinned by the quality education and high aspiration which fuels St Marylebone. A major strength of the proposal was the sharing of outstanding secondary teachers with subject specialisms, whose teaching, supported by SEN specialists, would raise achievement

and aspiration for special school students. This came with a logistical challenge of timetabling across two schools for a provision which (for a time) did not yet exist and then (for a time) did not have a confirmed location and then (for a time) required transport between sites in central London. Such practicalities can be overcome if people are willing to work with you; a huge part of making this work was frequent, informative and upbeat communication to the mainstream staff. As a result, SMBS students benefit from not only SEN-trained teachers in English and maths, but a secondary SENCo with a science PhD, and outstanding teachers in art, drama, music, food technology and design and technology – in specialist facilities not ordinarily available to so niche a provision.

2. Our school chaplain also works for both schools, enhancing religious studies lessons with 'behind-the-altar' visits to the St Marylebone Church, establishing hugely important multifaith inclusivity. Graduates recruited as learning support assistants (LSAs) bring subject expertise from psychology to PE to politics – and gain an insight into mainstream and special education which has resulted in several becoming successfully trained to teach. Finance, HR and administration all operate across the two schools, providing not only economies of scale but really motivating professional development for the non-teaching staff in the set-up and design of systems for a new school.

3. The first eighteen months have not been plain sailing but, throughout, our high expectations have seen us through, rather than diluting the vision to make it easier. For example, pupils with SEN of this nature are more than usually disrupted by changes in environment, lack of play space (a feature of inner-London schools), new relationships and systems. St Marylebone (the mainstream school) is a teaching school; as such, a number of teachers and LSAs train with us before moving on or out of London. Since a number of staff were 'shared' in our first year, it was inevitable that the second year would begin with a number of new faces for pupils to cope with. Our school leaders' approach to this, however, was in-line with the school's mission: new teachers, six times a day and several times a year, is a common secondary school experience, so our SMBS pupils, supported by excellent communication, visuals and a nurturing and mindful approach, would be able to deal with this. Rather than dumb down the experience, we set out to make the full experience possible.

4. We also replicated St Marylebone's lack of complacency at SMBS by actively seeking external partnership and review. Visits from the tri-borough's speech and language resource, a number of experienced SEN consultants, the tri-borough lead for SEN and vulnerable children, our DfE review partner and former HMI inspection partner were used strategically as part of school improvement and evaluation. Securing premises which are better fit-for-purpose, albeit temporary, has made an enormous difference – and we look forward hugely to securing new permanent location in the future, with the help of the local authority and the Education Funding Agency.

As the new school grows, seeks to open its own sixth form centre, increases its staff team and anticipates another site move, the experience of pupils remains paramount. A number of challenges await: filling our 12 places every year with pupils whose needs we can support, recruiting high-quality SEN specialists with outstanding secondary school aspirations, securing premises, coping with increasingly tall and strong teenaged boys with SLCN, reaffirming and promoting the inclusive Christian values of the school in a way which enhances rather than threatens the Islamic faith of nearly half our cohort, preparing for Ofsted.

Yet our motivation is strong. We set out to supply a gap in provision. What is evident now, already, is that 22 young people who would have fallen into that gap have not. Instead, they are learning, thriving and growing.

Kathryn Pugh became headteacher of The St Marylebone CE School in January 2014. The St Marylebone CE School is an outstanding, comprehensive, girls' school in central London, with a mixed sixth form, serving an ethnically and socially diverse community of students of Christian faith, all other faiths and no faith.

www.stmaryleboneschool.com

Getting the values right

Getting the culture right

Tim Manly

Whether starting up a new school from scratch, taking over an established and successful one or seeking to re-invent or turnaround one which is in need of radical change, the challenges facing the leadership team will share common characteristics, relevant for all schools, and especially for all independent schools, be they private or state funded.

Excellence in education comes in many different shapes and forms: independent and maintained schools, with and without religious foundations, single sex and co-educational, large and small, boarding and day, selective and non-selective, special needs and elite performance. And yet, within truly successful schools there are certain strands which seem to run through all of them even though there is no one single model which trumps all others and could be described as 'the best'. The key challenge for leaders and their teams lies in deciding what the right model is going to be for their school and then implementing it. As in business or any other institution, the organisations that succeed usually do so because they reflect a harmonious marriage between the marketplace in which they operate, the assets and facilities which they have (both human and otherwise) and the ethos or culture which permeates through that organisation. In other words, it is not just about who we are or what we do but also why we do it. Successful businesses which have a very clear sense of their own philosophy and underlying culture are going to continue to be successful, able to adapt and change in a Darwinian way to the landscape as it shifts and shapes around them. Schools are no different.

So whether starting up a new school from scratch, taking over an established and successful one or seeking to re-invent or turnaround one which is in need of radical change, the challenge facing the leadership team will always be the same. Even where a franchise model is being utilised, there are likely to be

differences in terms of context which might well fundamentally alter how that school's philosophy manifests itself. To transfer a strongly and overtly Christian foundation into a Muslim or other religious context may not result in success. Likewise, it may prove challenging to replicate that leafy campus which is such a mainstay of so many British independent schools in Shanghai or Singapore. Nor should it be assumed that because the grammar school thrives in one particular town, it will automatically and readily transfer into another. However, it is vital that every school has a strong sense of what it aims to do with its pupils and stays true to that purpose. Shakespeare's Polonius would say 'To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man'.

So what is our story here at Hurstpierpoint College? It is not a new school. Founded as a classic Victorian public school for boys in the mid-19th century, the school has had a long, mostly illustrious, if not particularly noteworthy, history. Arriving at the school 10 years ago, shades of Victorian and post-Victorian education were still very apparent. The school admitted girls in 1995, well behind many other similar institutions, and until fairly recently could be categorised as being all boys, all boarding and fairly brutal. Numbers had been around 300-400 pupils in the senior section of the school with a junior school which had only recently grown beyond just years 7 and 8 to incorporate a pre-prep from reception upwards. In 2004 the school which ran from age 4-18 had a total number of circa 600 pupils. Financially, as with so many other schools of this type, life was a challenge. Yet there was much to recommend Hurst not just in terms of campus but in other ways as well. There was also not just a desire within the school itself to evolve and adapt but also a very real need to do so. In short, the marketplace was there in terms of the increasingly wealthy south east of England, the assets were considerable though with some clear deficiencies, but the philosophy of education at the college had not perhaps developed as much as it could have done from early days, if indeed there was ever considered to be a philosophy at all. Pupils did well or they didn't do well. Some achieved great things in sport, drama and music and others didn't. Many pupils stayed but many pupils left early. Often pupils had some idea of why they were here but this was rarely articulated other than by recourse to the school's High Anglican Christian tradition. So, where to start?

First, we had to decide what it was that we wanted our pupils to have experienced, achieved and gained by the end of their time at the school. An airy notion of 'maximising their potential' was inadequate. Without any sense of what that potential might be or how it might be made manifest, such things are unhelpful. What was clear was that we needed to articulate what a Hurst education was to staff, pupils and their parents. In short, and this is no different to any other school, it is about providing a strong academic core so that pupils would achieve the best grades that they could but it was also about the classic 'broader' education which has been more or less in vogue since the days of Thring and Arnold at Uppingham and Rugby. The sort of education which established young men and women to become successful, independent individuals with a good sense of themselves and the world around them, with an idea of how they wanted to shape their own lives and the lives of others along with the wherewithal to do just that. In other words, education at Hurst was to be about not just the academic but also about the development of those qualities, skills and values which would bring them success and happiness in later life. It is a truism that

parents want their children to leave school ready for the world, able to seize what is out there and to make the right choices. Fine ideas of course but how do you make this a reality? First, one has to articulate what is the aim. At Hurst, we rapidly drew up a list of behaviours which pupils should not do (The Big 12) as well as some of the overall aims and these would not surprise anybody. But we also developed the cultural challenge as follows:

Hurst cultural challenge

- to take the initiative and not wait for the push which may never come
- to be independent and true to yourself rather than be one of the unthinking herd
- to keep on keeping on rather than leave things unfinished or barely begun
- to be rigorous and not accept less than you can achieve
- to innovate rather than imitate or copy
- to create not destroy
- to be passionate and enthusiastic not apathetic and cynical
- to lead with integrity and courage rather than drift aimlessly
- to take a broader, long-term view beyond the here and now
- to support and care for, rather than undermine, one another
- to work in a team for the greater good
- to make the right things happen for you and everyone else.

The above was not to be slavishly followed or particularly monitored. Rather it is there to create an overall sense of how it is that we want our pupils to behave and develop. This cultural challenge was then re-enforced by various mantras. Mantras are important. They are handy, quite possibly clichéd, but readily understood and could be, and should be, repeated often. For instance we have mantras of *'achievement of personal bests', 'work hard, do good and engage', 'no one on the bench', 'no one beneath the radar'* . However, these like all the other words in the cultural challenge are meaningless unless they become a reality. So, having decided what the culture of the place was going to be and what we wanted our pupils to aspire to, it was then vital to ensure that the curricula existed both within and beyond the classroom to provide the vehicles to make these things

possible. Alongside the curricula it is vital to ensure that the timetable and the allocation of time and resources enables the curricula to happen. So, out of our educational philosophy which was to affect every pupil came programmes which define us. Days are long at the school so that we can put in place time not just for academic learning but also for sport, creative and performing arts, activities, tutoring and time within our communities. These are all vital components of delivering our philosophy. These then also shape our needs when it comes to the assets, both staffing and facilities. The facilities do not come first in the planning. Rather, they must be shaped by the vision based on the philosophy of a school.

The above makes it all sound so simple. In some ways it is and some ways it isn't. The simple bit lies in deciding what you believe in should be the best educational experience for the children in your care. It is also exciting and invigorating and vital to get buy-in from the staff, pupils and parents. Then, the hardest bit, you have to deliver. Almost every year at the school, we have changed things and moved them on. Schools are evolutionary. Occasionally, I visit schools where there seems to be a sense that they are there and no change is required. Complacency and conservatism are the twin destroyers not just of schools but of any institution. The mentality must always be there to try and improve what you do.

So what have we learned? In short the steps are as follows:

1. Define the philosophy and culture which is right for your school and marketplace.
2. Articulate it clearly to all stakeholders.
3. Repeat and communicate it on every occasion.
4. Make it real through the curricula, academic and otherwise, through the systems and structures of the place.
5. Always celebrate and highlight pupils, staff and the school who are on message, getting it right and succeeding.
6. Use mantras as well as the formalised statements and aims.
7. Always be prepared to evolve and develop while staying true to yourself.
8. Always be sincere and act with integrity and do not be tempted to compromise.

What are the problems to avoid?

1. You need to know your marketplace.
2. Be realistic about the assets that are likely to be available to you and how these are going to fit with your vision.
3. Recruit carefully. Every dynamic school and institution is to a greater or lesser degree, something of a cult. Although you want disrupters and challengers, basically you want people who will buy into what you are doing and commit to it, whether staff, parents or pupils.
4. Never assume that everything is sorted and everyone knows what they are supposed to be doing.
5. Don't be embarrassed to constantly articulate what it is that the school is about, even to the point of virtual parody.
6. If you get it wrong, do not be afraid to say so. Pull everyone back in to coalesce around the school's philosophy and culture.

Looking back over the last few years at Hurst and at previous schools in my career, the best ones have undoubtedly been where the school (governors particularly) and the staff have had a certain anxiety that they could do better but, at the same time, have a very strong sense of the identity of their school and the philosophy behind that school. Leading a school is not just a job to be completed and then forgotten about, rather heads and governors are custodians of a philosophy and vision. If the culture is right in a school then not only will the pupils thrive but so will the school and there will be a pride in the place and a sense of goodwill which is beyond money.

Tim Manly has been headmaster of Hurstpierpoint College since January 2005, having previously been at Sevenoaks and Oakham. He was educated at St Edward's School, Oxford and then went to Oriel College, Oxford and the LSE. Hurstpierpoint College was founded in 1849 as the second of Nathaniel Woodard's schools. The college is co-educational and comprises a senior school, preparatory school and pre-preparatory school, with some 1080 pupils in total.

www.hppc.co.uk

PUPILS' GUIDE

Introduction by the headmaster

Hurst is a wonderful school in which to live and work. However, like all communities there is a need for certain rules, regulations and regimes to ensure that our community runs both harmoniously and effectively for the benefit of the community as a whole as well as the individuals within it. This guide is designed to enable you to understand how our community works and what your role and responsibilities are within it. Clearly, the rules cannot cover all eventualities but if you are true to yourself and you respect those around you, the community and institution in which we live then all will be well. Respect and common sense lie at the base of all we do here.

Statement of aims

We expect you to enjoy your time here and to thrive and excel. You will join strong communities, make friendships that last a lifetime and take away memories that you will value over the years ahead.

However, underpinning everything we do, is the knowledge that school is not an end in itself but a preparation for the future. Our overriding focus is to ensure that when the moment comes for you to leave, that you are ready for the challenges that lie ahead and properly equipped to make a success of your future life.

And so, first of all, we recognise that a pupil's grades will dictate the options open to them after Hurst. We believe that all our pupils must be given every opportunity to achieve the best possible grades so that they can progress to the university of their choice or move successfully straight into the world of commerce.

Secondly, and as importantly, we aim to develop those skills, qualities and values which will turn such paper qualifications into success and also help to promote happiness in later life. Academic grades will open the next door, but they will do no more than that and are no guarantee of success thereafter. It is skills such as problem-solving, analysis, communication, persuasion, personal organisation and the ability to work with others that will drive success in the wider world. Likewise, it is those great qualities of confidence, self-reliance, perseverance and openness to new ideas and a readiness to take the initiative, to innovate and to make things happen that will enable you to achieve where others might falter. It is our belief that such qualities and skills are often developed outside the classroom through non-academic activities.

Finally, we want you to develop certain values: a sense of duty, an awareness of right and wrong and a respect for others.

Yes, we want you to be ambitious with a clear sense of purpose, but we also want you to develop a balanced view of life that values the needs of both the individual and the wider community. I also hope that you will consider your own faith and the spiritual dimension to your life.

These, then, are the key elements of a Hurst education and, like the first-rate institutions and businesses you will eventually join, we constantly review the excellence of our provision. Are our pupils enjoying and benefiting fully from their time here? Will they be in the best position to choose their own future when they come to leave? Will they be equipped and ready for what lies ahead?

But, you also have a critical role to play in your own education. To make the most of your time at Hurst, you should take the initiative in what you do and be ready to seize the opportunities open to you. Increasingly, you should take responsibility for your lives and, as you gain clear self-knowledge, develop a clear vision of what you wish to achieve for yourself and others as well as how to achieve it.

Your time at Hurst should be challenging, exciting, hard work and rewarding.

Laying the foundations and delivering the vision

Paul Hollingum

The feelings associated with being appointed to the post of principal of a new school which has still not been built, and, in my case, with the apparent luxury of twenty months before opening, are hard to put into words: exciting, scary, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. My heart certainly missed several beats, not just because I suffer from an atrial fibrillation, but the prospect was actually beyond my imagining. Of course, imagination is what you need if you are starting with a blank piece of paper, or is it?

The blank piece of paper is, of course, the unseen undergarment of the 'emperor's new clothes'. There is no blank piece of paper! In my case there had been a pressure group for 20 years, who clearly knew what they wanted. There was a sponsor who was putting up the then prerequisite £2 million, who had clearly marked the paper. Unusually, in our case there was a local authority, who for their own expediency's sake had joined the party. After they had all had their say there wasn't much room left on the paper. And of course, in order to build St Mary Magdalene Academy as an all-through school there was the significant matter of closing a very successful primary school to make way for the unknown quantity of an all-through school: not surprisingly, the primary parents, staff, students and governors wrote a lot on the paper!

When you are appointed you are not given a blank sheet of paper but instead something more akin to a scrabble board onto which various different people have placed their key words, not all of which actually intersect with each other, and of which you are required to make some sense. The art is then to impose some discipline on these largely unconnected themes, introduce your own ideas which can hopefully hold everything together and create a coherent vision which can be accepted by the stakeholders and understood by prospective students and

parents. This final piece is the key because in the first instance (and probably for the first five years) you will be selling something without substance: the emperor's new clothes.

The key is to find a single unifying value that can hold everything together. So, what was our magical value that could hold everything together and keep the peace between all the parties and could meet the aspirations of the unusual alliance? In our case it was to be our specialism: 'global citizenship'. This became the unifying concept that brought and still holds together every feature of what we do.

Our sponsors, the Church of England, could see quite clearly how the values of a Christian community of learning can be lived out by a commitment to creating global citizens, creators of a worthy 'Kingdom of God'. For those interested in the curriculum it would drive the determination to be an International Baccalaureate World School offering both the Primary Years Programme and the prestigious Diploma Programme in the sixth form. For those who had planted 'standards' (scoring lots of points in the process) on the scrabble board, the Diploma Programme and building a curriculum that would feed it met every academic aspiration you could think of! Then of course, there are the parents who want a community which is safe and secure for their youngsters. What's not to like about global citizenship? Everything we did was ultimately to be framed by our understanding of this.

The starting point on the journey of opening a new school is therefore wisdom, not imagination, and if you can blend some humility with that, it will go a long way in bringing together all those who want to be and who are rightfully involved in the process of building the new school.

So, how was it all brought together? A great deal of discussion, clarifying, re-drafting and revisiting was required. So meetings with the key stakeholders and those who were to become the first governors were required. This was a huge commitment on the part of the non-executives, at this stage the majority of

those involved. The first step in our case was to build a powerhouse of committed people. But of course this has its downsides: working with large groups isn't always the way to get things done and commitment comes with a price, the price of listening to and taking on board the ideas of the committed, usually very influential, people in their own fields. It was therefore important to establish key relationships that would progress our objectives, and in my case there were two.

First of all was the appointment of an incredibly talented chair of governors who had not been associated with the project and was coming fresh to the challenge without a specific link to any of the existing power groups, including me as principal.

Secondly, and probably more astonishing for me in terms of the impact, was the appointment of an experienced public relations guru. Although the focus was on public relations, the key role of this appointment was to support all aspects of communication, so you might call this person a communications manager.

The sponsors approached a high-profile, ordained minister used to being both in the public eye and to managing difficult issues within the work environment. The key gifts she brought were an amazing thirst for knowledge of the educational world, a fantastic ability to listen to and reflect the ideas of all stakeholders and the priceless skill of being able to herd cats. This allowed her to be the force that brought things together in a way which I doubt anyone else could have done. In the early years we obviously spent a great deal of time together going over things, clarifying them and redefining them in a way which met everybody's expectations. This was a great test of my own powers of reasoning and argument. I suppose there was a sense that having already been a headteacher I thought I knew most things; I was quick to learn that I was at the bottom of a steep learning curve too. A question posed to our chair of governors was: how we might 'personify the drive to create global citizens' by the construction of a statement of intent (motto).

As a Church of England academy, open to those of all faith and none, finding a biblical reference which is clearly inclusive, highlights Christian values,

universal values and has strong links to citizenship as well as being quite snappy, is not as easy as it sounds, but she found it:

> *'Show by a good life that your works are done by gentleness born of wisdom'*
> ***James 3:13***

Jacqui Christian had a successful career in public relations before moving into consultancy and joined the project at a very early stage, even before Lucy Winkett, chair of governors. She had the added advantage of having two primary school-aged children and was in the group of potential parents we would be trying to reach. She became the touchstone I used to refine the messages to all the different audiences we were aiming to reach: how the same thing should be presented to governors, to staff, to parents, potential parents, the community. The importance of this element cannot be underestimated when the school is in fact just you to start with: no building, no teachers, no curriculum map, no results. You are selling the emperor's new clothes and there is nothing to show other than you!

It is obvious that however large your ego is, you can't do everything yourself, nor do you know all the answers: so somewhere along the line you need to pick your key, trusted allies whose wisdom and judgement you value. Lucy and Jacqui were those for me.

LEARNING THE LESSONS

We are now into our eighth year of operation and the most obvious reflection that I can make is that the vision and values of the academy are the same as they were, and if anything are even stronger. The truth is also that some of the fantastic strategies and tactics we had from the start have now disappeared without trace. This is for me the first important lesson: if you were to take over a school as a senior leader and something were not working as well as you would like, you would change it. Just because something you did was 'visionary' when you started, doesn't mean you should carry on with it if you could do it better another way.

Be flexible

This was a hard lesson and a painful one. Our vision was of an 'integrated humanities and English curriculum' in years 7 and 8 which we called 'Homebase' and was modelled as a development of the very best primary practice. The transition would be a nurturing process: the same teacher would have the class for ten hours a week. There would be no dip (the great concern about progress in key stage 3). We built an exciting study programme around the themes in the 'Global school curriculum'. We were proud of our achievement until a new senior leader asked the question, 'Are they making enough progress in either English or the individual humanities subjects?' In September 2014, after much debate, there are only archaeological signs of Homebase (the H in a number of room signs), separate English is accelerating progress (should I be surprised at that?) and the same is true of the humanities.

Make the offer unique

Of course, a great deal remains of strategies to create a school with global citizenship at its heart and our success both in the primary phase and sixth form phase in delivering the IB programmes has a significant part to play in setting us apart from the vast majority schools. In itself this has been the catalyst for our curriculum planning: breadth and balance, languages for everybody (seven languages on offer), a commitment to separate sciences, continued study of mathematics and English in the sixth form, pedagogy, independent learning, extended writing, and the importance of argument. This particular offer has made a real difference to the families of north London; it is a unique offer.

Develop strong partnerships to fulfil vision

We have always said that you cannot profess to strive for global citizenship if you do not work with global partners and our work with schools around the globe gives an invaluable opportunity to work with adults and children from each of the continents. It gives a real sense of purpose, a tangible outcome in our desire to break down barriers and improve relationships in the world in which we live, which in reality is shrinking every day.

Be true to your values

The important thing in leading the school is that subsequent changes still need to fulfil the ethos and values established at the start. When the inspirational chair of governors leaves, when the founding principal moves on, the new leaders, executive and non-executive, have to frame their new 'leading edge' ideas within the vision and ethos established at the outset. The question for them in our case will always be how this change supports our unifying principle, global citizenship, and our underlying statement of intent for all members of the community: 'Show by a good life your works are done by gentleness born of wisdom'.

Focus on the best outcomes for the students

When you start out on this road everything is possible. As the conductor you will have the opportunity to lead your orchestra wherever you want, so don't look back with regret that you didn't do something you really value (because you can't do everything); instead be clear what it is you think will lead to the best outcomes for those you serve and over time don't be afraid to admit that there might be a better way of getting the outcomes you want.

Paul Hollingum is executive director of St Mary Magdalene Educational Partnership Board. He was appointed in September 2006 to be the founding principal of St Mary Magdalene Academy: an all-through school for students from 4-18. The provision has developed through the addition of an early years centre and a special free school (The Courtyard) for high-functioning ASD students.

www.smmacademy.org

King Solomon International Business School

Cheron Byfield

King Solomon's vision

King Solomon International Business School is a free school set to open in September 2015 in central Birmingham. The school's vision is to achieve academic excellence, develop students with exemplary character and prepare them to effectively live, work and trade in the global economy. It will be Christian in its ethos, international in its outlook. King Solomon's offering adds to parental local choice in the Birmingham schools landscape as it is Birmingham's first free Christian, all-through, international baccalaureate and international business school.

All-through school models, although traditionally utilised in private schools, are becoming increasingly popular in mainstream state schools and among parents because of the huge benefits they have for students. Being an all-through school enables continuity and progression of King Solomon's values and ethos throughout all phases of the school and enables students to have a smooth transition throughout each stage, thus minimising the disruptions to their learning. In addition, it will enable teachers to get to know the students very well, helping them to effectively personalise students learning, leading to successful outcomes.

This ecumenical Christian school places Christianity at centre stage, as implicitly reflected in its ethos and values and explicitly in its plans for: collective worship, a high-profile school chapel, the employment of a school chaplain, and the display of Christian symbols. The Christian ethos of the school will create an environment which cultivates virtues of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, all of which are conducive to a positive learning environment for students and staff to excel. The faith element

of the school, based on the findings from parental surveys and the statutory consultation exercise, is set to be the most attractive feature of the school. However, it needs to be emphasised that King Solomon remains an inclusive school and welcomes students from other faiths as well as those with no faith.

King Solomon's will specialise in international business and enterprise and work closely with international businesses to ensure that our students develop skills aligned to the changing business needs of the 21st century and to equip students with the knowledge and skills to be able to effectively live, work and trade in the global economy.

Your vision needs to be distinctive

The vision for King Solomon evolved over a seven-year period. Its sponsor/proposer group, Excell3, was established with strong moral purpose, manifested in its mission of raising the academic aspirations and achievement of economically and socially disadvantaged children and young people, creating advantage for the disadvantaged. However, having become an approved academy sponsor, we ran into local political opposition and two academy projects were abandoned before a free school project received the green light.

Do your research to identify a gap in the market

Through research, surveys and our knowledge of the community, we identified a gap in the school marketplace for a school with a focus on international business and enterprise and decided that this focus should be reflected in the vision as well as in the name of the school. King Solomon of the Bible, a highly successful international business trader, is renowned today for his wisdom. We also engaged the services of free school specialist consultants to critique our proposals before submission.

Your curriculum offer should evolve from the vision

Market analysis spearheaded the exploration of an international educational programme to underpin the international business focus. We had by this time decided to adopt the all-through school model, and hence opted for the IB,

despite the financial costs associated with it, because it offers values-based international educational programmes for primary, secondary and sixth form students.

Consult with stakeholders, not least potential parents

Throughout this process of developing the vision, we consulted widely with parents. Although the IB was not widely known, our team effectively sold its benefits and gained parental support. The main concern raised by parents was that the IB Diploma Programme was not suited for students who were more vocationally oriented. We therefore decided to include level 3 vocational diploma courses into our curriculum offer. However, shortly afterwards the IB introduced a new and exciting development to its IB programmes, the IB Career Related Certificate (IBCC), a vocational programme. This now enabled us to offer an IB international qualification to students who would normally opt for vocational courses.

Work with established partners to deliver your vision

In the case of our free school we sought to work with both educational (Woodard Corporation) and national and international business partners. We gained the backing from a range of international companies located both in the UK and abroad (e.g. Jaguar).

Recruit and induct experienced high-calibre governors with appropriate diversity of skills and contacts

It is key to appoint governors who understand their responsibilities and are focused on their core strategic functions. We successfully recruited a strong body of trust members, governors and a pre-opening project team with the capacity and capability to lead the school. Our diverse governing body represents the community we serve as well as having strong educational and business links.

Be adaptable, since original visions need fine tuning

We saw the connection between character development, good behaviour and academic success and we refined our vision to incorporate character development, using the Fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) with its nine character virtues (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control) as the framework for developing character. Such was the strength of our conviction that character development was also woven into the slogan of the school.

Have resolve and flexibility

We resolved to establish the school despite whatever knockbacks came our way and hence remained committed; we persevered, and worked hard to meet the constantly changing DfE criteria. Our experience of setting up a school under the academies programme had been fraught with challenges, but so too were our experiences of the free schools programme, as it took the submission and resubmissions of four applications over a seven-year period before approval was obtained to open King Solomon. Our plans to offer the IB in each phase of the school were curtailed by the feedback we obtained from the DfE, as in their eyes this was innovation gone too far; no other mainstream state school in the country offered the IB in all phases. Determined to remain true to our vision, we decided to offer the IB in the sixth form only while creatively embedding the IB learner profile into the national curriculum offered in the primary and secondary school.

Do your research

Before we submitted a bid to the DfE we sought advice from education specialists, visited an all-through IB school and carefully read the DfE's and New School Network's free schools guidance notes and adopted our proposal accordingly, each time demonstrating how we had changed our application in response to the feedback we received from the DfE before resubmitting our proposal.

Choose the school leader carefully

We made what some considered to be an audacious decision to go to the open market to recruit a principal for a post that in effect did not yet exist, before submitting our proposal, as we recognised that having a principal would strengthen our proposal. We were successful in making a provisional appointment. However, our original principal designate stepped down before the funding agreement was signed and we have had to carry out subsequent recruitment processes. Key issues to consider include: ensuring that the principal designate (a) can develop the schools' vision into a fully developed education brief; (b) has the skills and capacity to manage the process of planning for a school to open from scratch, including the recruitment of all staff; (c) has the necessary expertise to bring your vision to life, including in our case the opening of an all-through school and marketing your brand new school to parents; (d) has high-quality networking skills, to work with many stakeholders (including the DfE, business leaders and project managers) to bring your school to life. They will need to build effective networks and relationships with other schools, community groups and external agencies which are all essential before the school is even open.

What we wish we had done with hindsight

There is one significant thing we wished we had done in hindsight and that is to have explored the option of raising funds to purchase our own school building. Although such an acquisition would have had to be backed up with a sound business plan to include plans for alternative use of the building, should the need arise, having our own building would have circumvented some of the challenges we faced in securing an appropriate site to align with our vision.

Dr Cheron Byfield is a trust member and governor of King Solomon International Business School, and is the CEO of Excell3, a charity which seeks to raise the academic aspirations and achievement of less advantaged children and young people. The school is an all-through, Christian, international business IB world free school catering for 1050 children.

www.kingsolomonibs.com

Getting the curriculum right

Principled curriculum design

Professor Dylan Wiliam

This article first appeared in full in SSAT's Redesigning Schooling series of pamphlets, published in 2013-2014. For more information about SSAT's extensive campaign to support schools in shaping the education system of the future, including a list of all the titles in the series, please visit the website: **www.ssatuk.co.uk/redesigning-schooling**

Principles of curriculum design

Everyone will have their own ideas about what the most important principles of curriculum design are. The more principles one has, the more likely the list is to be comprehensive but the more unwieldy it will be. A short list would be easy to use, but would miss out important aspects of good curricula that need to be borne in mind. In this sense, any list of principles of curriculum design can be thought of as a model of curriculum, and as the statistician George Box remarked, 'All models are wrong, but some are useful.' In this chapter, I discuss the seven principles of curriculum design that I think are most helpful and powerful in looking critically at school curricula. The list is not intended to be definitive – indeed I expect that readers will delete some and add others as they use the principles in their work – but I hope that it proves a reasonable starting point for schools.

Balanced

The rather terrifying thing about being involved in education at the present time is that we are the first generation of educators who know we have no idea

what we are doing. In the past, education systems were designed to produce people who could act effectively in the world as it existed then – a perfectly sensible strategy for a stable world, but a poor one for one in rapid flux.

The speed of change is hard to grasp. In 1978, around 7 million people were employed in manufacturing in the UK, while today it is well below 3 million. In other words, over the last 35 years, we have lost well over 300 manufacturing jobs every single day. This is often assumed to be because 'we don't make stuff anymore' but this is not true. The value of UK manufactures has grown, in real terms, pretty steadily over the past 40 years, and the UK is still – in value terms at least – one of the world's top ten manufacturers. We still make things, but we don't use so many people to do so anymore.

While jobs may be being automated or exported to other countries with lower labour costs, new jobs are being created all the time. According to one estimate, at the moment there are over 300,000 people employed in writing apps for smartphones (Economist, 2012); jobs that did not exist even five years ago.

The problem is that although we know that the changes in the world will continue, and possibly even accelerate, we have no idea what is coming. Even as little as ten years ago, hardly anyone would have backed Wikipedia rather than Microsoft's Encarta encyclopaedia and yet today, Wikipedia goes from strength to strength, while Encarta was closed down in 2009. As Nils Bohr the physicist once said, 'Prediction is hard, especially about the future.' Our education system has to prepare our students for a world we cannot imagine:

'So the model that says learn while you're at school, while you're young, the skills that you will apply during your lifetime is no longer tenable. The skills that you can learn when you're at school will not be applicable. They will be obsolete by the time you get into the workplace and need them, except for one skill. The one really competitive skill is the skill of being able to learn. It is the skill of being able not to give the right answer to questions about what you were taught in school, but to make the right response to situations that are outside the scope of what you were taught in school. We need to produce people who know how to act when they're faced with situations for which they were not specifically prepared.' (Papert, 1998; my emphasis)

Because we have no idea what is coming, we have to 'future-proof' our students, and the way to do that is with a broad and balanced curriculum. The current legal requirement for state schools in England is for:

> 'a balanced and broadly based curriculum which: (a) promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and (b) prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.'
>
> **Education Act 2002 section 78**

This suggests that every school's curriculum should promote the intellectual, moral, spiritual, aesthetic, creative, emotional and physical development of the child. The traditional disciplines of language, arts, mathematics, science, history, geography should of course figure strongly, but the subjects that are sometimes called the creative arts (dance, drama, music, art) are just as important. Indeed, given the increasing capability of technology to do almost anything that can be reduced to routines, it may be that the greatest contributions to economic growth will in the future come from the creative arts.

And as well as the traditional 'school subjects' there are many other selections we could make from culture including geology, astronomy, law, psychology, sociology and politics.

Rigorous

Any subject matter can be taught in a way that is faithful to the discipline or field from which it is drawn. Or it can be taught in a way that may well teach students something, but does not advance, or in important ways hinders, the future development of their capability in that discipline or field. For example, if a class is studying a Shakespeare play, then watching a film of the play, and studying one or two scenes in detail, may well teach students something about the play, and it may even increase their grades on a GCSE English literature examination. But what is happening in the classroom is not faithful to the discipline of English literature.

It is often assumed that the subject disciplines in our schools – English,

mathematics, science, history, geography and so on – are arbitrary. It is assumed that we have these subjects rather than others (e.g. the seven traditional 'liberal arts': grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music) because of some random decisions taken in the past. However, this is far from the case. The traditional school disciplines represent powerful – and qualitatively different – ways of thinking about the world.

The word 'discipline' is important here because it connotes both a subject, and the commitment that is needed to acquire the ways of thinking emphasised by the subject. For example, on a cold day, most people would explain their perception of the effect of the wind as being caused by the cold wind coming through their clothes, while anyone who has been trained as a physicist would explain this as heat being carried away from the body. Both explanations are, in some sense, correct, but the physicist's explanation is more powerful, in that thinking about heat, rather than cold, tends to produce more accurate answers to similar questions. (It is also more likely to support practical application of the information). The important point here is that such thinking does not develop naturally – if it did there would be no need to teach physics in our schools. Rather it is the result of becoming enculturated into the subject, and this requires hard work.

To be rigorous, therefore, a curriculum needs to develop disciplinary habits of mind – powerful ways of thinking that are developed through sustained engagement with the discipline. Examples are inverse operations in mathematics, cause and effect in science, structure and agency in sociology, provenance and context in history, and central tendency and dispersion in statistics. These are important and powerful tools for thinking, and can be developed only through sustained engagement with the discipline. Without sound disciplinary foundations, interdisciplinary work becomes trivialised and watered down. Effective interdisciplinary work is multidisciplinary, drawing on the strengths, habits of mind, and tools that each discipline contributes.

Coherent

The requirement for a rigorous curriculum described in the previous section is very much focused on the internal logic of each discipline or subject.

But for the educational experiences of young people to be meaningful, it is also necessary to ensure that what they experience in the different activities they engage in is coherent. This is important because unless explicit connections are made between the different experiences young people encounter in school, they are likely to see them as unconnected. Students often see coordinates in mathematics as unrelated to map references in geography, when the underlying ideas are identical. This often entails concessions and compromises. For example, the mathematics teachers may feel that equations and graphs are best taught in year 9, but if the science teachers need to use equations and graphs in year 8, there is a problem. Of course the science teachers could teach equations and graphs themselves, but the danger then is that this is done in a way that differs slightly from the approach taken by the mathematics teachers. For example, the mathematics teachers might use a functional approach to graphs, such as x->4x + 3 while the science teachers use equations, such as y = 4x + 3. Unless the connections are explicitly made for the students, they are likely to see graphs in science as different from graphs in mathematics.

The connections between different aspects of the curriculum are especially important in the development of reading. In the early years of primary school, children acquire the skills of decoding text, but once the basic decoding skills are acquired, reading is much more about knowing what is being described rather than being able to recognise words. To illustrate this, E.D. Hirsch gives the following example of a multiple-choice comprehension question.

> 'A manifold, contained in an intuition which I call mine, is represented, by means of the synthesis of the understanding, as belonging to the necessary unity of self-consciousness; and this is effected by means of the category.'

What is the main idea of this passage?
Without a manifold, one cannot call an intuition 'mine.'
Intuition must precede understanding.
Intuition must occur through a category.
Self-consciousness is necessary to understanding.'

Most adults will have little difficulty with the words in the paragraph (which is taken from Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*), with the possible exception of the word 'manifold', which is used by Kant to describe a collection of elements of sensation. But even being told this doesn't help much. The problem is not with decoding, but with forming a mental representation of what is being discussed. Unless one understands the point that Kant was trying to make here – that intuitions occur through categories – one cannot even begin to make sense of the passage.

Hirsch describes the situation like this:

> 'Comprehension depends on constructing a mental model that makes the elements fall into place and, equally important, enables the listener or reader to supply essential information that is not explicitly stated. In language use, there is always a great deal that is left unsaid and must be inferred. This means that communication depends on both sides, writer and reader, sharing a basis of unspoken knowledge. This large dimension of tacit knowledge is precisely what is not being taught adequately in our schools.'
>
> **Hirsch, 2009: p.15**

As Hollis Scarborough (2001) points out, learning to read is not just learning to recognise words through sight recognition, decoding, and phonemic awareness. It also requires comprehending language, which involves vocabulary, verbal reasoning, literacy knowledge (knowing about print concepts and genres), knowledge of language structure (syntax, grammar, etc.), and background knowledge of the subject of the text. As the basic word recognition processes become increasingly automatic, the language comprehension processes become increasingly strategic, relying on background knowledge.

Vertically integrated

A curriculum could be balanced, rigorous (in that it was faithful to the disciplines or subjects on which it draws), coherent (in that the totality of experiences mutually reinforce each other) and yet might still be inadequate

because it failed to promote progression in learning. In other words, it needs to be clear how material taught at one point in time builds on materials taught earlier, and feeds in to what is to be taught later. Every curriculum needs to have a clear model of what it is that gets better when someone 'gets better' at a discipline or subject.

In the first national curriculum for science in England, for example, there was a particularly clear model of progression in the understanding of light (Black, 1995).

- Know that light comes from different sources.
- Know that light passes through some materials and not others, and that when it does not, shadows may be formed.
- Know that light can be made to change direction, and that shiny surfaces can form images.
- Know that light travels in straight lines, and this can be used to explain the formation of shadows.
- Understand how light is reflected.
- Understand how prisms and lenses refract and disperse light.
- Be able to describe how simple optical devices work.
- Understand refraction as an effect of different velocities in different media.
- Understand the processes of dispersion, interference, diffraction and polarisation of light.

One can quibble with details of this progression, but the important thing is that such a framework provides a clear plan for the development of one aspect of scientific thinking over a period of at least ten years.

The problem with levels of achievement, at least as specified in the national curriculum, is that they were too often determined by the requirement that the levels should be specified so that students achieve one level every two years on average. The steps in development are rarely so neatly spaced, so the removal of levels from the national curriculum allows schools to decide on curricular progressions that suit their students and their circumstances. Obviously, the logic

of the subject matter should be the most important determinant of the model of progression, but many schools have found the SOLO taxonomy (Biggs & Collis, 1982) helpful in deciding how hard something might be (so that something can be placed into the curriculum at an appropriate level) and also what might come before, or next.

At the detail level of classroom practice, in designing teaching to promote progression, there is no substitute for teachers planning lessons collaboratively, as is practised in lesson study in Japan (Lewis, 2002; Fernandez & Yoshida, 2004). What is particularly intriguing about lesson study, as practised in Japan, is the extraordinary amount of time teachers spend discussing what seem to be relatively minor issues. For example, in the UK, mathematics teachers tend to teach the area of a triangle before teaching the area of a parallelogram. However, as a result of extensive investigation and research, Japanese teachers have determined that it makes much more sense to teach the area of a parallelogram before the area of a triangle. Those not interested in the reason can skip to the next paragraph, but the crucial observation is: two versions of the same triangle can always be fitted to give a parallelogram; but only when the triangle is a right-angled triangle can two versions of the triangle be fitted to make a rectangle.

Careful sequencing of topics leads to clearer connections between different topics, fewer things for students to remember, and therefore more effective learning. But this kind of careful sequencing takes planning, and is best done as a collaborative venture between teachers.

In devising curricular progressions, it is important to realise that very few curricular sequences are universal, even in a subject as linear as mathematics. It would not make sense to attempt to teach children to multiply before they can add, but while it might be assumed that one should teach multiplication before division, in fact the situation is a little more complex. It turns out that although multiplication is computationally more straightforward than division (you have to be able to multiply in order to be able to divide), conceptually, division is more straightforward than multiplication. This was demonstrated in the Concepts in Secondary Mathematics and Science (CSMS) research (Hart, 1981). One innovative aspect of the research was that students were asked to construct stories concerning arithmetic facts. The researchers found that many

students could construct a story for a division such as 12 ÷ 3 = 4 (e.g. 'there were 12 sweets shared between three people so they got four each'). But fewer could do so for a multiplication such as 3 x 4 = 12 (they said things like 'Jane had three sweets and John had four sweets, so they timesed them to get 12 sweets'). In a computational approach to multiplication and division, multiplication should precede division, but in a conceptual approach, it may make more sense to start with division. The sequence in which we teach things matters, and requires careful thought.

One issue that often comes up in the construction of curricula that are designed to promote progression in learning is the idea of the spiral curriculum. The phrase is often used to justify teaching students material that might come in useful later on. Too frequently, the result is wasteful, ineffective, or both. Either students are exposed to material that is beyond their grasp but which they revisit periodically until they do (not so much a spiral curriculum as a circular one). Or, the material is watered down until it is accessible to the students, but it then bears little relationship to the discipline or subject. For this reason, it is useful to review what Jerome Bruner, who invented the term, said about it.

> 'If one respects the ways of thought of the growing child, if one is courteous enough to translate material into his logical forms and challenging enough to tempt him in advance, then it is possible to introduce him at an early age to the ideas and styles that in later life make an educated man. We might ask, as a criterion for any subject taught in primary school, whether, when fully developed, it is worth an adult's knowing, and whether having known it as a child makes a person a better adult. If the answer to both questions is negative or ambiguous, then the matter is cluttering the curriculum.'
>
> **Bruner, 1960: p.52; my emphasis**

The condition that Bruner imposes – that material can be justified only if not having learned it as a child, rather than later, disadvantages the adult – would rule out most of what is today justified by appeal to the spiral curriculum. Indeed, one of the interesting differences between the curricula of high-performing

countries and those that do less well in international comparisons is the high-performing countries tend to teach the same material in fewer years (Schmidt et al., 1997). They wait until the students are ready for the material, and then teach it properly. This brings us on to the need for the curriculum to be appropriate.

Appropriate

The rate at which children learn varies to quite an extraordinary degree. This is illustrated by Figure 1, which shows the proportion of children of different ages participating in the Leverhulme Numeracy Research Programme able to correctly add 860 and 570 using pencil and paper. Around 15% of students are able to do this early in year 2, but not until the end of year 6 does the proportion of students able to answer this question correctly reach 90%. Since the proportion of students able to answer this question correctly increases by 75% in five years, the annual increase in the proportion of students able to do this is just 15%. Or, to put it another way, in a class of 30 students, four or five students are likely to learn this in any given year, despite the fact that teachers are teaching this every single year.

Many schools respond to this large variation in student achievement by grouping students by ability, which is generally called 'streaming' where the students are in the same general ability groups for all subjects, and 'setting' where the students are grouped differently for different subjects, depending on their achievement in that subject. There is a large literature on the effects of grouping students by ability that suggests that on average it produces gains for the highest achievers at the expense of losses for lower achievers. Since the losses for the lower achievers tend to be greater than the gains for higher achievers, the net effect of grouping students by ability is to slightly reduce average achievement, but to increase the range of achievement in a year group. What is less well understood is how the curricula experienced by students in different sets differ.

Such evidence as there is suggests that students in the lower sets receive a curriculum that is less rich, and, in Guy Claxton's terms, epistemically narrow (Boaler, Wiliam & Brown, 2000). The objective is therefore to provide an appropriate level of challenge for students while also taking into account what is known about the way in which students learn, so as to avoid making unreasonable demands on students.

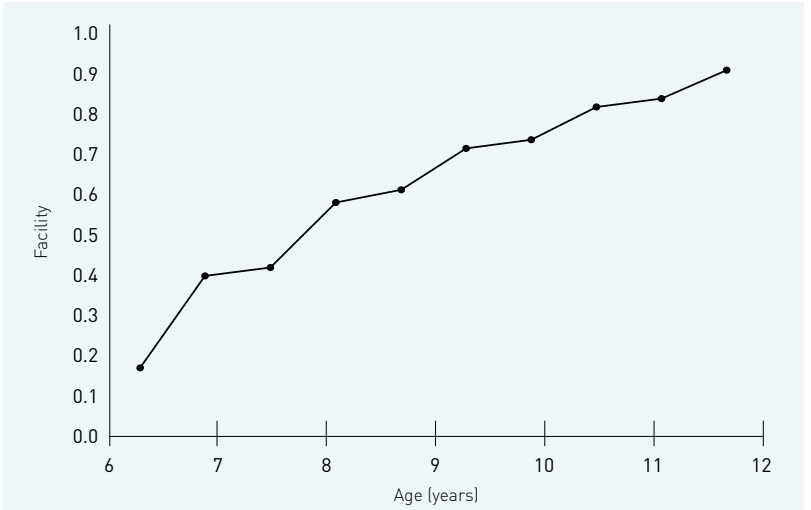

Figure 1: Increase in proportion of students able to add 860 to 570, by age

In recent years, a number of schools have addressed this issue through curricula based on 'stage not age'. Students are grouped with students of similar achievement irrespective of their age. However, before grouping students by stage rather than age, and determining what curricula are appropriate for different students, it is important to understand that the dimensions of progression in a curriculum can be different in different subjects, or even in different aspects of the same subject. A 'stage not age' approach is not likely to be equally appropriate to all aspects of the curriculum for a particular subject.

Focused

One of the most common complaints that teachers make about the curriculum they are teaching is that it is too full. Especially in science, but also in other subjects, there is a great deal of material to be taught, and this often results in a curriculum that is, in William Schmidt's memorable phrase, 'a mile wide and an inch deep' (Schmidt, McKnight, & Raizen, 1997). However, the same teachers who complain about an overfull curriculum also resist the removal of any topics from the curriculum – because they are seen as important. This is why the quotation from Sir Richard Livingston discussed earlier is significant. One cannot make a curriculum better by removing unimportant material

because there is no unimportant material – it's all good. Generally, the only way to improve a curriculum is to leave out important material so that the teacher and the students can spend more time on more important material – 'the good schoolmaster is known by the number of valuable subjects that he declines to teach.'

One of the key steps in designing a curriculum, therefore, is to be clear about what the 'big ideas' of the subject are. This is, in general, a very difficult task, requiring profound subject knowledge and substantial teaching experience. But the difficult discussions about what are the most important ideas in a subject are essential to undertake if the resulting curriculum is to be manageable.

The science curriculum is especially full of content (the original version of the national curriculum for science had 407 statements of attainment). So it is noteworthy that an international group of science education specialists managed to come up with a list of just ten big ideas of science, and a further four big ideas about science (Harlen et al., 2010):

Big ideas of science

1. All material in the universe is made of very small particles.
2. Objects can affect other objects at a distance.
3. Changing the movement of an object requires a net force acting on it.
4. The total amount of energy in the universe is always the same but energy can be transformed when things change or are made to happen.
5. The composition of the Earth and its atmosphere and the processes occurring within them shape the earth's climate.
6. The solar system is a very small part of one of millions of galaxies in the universe.
7. Organisms are organised on a cellular basis.
8. Organisms require a supply of energy and materials for which they are often dependent on or in competition with other organisms.
9. Genetic information is passed from one generation of organisms to another.
10. The diversity of organisms, living and extinct, is the result of evolution.

Big ideas about science

1. Science assumes that for every effect there is one or more causes.
2. Scientific explanations, theories and models are those that best fit the facts known at a particular time.
3. The knowledge produced by science is used in some technologies to create products to serve human ends.
4. Applications of science often have ethical, social, economic and political implications.

One could of course quibble about the particular selection made, but the important point about such a list is that it provides a structure for the organisation of the curriculum. Topics and activities are then selected only if they contribute to developing students' understanding of these 'big ideas'. Such a set of big ideas enables teachers and students to see the connectedness of the whole curriculum – trunk and branches if you will, rather than a disorganised collection of twigs and pine needles.

It is also important that the big ideas need not always be stated as outcomes. Sometimes, they are just things that we want young people to experience. The idea that a curriculum could be specified in terms of both outcomes and experiences was an explicit feature of the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence, as this statement about the expectations for dance illustrates:

> 'Through dance, learners have rich opportunities to be creative and to experience inspiration and enjoyment. Creating and performing will be the core activities for all learners, and taking part in dance contributes to their physical education and physical activity. Learners develop their technical skills and the quality of their movement, and use their imagination and skills to create and choreograph dance sequences. They further develop their knowledge and understanding and their capacity to enjoy dance through evaluating performances and commenting on their work and the work of others.'
>
> **Scottish Government, 2007 p.5**

Relevant

The foregoing principles are essential to the design of a high-quality curriculum, but none of these matter very much if the resulting curriculum is not relevant to the students for whom it is intended, and this is where teacher creativity is most important. What is in the intended curriculum – the lists of things that we want young people to learn – is rarely, at face value, relevant to students. What makes curriculum relevant is the way that teachers connect valued outcomes to the students in front of them. Of course some students are personally interested in certain aspects of the curriculum, but most are not, and it is the skill of the teacher that creates what Hidi and Harackiewicz (2000) call situational interest – the extraordinary way that good teachers get students interested in things they never knew they were interested in. Getting agreement on what it is that we want young people to learn is not easy, but it is relatively trivial compared to the challenge of teaching these ideas in a way that is engaging, interesting, and motivating for students.

One idea that appears to be useful in steering a course between the interests and wishes of the students on the one hand, and the principles of curriculum discussed above on the other, is that of informed choice in respect of pedagogy and curriculum. That is to say from the earliest ages, students should have a say in how they learn, and, as they get older, also in what they learn. The curriculum should provide opportunities for students to specialise – to pursue their interests in greater depth than would be required of all students. But since more time on subjects of interest will, inevitably, mean less time for others, students need to know enough about the subjects they are dropping for their decision to be an informed one.

To make an informed choice about what to learn, students will need to consider a range of factors. Perhaps the most important is the nature of the subject itself. But before students can form an accurate view of the nature of the subject, they have to experience the subject, which places a responsibility on the school to ensure that the students' experiences of the subject are authentic. If as a result of their classroom experiences, students think that geography is about learning the names of 'capes and bays' or they think mathematics is about doing

arithmetic quickly, then they have not experienced what the subjects are really about, and so any choice to stop studying the subject would not be informed.

For certain subjects, there may be 'sensitive periods' where studying the subject at a particular age leads to significantly greater progress than the same effort would produce at a different age, although the evidence for these is much weaker than most people imagine. In learning modern languages, for example, there certainly are sensitive periods. Unless one learns the sounds of a language before adolescence, it is highly unlikely that one will ever speak that language like a native (but then, who needs to speak a language like a native apart from spies?). There is a sensitive period for learning the syntax and grammar of a language, but this sensitive period appears to extend to at least the age of 25. For learning the vocabulary of a language, there appears to be no sensitive period.

The seven principles in combination

Readers who have reached this point will probably be convinced that no curriculum could ever, at the same time, be balanced, rigorous, coherent, vertically integrated, appropriate, focused, and relevant. And of course they would be right. The seven principles are not really goals or things we should aim for; the principles are always in tension, and often in direct conflict. The purpose of the principles is to provide a set of ideas with which schools can examine their curriculum, see where the trade-offs are being made, and check that these are trade-offs with which the school is comfortable.

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If you think you can do a thing, or you think you can't, you're right

Jim Henderson

The educational landscape had changed hugely in the 12 years since I had held roles in two brand new schools in south London; significantly, the funding for new school projects was dramatically less generous than it had been, but the fundamental challenges remained the same: how do you establish a curriculum that is as broad, balanced and rich as other local schools? How do you afford specialist staff to deliver that curriculum? How do you help families to trust that you will deliver what you are promising?

I faced the additional challenge, which I chose to see as an opportunity, of establishing our curriculum just a year before the new national curriculum came into force with its changed content and structure and, most importantly, the disappearance of levels.

I began in post on 1 September 2012, with two months to recruit a foundation cohort of students. So although I would have liked to flesh out my educational plan in a much calmer and more organic way, I knew that I needed to stand on a stage in the local community centre on St Martin's Estate in eight days' time and persuade parents and children that I had everything mapped out clearly. They would be taking a big enough risk sending their children to a school with no track record and it would not help my case to sound ambiguous about what we would have on offer. So when the question came as to what sports we would offer in PE or what topics would be covered in year 7 science I heard myself giving the most authoritative answers possible, always conscious that that if the curriculum experience we delivered in one year was different, these words would be quoted back at me.

However, the most important lesson I learned from this was that generally families wanted to know that the curriculum would support, challenge and excite

their children, that the teaching would be excellent, that the students would have a range of enrichment opportunities and that we would build a happy, harmonious and supportive community. That, and that the school jumper wouldn't go all bobbly after a few washes.

Creating the curriculum

Have a clear curriculum philosophy: two key books really helped me to articulate the 'how' of our curriculum no matter what the content and structure might otherwise be.

The first of these was *Mindsets* by Dr Carol Dweck. Across the years I had worked with many children with great potential who came from homes where education had not been a happy experience over generations. These children often had low self-esteem in regard to education. Their strategy to spare themselves the pain of public failure was to avoid exposing their vulnerabilities by not taking on challenge. As I read Dweck, I realised that these children had a fixed mindset in which they defined themselves as educational failures who would not learn however hard they tried and therefore would play up or disengage to avoid inevitable humiliation.

As I read on, I realised that the same sometimes applied to children who came from primary schools and families where they were told how good they were at their lessons. A fixed mindset would also lead these children to sticking in their comfort zone rather than taking on real learning challenges where they might fail and shatter their self-esteem. My school would transmit Henry Ford's pithy maxim: 'If you think you can do a thing, or you think you can't, you're right.' Both staff and students would be encouraged into a growth mindset where we would relish taking on challenges and not be afraid of failure because that is how we grow and nurture new skills and talents. As Aristotle said: 'We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.'

The other book was *How Children Succeed* by Paul Tough. This book reflects on the story of the Charter Schools in USA. These schools were intended to be at the heart of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002. This aimed to break the link between poverty and educational underachievement. In the early days these schools showed themselves to achieve amazing results from previously

failing children. Through a ruthless 'boot camp' approach many of these children achieved high school results that took them on to college and university. However, longitudinal studies soon started to suggest that many of these students fell apart and dropped out of college once the disciplinary exoskeleton was removed. Paul Tough articulates the debate between a principal of a school in a very tough New York neighbourhood and the principal of an elite upstate school who confesses that this pattern is true for some of his alumni too. The thesis that emerges is that we help children to succeed best in education and all of life's other challenges by helping them to develop a core set of character attributes.

A curriculum which explicitly focused on developing character as well as knowledge and wisdom would be central to the school's ethos (and this long before senior politicians started speaking of their interest in the idea).

Get curriculum principles right

So, with the big picture sorted it was time to decide the detail. I looked at various curricula on offer such as the RSA 'Opening Minds' curriculum and was very keen to ensure that we develop a curriculum to build competencies and character as well as wisdom and knowledge. I had also had discussions about the mastery approach to mathematics being developed by Ark Schools and was keen to explore how this could underpin our curriculum. However, my discussions

with potential families led me to realise that, whatever more innovative plans I had, parents wanted the security of a rigorous, traditional curriculum underlying them. In particular, in an area of south London which celebrates the wonderful diversity of culture and tradition ('Lambeth - The world in one borough') many families hold a high regard for the traditional academic curriculum and the opportunities they see it as unlocking.

Teachers' passion is essential

In addition, I wanted to employ teachers whose first passion would be for their subject and my experience has led me to believe that, unless you consciously employ enthusiasts for an alternative curriculum approach, you tend to get a technical delivery which lacks the passion of the historian or physicist in full flight.

So it would be a traditionally structured curriculum but would incorporate character development and a mastery approach. And with our specialism, I wanted the curriculum to be infused with Spanish vocabulary and themes drawn from the history, cultures and traditions of Spanish-speaking countries from around the world.

Building the team

My next task was to appoint a teaching staff who would be excited to join as pioneers in this new venture. I first appointed a director of business and resources who would start at Easter and provide invaluable expertise in many areas of establishing a new school which were outside my experience. I was also able to appoint a vice principal who had expertise in assessment and progress data and a track record of innovation in ICT and an assistant principal with experience of SEN provision, literacy development and inclusion. She would help to establish our Autism Resource Base for Lambeth as well as providing structured support to those students with the greatest barriers to learning.

Next, I knew that I wanted to recruit teachers who had a track record of good or outstanding teaching as it would be the quality and passion of the lessons which would engage children in learning and give confidence and reassurance to our parents that their children were making great progress and loving being

there. These would become my directors of curriculum and my subject leaders. However, what I was after initially were great teachers who were intellectually engaged in debate on educational issues. They would need to be creative and enthusiastic about thinking outside the box. Their job would not be that of managing systems already well-established but to repurpose all their experiences from base principles. They would rise to the challenge of moving into their first middle leadership positions where they would take responsibility for developing the detail of their curricula in discussion with colleagues. They would be able to develop their leadership understanding collaboratively during our first year while they were leading only themselves (except for the director of maths who would have the unenviable challenge of having to manage me in her department!). They would therefore be able to develop their vision and leadership style ready for them to start to build their teams in year 2.

And so, as so often in education, the curriculum so carefully planned had to be adapted to the resources available. We would hold firm to extra weighting for maths and English to secure firm learning foundations in these subjects. We would give extra curriculum time to Spanish as an assertion of our specialism as well as pursuing our commitment to 'bilingualism for all' with all the associated cognitive benefits. Science and art would have a typical timetable weighting. We would give a smaller weighting to the humanities in the first year with the intention to balance the provision over the key stage once we had specialist teachers in post. During our first year especially there would be a focus in the humanities on literacy development and extended writing, oracy and questioning.

Finally there was the question of PE, drama and music. I have always believed that sport and the performing arts are at the heart of a fit and creative school. My plan was to timetable these subjects in a carousel on three afternoons and to try to find external providers who would deliver. For me, it was more important to find providers who would fire up the enthusiasm and engagement of our students than to find someone expert in delivery of the national curriculum and knowledge of the now defunct levels in their subject. Here again, my local network bore fruit and I was able to contract Moving Matters, an organisation that delivered some of Lambeth's primary PE provision and organised inter-school competitions for PE. A popular youth theatre company, Firecracker

Theatre, which also worked with local primary schools took on our drama. And the music was delivered first by Choir Community, a local community singing organisation and then by Lambeth Music Service to provide instrumental experience for our students.

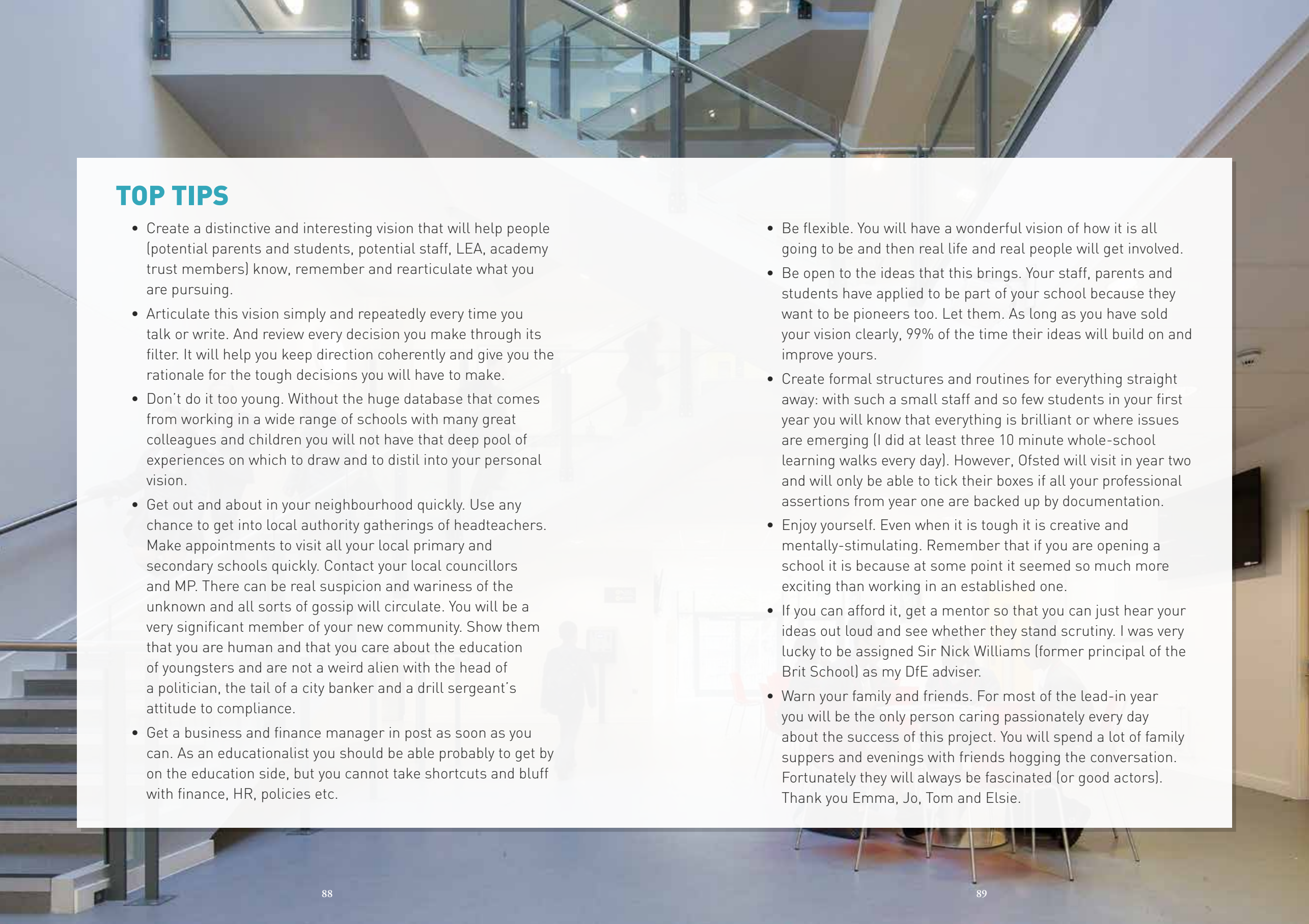
The final element of the curriculum was to ensure a broad and enriching extra-curricular experience. Because many of our students would be getting minibus transport to the temporary site, we would be unable to run after-school clubs. I therefore decided to make it a compulsory element of the curriculum and to ask all members of staff to contribute something imaginative. From debating to computer programming to textiles to Spanish rap I was delighted by the exciting programme we were able to offer.

As I write, sixteen months later, we are now in our permanent building, we have two year groups and a total staff of over thirty. Such was the enthusiasm from students and staff for our compulsory enrichment curriculum that we have kept it. We have a curriculum which is delivering high engagement and progress in the classroom and a 'life beyond levels' approach to assessment, reporting and tracking which is fit for the future.

In 2020 our pioneer students will head off for universities and bright futures. We do not have 20-20 vision and our already volatile educational landscape is likely to see much more political and structural change before then. But we know that the broad, balanced and creative curriculum, alongside our values and expectations of ourselves and our students, will provide strong foundations for their lives and ours.

What did I not do that with hindsight I wish I had?

- Keep a daily journal: I would love to reflect on my moments of inspiration and the splendid naivety or stupidity that hindsight might reveal. It would also have served as a great basis for writing a guide for others.
- Write an Ofsted-aligned SEF for what you expect the gradings and evidence for the school to be one year hence right at the start: my plan for delivery was about a strong curriculum, rigorous assessment, a secure and inspiring ethos and culture and good pedagogy. A formalised evaluation against the Ofsted framework (although this has changed three times since



TOP TIPS

- Create a distinctive and interesting vision that will help people (potential parents and students, potential staff, LEA, academy trust members) know, remember and rearticulate what you are pursuing.
- Articulate this vision simply and repeatedly every time you talk or write. And review every decision you make through its filter. It will help you keep direction coherently and give you the rationale for the tough decisions you will have to make.
- Don't do it too young. Without the huge database that comes from working in a wide range of schools with many great colleagues and children you will not have that deep pool of experiences on which to draw and to distil into your personal vision.
- Get out and about in your neighbourhood quickly. Use any chance to get into local authority gatherings of headteachers. Make appointments to visit all your local primary and secondary schools quickly. Contact your local councillors and MP. There can be real suspicion and wariness of the unknown and all sorts of gossip will circulate. You will be a very significant member of your new community. Show them that you are human and that you care about the education of youngsters and are not a weird alien with the head of a politician, the tail of a city banker and a drill sergeant's attitude to compliance.
- Get a business and finance manager in post as soon as you can. As an educationalist you should be able probably to get by on the education side, but you cannot take shortcuts and bluff with finance, HR, policies etc.
- Be flexible. You will have a wonderful vision of how it is all going to be and then real life and real people will get involved.
- Be open to the ideas that this brings. Your staff, parents and students have applied to be part of your school because they want to be pioneers too. Let them. As long as you have sold your vision clearly, 99% of the time their ideas will build on and improve yours.
- Create formal structures and routines for everything straight away: with such a small staff and so few students in your first year you will know that everything is brilliant or where issues are emerging (I did at least three 10 minute whole-school learning walks every day). However, Ofsted will visit in year two and will only be able to tick their boxes if all your professional assertions from year one are backed up by documentation.
- Enjoy yourself. Even when it is tough it is creative and mentally-stimulating. Remember that if you are opening a school it is because at some point it seemed so much more exciting than working in an established one.
- If you can afford it, get a mentor so that you can just hear your ideas out loud and see whether they stand scrutiny. I was very lucky to be assigned Sir Nick Williams (former principal of the Brit School) as my DfE adviser.
- Warn your family and friends. For most of the lead-in year you will be the only person caring passionately every day about the success of this project. You will spend a lot of family suppers and evenings with friends hogging the conversation. Fortunately they will always be fascinated (or good actors). Thank you Emma, Jo, Tom and Elsie.

I was first appointed) would have forced me to be more forward-thinking in ensuring that the foundation work not only embedded great education but ticked the Ofsted boxes too (not necessarily the same thing!).

- Create a staff handbook that lays out all the systems, procedures and expectations: all your staff will have come from places with different expectations. With no guidance or reminder of 'Our School's Way' they will have to respond with professional instinct to the unexpected. While this is likely to be an appropriate response individually, if it is not coherent with other responses it will begin to erode the solid and secure boundaries you wish to establish.

What did I do that I wish I had not?

- Nothing: I do not say this hubristically. There was plenty along the way which did not immediately seem of value but every idea, every false avenue, every bit of reading and every conversation over the last two and a half years has contributed to what City Heights has become.

Jim Henderson is the founding principal of City Heights E-ACT Academy, a brand new academy in Lambeth which opened in September 2013 and will grow to an 1100 student 11-18 academy by 2020.

www.cityheightse-actacademy.org

A fresh approach to education

Andrew Howard

One of the most difficult things about starting a brand new school is making it different; not different for the sake of being different, but truly, actually different. Something that makes a real impact in the lives of the people who are part of it. There are many voices around the world that say there is a real, insistent need for revolution in education, that our young people are being cheated and let down by a system weighed down by hegemony and tradition; a Victorian structure, based on Victorian theories about young people's growth and development. And while there are many people trying to evolve the system, radicalise from the inside, there can only ever be small, evolutionary changes doing this. What is needed is a system whereby schools can begin with a completely new starting point, a fresh approach to education.

But we also don't want to throw the baby out with the bath water. Students in a brand new school, doing things differently, still need to be able to compete with their peers when they leave school, still need the same qualifications. So curriculum design, curriculum choice and purpose has to be at the very heart of something new. Any curriculum has to be broad and balanced, has to prepare young people for the rest of their lives and needs to be thorough and rigorous. But that is as obvious as stating that night follows day – no one would dispute those facts. However, the skills required for our school leavers are not highlighted or seen as important in a system that currently values the passing of exams and regurgitation of facts more highly than anything else.

So what should make a school different, what should make a fresh school curriculum different, given the opportunity?

Plan to meet local need

First of all, there is local need. A school, created, founded by local parents, with no axe to grind and no political motivation other than wanting something different for their local children, deserves to be a school fit for the community it serves. This means that every subject area and every opportunity in school has to be rooted in the concept of how it affects and is relevant to the young people experiencing it.

Design a curriculum that prepares students for life

But then there is the seemingly conflicting need for the school curriculum to prepare our students to spread their wings, to aspire to be the very best they can be and have the skills and qualifications to do so on a global stage. So the need to expand minds, limit parochialism and create literally world-class school leavers also has to be part of a modern curriculum. 'Nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain, difficulty…'. This quote from Theodore Roosevelt frequently comes to my mind when I consider the work that has been required, to create a curriculum fit for the young people at my school.

Start with a focus on individuals

The starting point to everything was and is the individual students in it. This has meant, in practical terms, ignoring the status quo and working with no prejudices or preconceptions in any plan, design or procedure we have built. We start with what is important, what is relevant and what they need, to be the best they can be.

A curriculum covers the whole day

The other thing we started with is the fact that the whole day, from when a student comes into school to the time they leave is all important – the times between lessons is as important, if not more so, as the formal learning.

A different emphasis

In terms of content, our curriculum looks remarkably similar to anywhere else; a student transferring to us mid-year does not struggle to catch up with content. However, it is the subtle differences that are our revolutionary elements. The style of delivery, the methodologies, the expectations on the students are radically different. Our curriculum has a different emphasis, and this is what makes the difference. Skills are foremost in all aspects of school life. Personal skills of responsibility, persistence, self-awareness and collaboration are highly valued and rewarded. Schemes of work and subject content are delivered in styles that emphasise these skills.

The building needs to support the curriculum

And most importantly of all, everything around the school has been designed to support the curriculum. The building is designed to emphasise personal respect, with a more 'office-like' or college design. There are no bells, no elements to remind them that they are 'inmates' in an institution, because they are not; they are treated as colleagues in a workplace. The classrooms look more like seminar rooms or meeting rooms, with cluster tables to encourage collaboration and no focal point as there is no 'teachers' desk' at the front. In fact there is no 'front', with twin projectors delivering the lesson content onto two different walls. There is no whiteboard – and certainly no 'interactive' whiteboard – on the walls, as the walls are painted in an ultra-matt paint, in an off-white colour designed to aid eye health and support reading.

Being tech savvy

Technology is used intensively and the school's IT infrastructure was also a key element of the school design and an essential component in supporting the curriculum model. Superfast internet connectivity, with saturated WiFi capacity in the building, encourages all members of the community to interact with the online systems. The advent of Office 365 has, in fact, completely transformed our systems, pushing everything into the cloud and supporting our emphasis of treating the students like work colleagues. We now, thanks to Office 365, have no student planners – homework, project deadlines and teacher meetings,

including detentions, are set via calendar invites. Students email staff for support and help, allowing the staff to be much more responsive to student needs, and tools such as OneNote have completely changed the way our staff use exercise and note books. With our most adventurous staff, whole classes are collaborating in a OneNote notebook to effectively create a class personal text book, with each student as the contributor and collaborator in the project.

Make the curriculum central

By emphasising personal qualities as essential elements, the very drivers of the school curriculum, everything may become curriculum-focused. Where the toilets are placed, what they look like (we have no urinals, only domestic toilets, to reinforce the fact that we are not an institution), behaviour procedures, uniform, everything becomes a critical element of the curriculum.

Stage not age

We have a blended horizontal and vertical pastoral system, which also leaks into curriculum areas. Students are in vertical house groups for registration and pastoral subjects, mixing with older and younger students on a daily basis, but also spend time in year-group classes for certain tutorials. But if personal skills are as strong a part of a curriculum as they are in our school, there is one major issue that has to be addressed. This is one aspect of current western education systems around the world, so pervasive that most people wouldn't even think about changing it. It is the fact that we treat young people no differently from widgets in a factory and expect them all to progress through the system at a pre-defined rate, popping out after sitting exams at the age of 16 or 18. At Sandymoor, we are committed to never entering students for an exam everyone knows they will fail. This has then made us look at our curriculum models still further: we have a fairly traditional first two years, with students entering the school aged 11 and going into an age-specific class structure for most of their subjects. This continues for two years, in what we have called Sandymoor Foundation; during this time, they are taught a standard broad and balanced curriculum, based on the national curriculum (because, to paraphrase Sir Ken Robinson, Why Wouldn't You…?), but, as described before, with a very different

focus and emphasis. After that, they take their option choices and enter what we have called Sandymoor Pathways. In pathways, they then are put into groups dependent on their progress rates, resulting in students of different ages sitting together, working together and learning together.

Get the right staff

Back to reality, starting a school is incredibly difficult, with limited resources and budgets, so recruitment is vital and getting the 'right' staff is crucial. In the three years since we opened, we have been understaffed in all areas of the school, but this has, in fact, had a positive impact as it has resulted in everyone pulling together and supporting each other. Systems have been developed collaboratively in support of the ethos, and structures have evolved in-line with this. It has meant that I have had to be flexible in designing staffing structures, but with the curriculum model and school ethos at the very core of everything. We have had to reach out for help and support when we have needed it, which has also been positive; indeed we are now strategic partners in a new teaching school alliance.

Top tip

Through the whole process, this has been the most important factor: setting the vision, making it clear and unambiguous and not being apologetic for being passionate about making a real difference in young people's lives. When the school opened, my first priority was to ensure that the school's vision was embedded in everything we did and this took priority over other things. With a small staff, where everyone was wearing multiple hats, it was important that everyone knew why we were doing it. This attracted some significant criticisms from various corners, including the government advisers responsible for overseeing our development – they wanted to see policies and action plans, protocols and paperwork, whereas I was building relationships. We did then focus on these things, because they are important, but only after we were all clear about why we were doing it in the first place. And this paid off, because everyone who visits the school comments on how amazing the atmosphere is and how strong the ethos is. And if this is right, everything else will follow.

This, ultimately, is, in my mind, the most important 'top tip' in getting it right – to start a new school, one that is truly going to make a difference, requires passion and determination, but also needs, beyond anything else, an absolutely clear vision for the school. The young person at the very heart, and the curriculum driving everything around that. If that is in place, then it will be a success. There is no magic wand, no formula for making a school a success, but bravery, conviction and determination are crucial elements in getting things right. If the students, their needs, and a clear vision for what they require to be the best they can be is at the very heart of everything, this is a good starting place.

Andrew Howard is principal of Sandymoor School, a free school founded in 2012, as a fully comprehensive 11-19 academy for 900 pupils in Runcorn. Sandymoor School was selected by Microsoft as a 2014-2015 Microsoft Showcase School for its excellence in transforming its learning environment to deliver more personalised education to students, using mobile and cloud technology to better prepare students for success in the workplace.

www.sandymoorschool.org.uk

Getting governance right

Strategic governance in a new school

Emma Knights

Good governance is vital to any successful organisation. In the public sector there is the added task of ensuring that public money is used well. Governing boards are central to the effective accountability of schools and ensuring children reach their potential.

In its *Governors' handbook* the DfE specifies the three core functions that governing boards in all state funded schools in England have:

1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.
2. Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils.
3. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

Who's who?

In England, at the time of writing, any new state funded school has to be set up as an academy. There are a number of layers of governance:

The members

The academy trust is formed by the principal sponsor or the individual subscribers to the memorandum of the company when it is first created.

There must be at least three members of the trust, but there may be more. The academy trust, as a company, enters the funding agreement with the secretary of state and is thus legally responsible both to the secretary of state and to parents and pupils for the running of the academy. Members usually have much more limited involvement in the oversight of the company than the trustees.

Board of trustees/directors of the company limited by guarantee

The board exercises the powers and carries out the duties of the academy trust. They can delegate further some of those duties, but they will remain accountable as trustees and company directors.

The academy governance model is flexible and allows individual schools also to constitute a governing body; however this might be an unnecessary complication, so due consideration should be given when deciding on this. The constitution of the trust will be set out in its articles of association and this should be debated long and hard by the founders as choosing the wrong structure for your school can have profound implications in the quality of its governance later on. Articles can of course be changed at a later date, but it is better to start with a secure constitution which is fit for present purpose.

Deciding on the governance structure

Under the coalition government, the legal form for all new schools is academy status. Although called free schools, the legal requirements are identical to other academies. However there is a large variety of academy structures. The first decision is whether the new school is to be a stand-alone institution, or part of a larger group. Joint governance for groups of schools provides a number of advantages for pupils, especially when schools are within a geographical area which allows staff to travel easily between them. This needs to be carefully considered. One option is to join an existing multi-academy trust (MAT). The challenge would be to find an existing MAT with a similar or compatible ethos, preferably not too far away from the location you are considering. If the decision is to set up a completely new academy trust, founders need to ensure the structure will stand the test of time should further schools be set up or wish to join. You also need to make efforts to collaborate with other schools; Sir Michael Wilshaw, the chief inspector, has recently expressed concern that the standards at some academies which have isolated themselves are declining.

The challenges for founders

In many cases those people who have spent an enormous amount of time to get a new school started will become the first trustees of the academy. However

this can be an extremely difficult transition for these founders, who have no doubt played a great part in developing the plan for the school and getting to the point where a board of trustees is being established. They will have been inspired to put much thought into the vision for the school and are likely to be wedded to this plan. Those trustees who join the first board from outside the group of founders have to be sensitive to this, but at the same time the founders must accept that it is now the board of trustees who will be safeguarding and developing that vision. All trustees should have an equal say in decisions of the board; there cannot be two classes of trustee.

Some of the founders will most probably become the members of the academy trust. Members are there as a check on the board of trustees, can appoint and remove some trustees, amend the articles if necessary, and have some formal duties, such as signing off the company's financial accounts and annual report.

Founders need to debate fully how many members there need to be and who they will be. Good practice has developed over the past few years, with it now being accepted that if there is to be only a small number of members (say between three and five) there should be a degree of separation between members and trustees. Some founders may therefore prefer to be a member, rather than a trustee; this would suit those founders who are not able to commit what is likely to be in the region of 20 days over the year to being a trustee.

In the very initial stages of the project, many founders will have been used to being extremely hands-on, researching and writing proposals, undertaking consultations, and then searching for sites and contracting with various suppliers needed for the set-up phase. Many may even have been involved in the detail of the proposed curriculum and pedagogy, especially if they themselves are educational professionals. However there comes a time when these tasks need to be handed over to the paid staff. Once a headteacher and a business manager have been recruited, the operational tasks required to deliver the vision become the province of the executive and the trustees must make that transition to a non-executive director role. In many schools that line between the strategic governance role and the management role of the employed school leaders is sometimes blurred, but for founding trustees it can be particularly difficult.

Deciding on the people on your board

The DfE provides model articles of association which give considerable flexibility on the size and constitution of an academy trust board. The most common size for a school governing board is between twelve and fourteen, but some new trusts have chosen to go below that number. There is no magic number, but it is important to choose the right combination of people who bring different experience to the board. It is also best to avoid those who bring conflicts of interest to the table. Trustees must make decisions entirely on the basis of what is best for the school and its pupils; although it is possible to declare an interest, perhaps because a trustee has a contract to supply a service to the school, and withdraw from a particular conversation, these can be very difficult scenarios to manage and there can be an external perception of other interests holding sway even when they might not have done.

The chair

The first decision of the founding trustees will be to appoint a chair; this may be from among their number or by bringing someone onto the board purposely to carry out that role. Getting the right person to chair the board could be the most important thing you do to ensure sound governance. The chair, with support from the vice chair, is responsible for ensuring the effective functioning of the board. It is the chair's role to give the board clear leadership and direction, and it is no exaggeration to say that the success or failure of a governing board depends heavily on the calibre of its chair. The culture of the board is largely determined by its chair, for better or worse. A good chair will ensure its focus is on the strategic, ensuring all members of the board both support and challenge the executive management. The chair also needs to be a source of wise counsel to the chief executive - whether named the principal or the executive headteacher - providing credible advice while respecting executive responsibility. Getting that relationship right, professional without being cosy, is critical not just to the work of the board, but to the future of the school.

Skills required by the team

Although appointments are not made by the chair alone, the chair should

be much concerned with building a diverse team of trustees with varied knowledge and skills, who together can address all the needs of the governance role. A governing board will be stronger and better able to challenge each other and the school's leaders if its members have a variety of views and experience.

All trustees must have a commitment to improving education for all pupils, but the board collectively needs to bring a range of backgrounds and competences appropriate to its wide range of responsibilities. The chair needs to help the board to consider seriously whether it has the full set of skills and knowledge it needs to do its job properly. The essential skills include:

- communication skills (including listening)
- understanding data
- the ability to question well
- softer relationship-building skills which encourage teamworking, facilitate good decision-making and ensure good working relationships with a range of different stakeholders.

Many trustees will have more than one of these skills, but if the chair feels there is a deficit of any of these skills across the team or an imbalance in terms of the strengths of the team, s/he will need to ensure the board discusses this at its next meeting in order to rectify this.

There is a wide range of expertise that can be useful on a governing board; financial management and accountancy, legal expertise, human resources, property/estates management, procuring and contracting services, project management, organisational change management, equal opportunities,

special needs, quality assurance and service improvement, risk management, health and safety, marketing and public relations, and IT. These are included here not because trustees will undertake tasks in these disciplines, but because this experience enables them to understand the issues the school faces and analyse information, thus supporting the leadership team with advice, asking challenging questions, and meeting their legal and financial obligations. Some leadership teams do like to seek free expertise from their trustees, in addition to their governance role; it is important that the difference between giving time as a trustee and the option of donating additional time to other tasks is understood. Trustees must not feel that they are under any obligation to volunteer for tasks over and above the time taken by governing. We know of lawyers who have left governing boards because they felt they were being used for free legal advice on a range of issues. Furthermore this can create conflicts of interest which are best avoided.

Delegation

The board of trustees will need to decide how much to delegate to the executive, which in a stand-alone school will be the headteacher in the first instance, and to any committees. If the board being set up is fewer than twelve people, it will probably not need committees. The average school governing board is between 12 and 14 people, and with this sort of size, it is likely that two committees will provide an effective model: one covering resources (finance, staffing and premises) and the second covering the education offer and outcomes for children, which is called a variety of names, including education.

Employing a clerk

One of the very first decisions the board must take is to employ a clerk as their adviser and administrator. The clerk is sometimes also given the role of company secretary, but clerking alone is a highly professional role. A good clerk, along with the chair and the most senior executive, will ensure that the board functions effectively.

School strategy

The chair must ensure that the governing board defines the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school, and then concentrates on monitoring whether the school is on course to meet its goals, rather than interfering in the headteacher's role. The school strategy should drive the business of the governing board for the year. An effective school strategy document will describe not only where the school wants to be, but how it will know if it is progressing in the right direction.

We find in practice many schools are without a vision which provides the direction and priorities for the school as a whole. This should not be such a problem with a new school as the founders will presumably have had a vision in order to consider setting up a school. This might therefore be the first act of a new board: to ascertain if the school strategy exists and is fit-for-purpose and, if not, to instigate the development of a vision and its agreement by the governing board, alongside a useful strategic document.

Governing effectively

There are eight elements of effective governance:

- the right people round the table
- understanding the role and responsibilities
- good chairing
- professional clerking
- good relationships based on trust
- knowing the school – the data, the children, the parents, the staff, the community
- commitment to asking challenging questions
- confidence to have courageous conversations in the interests of the children and young people.

A governing board must review its performance regularly to make sure it is fulfilling its functions and having an impact on the pupils, and indeed the future pupils.

Governance is not a task to be taken on lightly; it is a highly responsible role, requiring great diplomacy and collective wisdom. But there is now much information, support and advice available for trustees, please do use it.

For further information; see NGA's induction guide *Welcome to Governance* and *The Chair's Handbook*. Later in 2015 we will also be publishing another induction guide tailored to MATs: *Welcome to Multi-academy Trusteeship*. There is much other guidance material available to NGA members in our online guidance centre. We can also provide bespoke training and consultancy for free schools.

Trustees of free schools have told us:

- Recognise that the role in the early stages is often different. You will probably have to get involved more in the operational side of things than you should as a strategic governor in an established school. But you will need the ability to step back once things are on track.
- One of the biggest jobs you will have to do is find an outstanding head and this will not be easy; established schools struggle enough finding great heads - asking someone to leave the security of a school that exists to take on a role in a school that might still end up falling through is a huge ask.
- Recognise that you'll have a shifting role, from proposer to governor, as the head and their SLT get appointed and start to run the school. This happens at some undefined point during pre-opening. If it doesn't, make it happen! You are not the operational lead for an open school even if you have been the operational lead for a project to open a new school.
- Remember that you are a real trading company that deals with real money and affects real people's lives (the shift from a paper exercise to real life happens via a pretty undefined but significant moment). The minute you sign a contract for supply of goods and services, or sign an employment contract with a member of staff, real life laws kick in (on potentially really quite important issues to do with equalities, duty of care, health and safety, and contract law).

- Be just as discerning about the skills and experiences you need on your board when it is your baby as you would be when sitting on any other board that you didn't help create. Don't be blinded by friendship if someone isn't quite the right fit and you need someone with a better grasp of the issues. Don't just recruit from your friends, colleagues and acquaintances to fill new vacancies even if you did initially.
- A new school will have a host of challenges during set-up phase (which lasts for seven years!) including some things you can predict – approving a whole suite of policies, being more involved in early staff recruitment – and some you might not have thought of when you agreed to get involved, such as setting up procedures for procurement and delegation of spending for the first time, and generally being a sounding board for endless queries of the type of 'we haven't got an agreed way of dealing with issue x because it's happening for the first time, what do you think we should do?'
- Remember that you are bound by some strict sets of rules as trustees and directors - not just charity law but also companies law. The buck very much stops with you.

Emma Knights is chief executive of the National Governors' Association (NGA), which offers support, advice and guidance for school governors and trustees. The NGA is an independent charity that aims to improve the educational standards and well-being of children and young people through supporting and promoting outstanding governance in all state funded schools, including academies and free schools.

www.nga.org.uk

SOME THOUGHTS FROM CHRIS WRIGHT, WOODARD SCHOOLS

School governance is a top priority for both independent and state schools. It is also an issue very much in the news. As the parliamentary under secretary of state for schools has recently said (11 September 2014), 'My ambition is that every school has a dynamic governing body. That means one that understands its responsibilities and is focused tightly on its core strategic functions.' He makes references to the governing body as the entity within a maintained school or academy/ free school responsible for exercising governance functions – which in the case of multi-academy trusts may well be the academy trust board.

This is a good reminder for all of our schools to review governance in relation to the impact it has on setting vision and strategic direction through having a robust strategy for achieving its vision that contains SMART targets and key performance indicators. This strategy should address the fundamental questions of where they are now, where they want to be and how they are going to get there: and all of this includes considering the type of school which would offer the best opportunities for achieving future aims. Such a focus ties in well with the findings of research from educational consultancy firms working in the independent sector.

There is a legal requirement placed on all maintained schools to be constituted under the recently revised 2012 Constitution Regulations by September 2015, having regard to new statutory guidance. In September Lord Nash, the minister for school governance, wrote to all state maintained schools providing them with the latest version of the *Governors' handbook* (for governors in maintained schools, academies and free schools). In it he focused on:

- The three core strategic functions of governance: setting vision, ethos and strategic direction; holding school leaders to account for the performance of pupils and the performance management of staff; and ensuring the school's finances are well spent.
- The recruitment, induction and development of high calibre governors with relevant and necessary skills and experience. He underlined the role of the chair to set high expectations of governors' role and conduct and ensure that each makes an active and valuable contribution. In relation to the recruitment of governors he signposted use of the free service from SGOSS Governors for Schools which is funded by the DfE to help find skilled governors) and the Inspiring Governors Alliance. The handbook recommends designing a code of conduct for the governing body, carrying out regular audits of governors' skills (see the skills matrix by NGA) in the light of skills and competencies needed and having succession plans in place.
- Induction and training programmes for the chair and clerk through the National College of Teaching and Leadership. This includes publications such as *Leading Governors* and free Governorline advice service supported by around 300 National Leaders of Governance to provide chairs with free peer support. NCTL have also published resources on governance in federations and in multi-academy trusts, including case studies of good practice on their website. They have developed leadership programmes for vice, aspiring and existing chairs.
- The importance of regular governance self-review that evaluates the impact of the governing body and individual governors, including the chair. The review enables the school board to reflect on whether its constitution and membership is fit-for-purpose, and identify whether it needs to restructure or recruit to address any identified gaps or weaknesses. There are a range of self-evaluation tools available.
- The need for all schools and academies to publish up-to-date details of the structure of the governing body (and any committees), together with the names of their governors and their particular roles and responsibilities within that structure. They should also publish an annual statement setting out the key issues that have been faced and addressed by the governing body over the last year, including an assessment of the impact of the governing body on the school.
- The role of Ofsted to shine a light on the effectiveness and impact of governing bodies in raising standards. If Ofsted judge the school's governance to be ineffective they will recommend that the school commissions an external review of governance from an expert in-line with guidance from NCTL, and that the school develops and acts swiftly to implement a SMART action plan for improvement.

Establishing effective governance

Andrew Hutchinson & Mark Patterson

This article explores the theme of establishing effective governance for a new school as part of an existing federation of schools. It describes: the governance processes involved in creating the new school; the elaboration of the vision for the new school; designing the new school; and the establishment of the key mechanisms needed to travel from the idea for a new school right through to the day-to-day reality of construction. This is the story so far of the Trumpington School in Cambridge, part of the City of Cambridge Education Foundation (CCEF) that grew out of the success of one Cambridge school, Parkside Community College.

There are three sections and each begins with a series of questions that focus the reader on the key aspects of the Trumpington School story.

Effective governance

What does effective governance look like? How do we go about establishing an effective governing body for a new school? And does having a 'good' governing body for a new school even matter that much?

Effective governance understands the clear difference between governing a school and running it. Headteachers, together with senior colleagues and other leaders, run schools. Effective governors consciously stay away from running the school and instead focus on strategy, challenge and support. Their strategic involvement includes establishing the vision and aims for the school, its targets (for example, for students' achievement) and its plans to ensure all students fulfil their potential (the school improvement/development plan). Agreeing key policies such as the school's behaviour, curriculum and teaching and learning policies is also a key strategic role for governors. The vision, aims, targets and concrete action plans are the foundational elements of schools and it is clearly very helpful to have a group of committed volunteers who will contribute to, ask questions about, challenge and ultimately confirm the proposals that come forward. This is not so much a case of many hands make light work, it's about the specific expertise that governors can bring and the key ongoing mechanism for challenge and accountability that they provide.

Establishing a governing body for a new school typically involves a two-stage process: stage one involves creating a temporary governing body that will exist until the new school opens; and stage two involves creating a permanent governing body that will serve the new school once it is open. The establishment of new governing bodies, whether temporary or permanent, involves gathering together a group of volunteers who are willing to commit themselves to working on behalf of the new school. Governors typically live in the locality of the school, and include a range of people with different skills/knowledge, such as business/finance, management, PR, education. Some governors may not have those specific skills but they will be equally committed to the new school because they will almost certainly live within its community and so will be important stakeholders.

Where the new school is part of a federation, as is the case with the Trumpington School, some of its governors are likely to be existing or ex-federation governors. To be effective, the governing body has to be very clear about what its role is – strategy, challenge, support – and what it isn't – running the school.

While all schools clearly benefit from having effective governing bodies, this is arguably even more important in a new school, because while an existing school may be stable and may have been 'successful' for a long time, with an experienced head and other leaders, new schools do not have that stability and track record: they are new! They therefore benefit from having at least some governors who know about governance already, and may well be governors at other schools at the same time. New schools are vulnerable if they have nothing to build on, and it's important that they start well - that's why it makes sense for a successful and established school or federation, such as the one around Parkside Community College, to be at the heart of creating a new school.

Getting governance right

Case Study: The new Trumpington School in Cambridge

How did we go about establishing the governing body for the new Trumpington School? What was the educational vision for the new school? How did the governing body work in practice? Were there any other structures needed to see the new school from idea to build and what were they?

At the outset, the City of Cambridge Education Foundation (CCEF) established a separate committee, called the project board, that has primary responsibility for the new school-build project, including a project manager responsible for driving the work of the board. The project board works under the auspices of the CCEF.

This was done to create a clear separation between the hands-on, day-to-day nature of managing a complex building project on the one hand, and the strategic functions such as establishing the vision for the new school, and its aims, on the other. These other functions fall within the remit of the new school's temporary governing body, which has now been in existence for two years. The Executive Principal of the federation of schools, Andrew Hutchinson, sits on both of these groups, as do two other CCEF trustees, to create a link between the two.

The new Trumpington School will open in 2015 with two classes of students who will be accommodated at the Parkside Campus, and will move into its new building in 2016. At the time of writing, its governance remains at phase one, having a temporary governing body. The temporary governing body was established through the existing federation of schools structure, as follows:

- one third of the temporary governors are ex-Parkside Community College governors and the ex-chair of Parkside Community College is the current chair of the Trumpington temporary governing body
- one third are local community/local business people, who were already known to the federation through local networks and who were approached directly and asked to join the group
- one third are parents of children who attend one of the two existing federation secondary schools, Parkside Community College and Coleridge Community College.

None of the members of the temporary governing body is elected. The foundation governors, headteacher and another staff governor were all appointed by CCEF trustees; this exemplifies one of the advantages of a new school being established under the auspices of an existing local successful school.

The vision for the new school is that of the federation

- Small scale learning communities where young people are known as individuals.
- Each learner's particular needs are met and all aspects of development – creative, emotional, moral, spiritual as well as intellectual and physical – are encouraged.
- The learning process is active.
- The learning community is underpinned by environmentally sustainable values and practices.
- Families and the local community are vital partners in the life of the school and they share in the decision-making.

Alongside the project board and the temporary governing body, the other key drivers for the development of the new school have been:

1. The appointment of a professional consultant to write the design brief for the new school. The consultant turned the federation's educational vision into the comprehensive 'invitation to tender' used to inform the appointment of the architect charged with designing the new school.
2. The engagement of parents and young people in the school design process. These were chosen from the two schools already within the federation.
3. The visits that saw key stakeholders going to a number of other recently-built schools with innovative designs, to inform the design brief.
4. The early involvement of local planners. The federation has been keen to involve local planners from the outset, so that when the plans are presented for approval, there is a greater likelihood of success.

The new school building will open in September 2016. Once it is open, the federation will reconstitute the temporary governing body into a new,

permanent governing body for the school. Some temporary governors may well join the permanent governing body at that point, and some may step down. In any case, the new governing body will include both Trumpington School parents and staff, so it will differ, at least in part, from its current form.

LEARNING THE LESSONS

What has gone especially well in the story of our project so far? What hasn't gone so well so far? What would we do, or do differently, with the benefit of hindsight? What are our 'top tips' for others who have an idea for a new school and are ready to take it forward?

What has gone well:

- The decision at the outset to separate the work of the temporary governing body and the project management needed to see the new school build through to completion has proved crucial. Having two separate groups of people with distinct roles (linked by the executive principal and two trustees sitting on both groups) has enabled one group to focus on the complex process of getting the new school built and the other group to focus on setting up the school as an educational concern. Key to the ongoing success of the project board was the proactive approach to recruitment by the principal and the chair that led to the board benefiting from volunteer members who are of the highest quality.
- The establishment of the new school has been significantly aided by its creation as part of a successful federation that is already in existence, since it has enabled the involvement of the executive principal of the federation and other federation staff, with the associated structures for teaching and learning as well as experienced governors and other local experts garnered through their local networks.
- Careful research into the kind of new school we want in our context has paid significant dividends, as it has enabled the involvement of key stakeholders and the creation of a detailed and very clear design brief embodied in the invitation to tender document given to the bidders. The invitation to tender makes very clear to the architects what the new

school should look and feel like, and design proposals that do not meet the invitation to tender have had to be amended to reflect the vision.

- Using a project manager employed specifically to drive the project has enabled the executive principal and other federation staff to manage their existing work commitments alongside their involvement in the new school project.
- The careful selection of a professional consultant to drive the design brief process and create the invitation to tender has provided key expertise in a very complex project area.

Significant challenges:

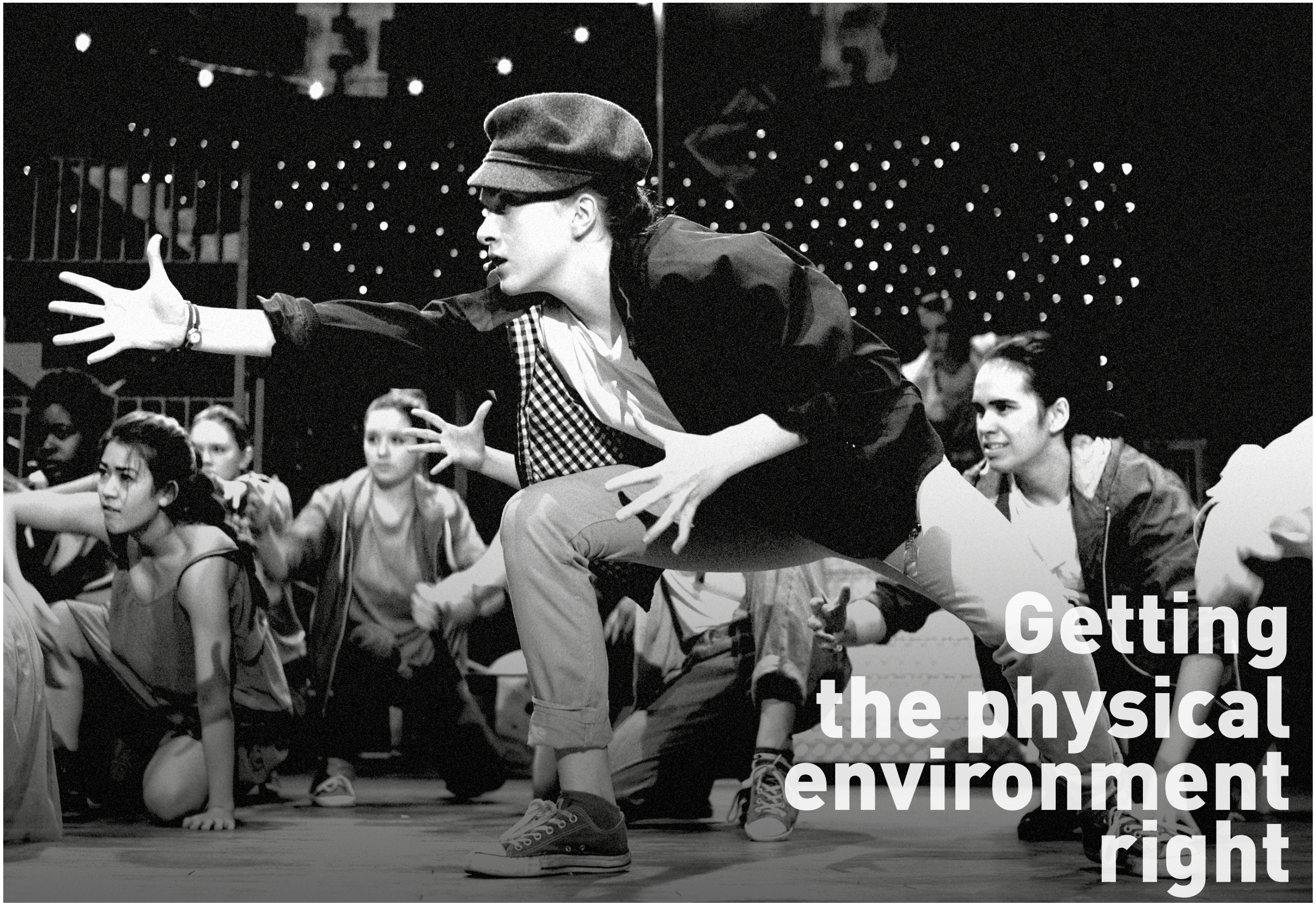
- Despite the clear and detailed invitation to tender, the architects' initial designs were not within budget and this resulted in further work for the project board, and delay in the process.
- The ground on the site allocated by the county council for the new school was found to be too low-lying, and inadequately founded, for the school to be built on. This resulted in considerable delay, while it was decided how to remedy the problem. In the end, £1 million had to be spent bringing in hardcore to both raise the ground level and provide a suitable foundation for building, which resulted in the project going considerably over budget and the opening of the new school being put back from September 2015 to September 2016.
- Agreeing the total budget allocated for the project right at the outset proved a significant challenge because of the delays that occurred during the project. Delays cost money, as designers, architects and others still need to be paid and the £1 million cost of the hardcore also contributed hugely to the budget going off course.

Mark Patterson is headteacher and Andrew Hutchinson is executive principal of Parkside Federation Academies. Parkside Federation Academies is a small, multi-academy trust running two schools, Parkside Community College and Coleridge Community College, and an international sixth form, Parkside Sixth in Cambridge. It will be opening a third new school, Trumpington Community College, in 2015.

www.parksidefederation.org.uk

TOP TIPS

- Build in more time than you think you need to get to project completion. The unexpected happens and if sufficient contingency time is built in, it may still be possible for the project to be completed on time, despite delays.
- Separate the work of managing the new school build project from the educational work to be done by the temporary governing body. This should enable both groups to operate effectively within very clear briefs.
- Take time to get the design brief, as described in the invitation to tender, right. This tells the architects exactly what you want/expect and it is a reference point throughout the process ('That's not what we asked for. Go back to the invitation to tender…') Decide what you want before engaging the architects!
- Involve local stakeholders as much as possible. Schools should be at the heart of their community and for this to be so, the community needs to be involved, and feel involved, right from the outset: 'This new school is our school'.
- Visit other schools, as part of the research phase, along with key stakeholders, such as students and parents.
- Engage with the planning authority from the outset, to get them onside.
- Try to ensure that a critical mass of the temporary governing body are experienced governors, as they will already know the job well and won't need induction. By definition, a temporary governing body for a new school is a brand-new entity and starting with some experienced governors will give a far greater chance of it being effective.



Getting the physical environment right

Key design principles

Paddy Jackman

A bursar's perspective

Just as teachers motivate students in relation to learning, so any educational environment should inspire and engage the entire community. If a school can create a place where students, in particular, want to be, where they feel comfortable and secure in their surroundings, then it can only aid the education experience. In any modern educational facility it has to be recognised that teaching and learning does not only happen in the classroom, and the design of formal and informal spaces where information is absorbed as much from peers as teachers forms an essential element of a good school. There are practical realities to consider, with the highest priority being safety, but all design should be referenced back to its impact on the learning experience.

Focus on the impact on learning

Beginning from scratch with a blank sheet of paper and designing a school is not an easy task, but the starting point, as with any project, must be a clear brief as to the exact requirements. Although I have spent the last 16 years building educational buildings, I am the first to recognise that a school is not a set of buildings, it should be a vibrant community that can have a distinct brand and the design of the buildings can engender that community and reinforce any brand. So a set of architectural drawings is not the starting point for a school. It will be important for the design team to spend considerable time with those involved in creating the educational institution to understand the brand – the core values and what they are trying to achieve.

Start with the school's brand/core values in mind

That having been said, in education, the only thing that is a constant would appear to be 'change' so to that end a high degree of flexibility in terms of facilities should be incorporated in any designs. Questions such as how would the school expand, how will it incorporate changing teaching methodologies and the modern necessity of future proofing from a technological perspective must all be incorporated into initial thinking, or at least the constraints identified. Design should not all be about what is wanted at this exact point in time, a crystal ball will be required! For example how will the 'flipped classroom' concept, which sees a shift away from students acquiring knowledge via a traditional teacher-led session, be incorporated? Students instead go through course materials outside the formal class using video or audio lectures, freeing up staff time for small group teaching. But the flipped classroom is only the current trend – when designing a facility that should last at least fifty years there must be some consideration as to how teaching and learning might change over that period.

Be flexible

It is not necessary to think of a total new build as being the only option and many educational institutions have been created by refurbishing older buildings in order to create unique and atmospheric learning spaces. The University of Huddersfield's restoration of a number of derelict mills since 1992 is a good example of using the old, while a mix of old and new has very successfully been achieved at Central Saint Martin's multiple award-winning new home at King's Cross in London. The scheme which opened in 2011 and is designed by architects, Stanton Williams, made use of Grade II listed 19th century granary buildings and transit sheds as well as modern industrial materials to cover a 10 acre (4ha) floor space including a wide 'internal street' that acts as a central spine. Although clearly the architects can take the credit for the design, they would be the first to recognise that such projects are not delivered successfully without considerable teamwork. Another excellent example of the creative use of traditional industrial spaces in a modern school is the JCB Academy (see page 184).

Be function led

In relation to the design team, large projects require a significant number of different inputs so it is essential that a team is assembled that has the required expertise but, most importantly, a team with whom those leading the project can work closely. Individuals must be chosen on the grounds that they are prepared to incorporate the school's ideas rather than merely implement their vision – seemingly deaf architects are quite common! Speaking to former clients and seeking detailed references is therefore essential. Iconic buildings have their place but practicality will be the driving force in the design of most schools. That is not to say that there is not a design element but the project must be function-led with good design rather than vice versa. A number of renowned architects, or 'starchitects' as they have become known, are keen to be involved in educational opportunities but although this may lead to impressive structures it does not mean that the outcome will be a fantastic building that will endure for a long time.

Do your research into good practice elsewhere

Being responsible for spending several millions can be daunting for any member of the executive team, particularly if members of the governing body have experience in such matters. The positive news is that literally thousands of building projects have been successfully completed in the education sector so there is a wealth of experience which can be called upon. Whatever is being considered, something similar probably exists somewhere! I do not know many who don't enjoy showing off their accomplishments. So if, for example, the new school includes a state of the art science block, then visits to similar schemes should be arranged. Understand what the school's science department want but once again ensure that the demands from the internal team are relevant for the future. Very often trends in university style teaching run ahead of those in schools so having knowledge of higher education and researching new buildings in that sector may prove valuable.

Appoint an individual

In relation to managing the project team, although there are numerous

routes to success, having an individual for the school acting as the 'client' and being a single point of contact for the external project manager is usually beneficial. Designing by committee is never efficient and a single point of contact can take all the opinions and feedback from school colleagues at any stage of the project and then convert them into clear instructions for the project manager, knowing with confidence the likely consequence of any changes. There are numerous stakeholders in terms of a school and it will be impossible for the design team to fully meet the requirements of all and the client on the school side must determine the priorities rather than this being left as a matter of interpretation for the design team. The project manager can, in turn, then communicate with the project team. Think of it as a two-way hour glass with the project manager and client as the pinch point interface controlling the information flow.

Design to stimulate learning in inside spaces

Design clearly is not limited to defining space requirements and layouts. There are elements of interior design that have been proven to assist in learning, such as the use of bright colours helping to promote mental alertness and activity. The use of the word 'magnolia' should be banned! Stimulating all senses should

be a design goal and can have education impact in terms of pupil creativity and productivity through to the motivation and well-being of all who work in or visit the school.

Design to stimulate learning in outside spaces

The design of external spaces is just as critical as the buildings and the transition from one to another must be incorporated into the design strategy. Outdoor spaces in schools, particularly for younger age groups, are a necessity, allowing students to let off steam, run and play, therefore ensuring a greater focus on the academic parts of the timetable. Clear objectives in relation to external spaces should lead to them being an inherent part of initial designs rather than being a later addition using whatever space is left. In countries with variable climates provision must ideally be made to incorporate both green and hard external areas, thereby allowing students some form of outdoor activity in most weather.

Design with operating costs in mind

In building a school the real tests of the initiative come in terms of the output it inspires; what is the quality of the outcomes of the young people who graduate? Is the venture sustainable? In relation to the latter, minimising running costs and looking at all aspects of whole life costing for the new facilities must be a driving factor. Energy costs, despite the very recent reductions in price, will, for the foreseeable future, be a major consideration in building design and it is essential that all the latest sustainable technologies are considered. That having been said, non-technological solutions such as maximising natural ventilation and optimising glazing opportunities to let in natural light can have long-term cost benefits as well as positively impacting the well-being of those working in those areas. Any capital investment which is affordable and which reduces operating costs is highly worthwhile.

Assuming all the above has been taken into account, at some stage there will be a brand new shiny facility. At the point of opening the new school and well before the impact on students can be measured, the success criteria for the project will fall into three distinct categories – programme, budget and quality.

For any education project there is usually a specific requirement in terms of an occupation date that determines the programme. In addition the budget is almost always limited to a defined figure. Hence without planning, the only variable tends to be quality. Unfortunately in any construction the last phase tends to consist of those elements which will most influence initial perception, with such areas as the furniture fit out and paint finishes being key. Unless managed properly it can be at this very critical time when the project is slightly behind schedule and running up against the budget when quality is the only aspect that can be cut to fulfil the other two objectives. Careful planning should ensure that there is flexibility in the programme and in the budget. Although clearly having an empty building for any period of time will bring short-term cost consequences in terms of financing, this is a wise investment and a much preferred route as compared to the alternative of cutting corners in the last phase of construction. In addition any budget must have a significant contingency, perhaps as much as ten per cent of the contract value, and this must be retained as long as possible rather than all being invested at any early stage in the build.

There is no doubt that what is meant by 'good' school design will change over time. However, if a new school is well thought out and a clear defined design brief established then the result will be outstanding. The facilities will act as a draw to both students and staff and the school will flourish. Operating costs will be kept low, allowing for the maximum investment possible on additional staff and other areas that directly impact on the teaching and learning experience rather than in the fabric of the buildings. Most importantly your successors will not ask the question, 'What were they thinking when they built that?!'

Paddy Jackman is director of operations at Ardingly College, a co-educational independent school with 920 students aged 2-18. After working at the University of the Arts, Imperial College and Ardingly College, Paddy Jackman has a proven track record in the delivery of complex building projects in the education sector.

www.ardingly.com

Delivering the design

Colin Hall

The Durham grammar school that I attended (no longer, of course, a grammar school) is having its centenary this year; with its listed building status, its Edwardian splendour is intact. Its parquet floors, sash windows, tiled and painted corridors have all stood the test of time.

Of course it is quite a newcomer, or a later example of the myriad of Victorian schools built at the latter end of the 19th century. While I am no Luddite or Morrisesque romantic, it was these buildings which were in my mind when I approached the design and realisation of a brand new school. They have stood the test of time and while they may suffer from a want of eco-credentials, what is more eco-friendly than a building that can last well beyond a hundred years? It is perhaps an iconoclastic view to wish to return rather than to advance. Should schools be vehicles for aesthetics, or should they be rather more pragmatic, more prosaic, more mundane, fit-for-purpose, ephemeral? Best to build them light and knock them down forty years on. For all the talk of flexible buildings and spaces to accommodate radical curriculum change, the actuality is that the fundamental curriculum and mode of examination has not changed in nearly a century and nor are there any signs or moves to suggest that teaching has moved beyond or will move beyond what we currently do. I am less sure that building design is intrinsically linked to teaching and learning but am very sure that it is profoundly linked to ethos and values which in turn promote an attitude to learning. Few people have the opportunity to build a new school from scratch, but all school leaders have the opportunity to make their buildings better and I think that the principle is the same: what values do we wish the buildings to enshrine, to uphold, to promote? For me all buildings start with ethos, they start with defined ideas of what we wish their users to think about. From thought arrives action and from action outcomes are derived. This is, of

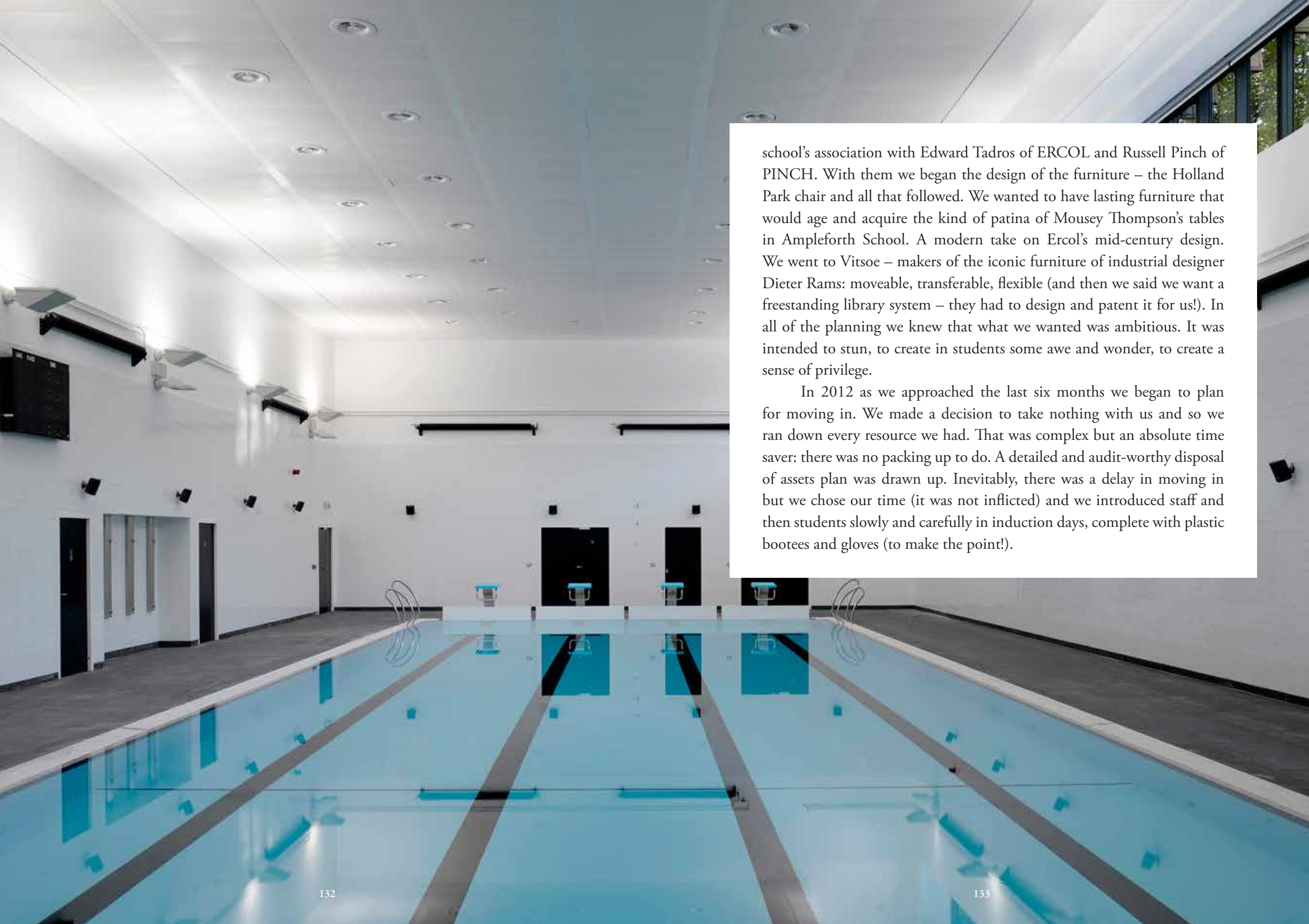
course, a deeply personal perspective and it is only in very recent times that I have recognised that personally painting my first classroom in 1982 before I taught my first ever lesson was an early expression of the person who went on to have the opportunity to create an £80 million school. In between, there were many examples of making the environment an essential tool in delivering the best educational outcomes. Buildings matter: the light matters; the temperature matters; the colours matter; the corridors matter; the toilets matter; the sound matters; the lines of vision matter. The building creates a mood and the mood dictates ownership and ownership equals outcome. I would adore my Edwardian grammar school building but as a leader of a very 21st century glass box I am acutely aware of what would present barriers to success – never insurmountable – but considerable nevertheless and harder for teachers and learners in real terms.

The vision

The new Holland Park School opened in November 2012. Building had started some two years earlier and demolition the year before that. The new school was erected on the same site as the old one, required a complex set of manoeuvres and a set of four storey portacabins. The commissioning of architects and the design process began in 2005. The success of the project had its roots in the following: the commitment and ambition of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and their desire to build a landmark building; architects who wanted to work closely with the school on every element of the design; and most critically the decision to give the project to one key person from the school. The architects – AEDAS, now known as AHR, were appointed by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea who involved myself and David Chappell, the school's associate head, in all of their deliberations and processes. David and I were deeply impressed by AEDAS' openness and creativity. In their opening meetings they asked for our key aspirations. What we knew we had was a site of approximately 110x55m and we all started not just from a list of ideas but from a steadfast determination and belief. What we asked for was a school that did not look like a school. We requested: solidity, durability, heavy doors, indestructible surfaces, no plasterboard! We listed transparency: glass spaces; clean lines of vision from one end of the building to the other (110m); clean lines of vision across

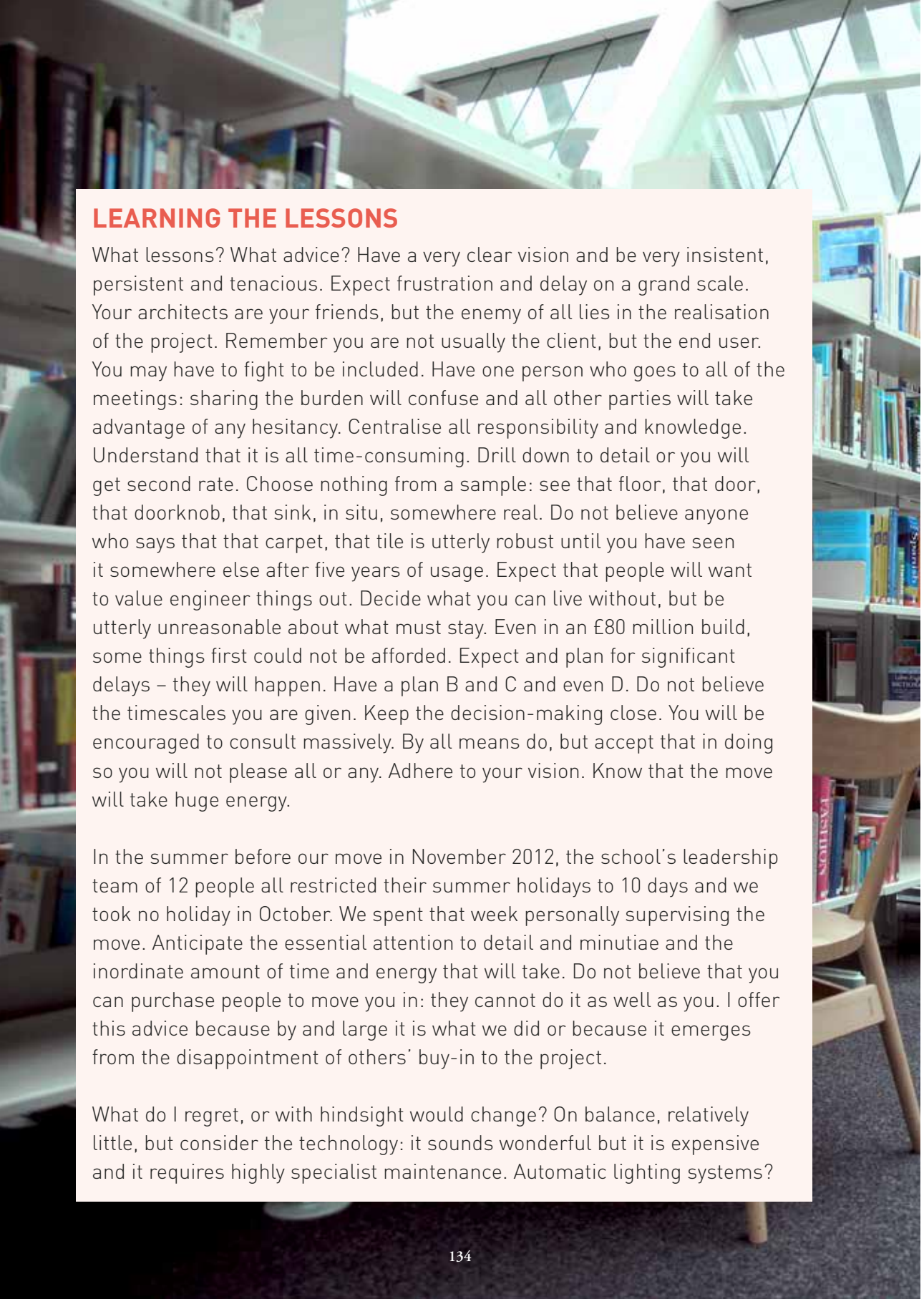
the space (55m), no cul-de-sacs; toilets/washrooms open to the corridors and without doors. We listed egalitarianism: the same chairs for all; the same quality for all. We listed the seemingly impossible: an art gallery; a competition-sized swimming pool; bespoke storage systems; a library shelving system that did not yet exist; no storage/stock cupboards; a stunning school hall that would rival the original 1958 school hall designed by Leslie Martin (who built the Royal Festival Hall). A library in the heart of the school. For a year we met frequently and the design emerged. The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's steering group gave vital support to the work and design. The key ingredients were a team of architects who perceived their role as one of service. At no point did they ever seek to impose, rather they sought to realise our vision for a solid, transparent, and egalitarian building that struck a new note and did not look like a school. That final demand was entirely understood by them: they comprehended that what we wanted was a stunning building that happened to educate young people. And so, the ideas became plans and the plans began to display our collective vision. In weekly meetings the shape of rooms was conceived and choices were made to suit needs. We wanted teachers to have everything to hand so we conceived the 'Teacher Wall' housing their stock, their IT, their locker, their printer, their telephone – all self-sufficient. We declared: no departmental offices but rather a light filled fifth floor staff common room perched on the top of the school with a terrace, with no student access as we wanted privacy for staff, a retreat.

Once the design stage was completed I made a crucial decision to hand over to David Chappell. This was critical to the project. Realising a new school is a full-time job, I wanted David to have the credit for the work and judged him better suited to what went on to be three years of lengthy and frequent meetings which dealt with enormous detail. His involvement was essential because there was not a pipe, a foundation, a door fitting, a ventilation system or window frame that he did not know and understand intimately. He regularly updated me as and when he saw any fundamental issues were at stake but he was the person leading and that meant taking decisions, in conjunction with the RBKC that were millions of pounds decisions. Once the building work started – starting with the decant, demolition of our old school and our removal to portacabins – then commenced the fitting out. Again, there was a vision – bespoke and lasting. So began the



school's association with Edward Tadros of ERCOL and Russell Pinch of PINCH. With them we began the design of the furniture – the Holland Park chair and all that followed. We wanted to have lasting furniture that would age and acquire the kind of patina of Mousey Thompson's tables in Ampleforth School. A modern take on Ercol's mid-century design. We went to Vitsoe – makers of the iconic furniture of industrial designer Dieter Rams: moveable, transferable, flexible (and then we said we want a freestanding library system – they had to design and patent it for us!). In all of the planning we knew that what we wanted was ambitious. It was intended to stun, to create in students some awe and wonder, to create a sense of privilege.

In 2012 as we approached the last six months we began to plan for moving in. We made a decision to take nothing with us and so we ran down every resource we had. That was complex but an absolute time saver: there was no packing up to do. A detailed and audit-worthy disposal of assets plan was drawn up. Inevitably, there was a delay in moving in but we chose our time (it was not inflicted) and we introduced staff and then students slowly and carefully in induction days, complete with plastic bootees and gloves (to make the point!).



LEARNING THE LESSONS

What lessons? What advice? Have a very clear vision and be very insistent, persistent and tenacious. Expect frustration and delay on a grand scale. Your architects are your friends, but the enemy of all lies in the realisation of the project. Remember you are not usually the client, but the end user. You may have to fight to be included. Have one person who goes to all of the meetings: sharing the burden will confuse and all other parties will take advantage of any hesitancy. Centralise all responsibility and knowledge. Understand that it is all time-consuming. Drill down to detail or you will get second rate. Choose nothing from a sample: see that floor, that door, that doorknob, that sink, in situ, somewhere real. Do not believe anyone who says that that carpet, that tile is utterly robust until you have seen it somewhere else after five years of usage. Expect that people will want to value engineer things out. Decide what you can live without, but be utterly unreasonable about what must stay. Even in an £80 million build, some things first could not be afforded. Expect and plan for significant delays – they will happen. Have a plan B and C and even D. Do not believe the timescales you are given. Keep the decision-making close. You will be encouraged to consult massively. By all means do, but accept that in doing so you will not please all or any. Adhere to your vision. Know that the move will take huge energy.

In the summer before our move in November 2012, the school's leadership team of 12 people all restricted their summer holidays to 10 days and we took no holiday in October. We spent that week personally supervising the move. Anticipate the essential attention to detail and minutiae and the inordinate amount of time and energy that will take. Do not believe that you can purchase people to move you in: they cannot do it as well as you. I offer this advice because by and large it is what we did or because it emerges from the disappointment of others' buy-in to the project.

What do I regret, or with hindsight would change? On balance, relatively little, but consider the technology: it sounds wonderful but it is expensive and it requires highly specialist maintenance. Automatic lighting systems?

Do not do it! Two years on, we still cannot control them properly and all who designed and installed them are long gone. Just have a light switch you can turn on and off. Key systems – have keys. Windows – make them manual. Of course some of this is all about eco-credentials and energy saving. You will not save money on a new building: your fuel may be cheaper, but the engineer you need to understand the technology will add staff costs you did not dream of.

Regrets? No regrets, but really: substantiality. I go back to brick and tiled corridors – I wish I had insisted on these. The hall floor, I wish I had sacrificed something else to put down the kind of parquet floor that our original school had. In time and over the years these may be possible. Of the fundamental school not a simple regret: we knew what we wanted, we had architects who wanted to deliver it, and I had the utter passion and commitment of David Chappell, Associate Head. His talent, tenacity and tight control delivered our piece of history.

Believe that it will make a difference. It does. It will. Our new building enhanced student attitudes very considerably. Their elevated respect, pride and ownership were a key part of our 2014 Ofsted inspection in which the school was judged 'outstanding' in all categories.

Colin Hall has been the headteacher of Holland Park School since 2001. Holland Park School is an 11-18 converter academy with 1400 students in west central London.

www.hollandparkschool.co.uk

Learning leading design

Lynne Heath

Keep learning central

One of the biggest challenges for school leaders looking to design new schools has been to look at learning spaces with 21st century eyes: to imagine the kind of school that fosters the best from each and every child; that allows a permeability of disciplines; and recognises that the soft skills required for our future economic prosperity need building designs that promote collaboration, communication, teamwork and flexible ways of working. However, achieving these objectives by design is a valid test of vision and imagination, given that the science of designing learning environments remains underdeveloped. As Professor Stephen Heppell argues, 'whereas, traditionally, we have designed for productivity, processing large numbers of children through the effective use of buildings, designing a room for learning is very complex. No one knows how to prevent "learning-loss".'

In the UK the academies programme and the Building Schools for the Future funding generated intense debate about future schools and future learning. What increasingly emerged was the criticality of physical factors that need to be taken into account in school design. The evidence that natural light improves performance, well-being and attendance; that speech intelligibility ratings of 75% or less hinder progress; and the health-related problems such as asthma associated with ventilation systems all need to be considered. Many children throughout the UK are still expected to learn in ageing structures that were never sound in the first place, containing materials that we now know to be toxic and unsuitable.

Other considerations such as the systems and processes and communications approaches that schools need to underpin their physical environment also have to be factored into any design process. We have seen a major shift from the traditional view of learning in recent years, reflecting the global and societal changes that impact on the world we live in. These changes have resulted in new demands being placed on learners and schools, with a government agenda focused on personalised learning, increased participation rates post-16 and post-18, the 14-19 reforms and greater accountability for learning outcomes.

At the same time our understanding of learning has developed, fuelled by significant research on learning styles, multiple and emotional intelligences and formative assessment. Add to this the rapid development of technology which has shifted the emphasis from teaching to facilitating, enabled peer-to-peer and distance learning and encouraged self-directed and individual learning. All of these factors have combined to provide some very different approaches to the notion of a teacher at the front of serried rows, pouring wisdom into empty vessels. Yet we still do not have a robust research base for integrated and personalised learning environments.

A further issue for those charged with planning is the recognition of the extent to which school users are engaged in the design process. Clearly while the design of a building can support future thinking the community inhabiting the building also has to change if a genuine culture shift is to be achieved. According to Sir Ken Robinson, 'if you really want to shift a culture, it's two things; its habits and its habitats'. If this is the case then it is clear that school designs cannot be imposed on users, nor can they be an 'off-the-shelf' model. The success of new buildings relies heavily on its users being able to articulate a distinctive vision for their school and then working with designers and architects to ensure a solution that allows that vision to breathe life into the habitat.

Manchester Communication Academy

Manchester Communication Academy (MCA) opened in September 2010, following a three-year planning period, as a new school for students aged 11-18. MCA's origins lie in the distinctive national policy context of the years from 1997 to 2010, when governments became particularly concerned that England, although affluent by international standards, is also beset by multiple inequalities associated with poverty and other forms of economically-related disadvantage.

Governments recognised the role of education as essential to tackling poverty and economic disadvantage and this was a crucial factor in the launch of the Academies Programme in 2003. This programme placed schools in the hands of a sponsor who could bring new ideas and leverage resources to tackle educational disadvantage.

In MCA's case, the lead sponsor was British Telecom (BT), one of the biggest employers in Manchester and a major force in the telecommunications industry in the UK. There were two additional co-sponsors, Manchester City Council and Manchester College, and the academy was built as one of six new academies in Manchester, as part of the citywide BSF programme. The sponsors were approached by the council because of their connection to the economic growth of the city and their reputation for commitment to sustainable long-term growth

Academies were given freedoms which enabled local solutions to educational disadvantage, and the trustees of MCA deliberately chose to move beyond the immediate focus on raising levels of attainment. Instead they positioned themselves as having a very clear vision, based on their own corporate and social responsibility policies, which committed them to the creation of a new model showing how schools can contribute to the well-being of the areas and populations they serve.

Within this framework, attainment was viewed as one, admittedly crucial, element in a wider programme of activity to promote resilience, healthy lifestyles and workplace skills, and ultimately improve life chances. Accordingly the priorities for MCA were to champion its local neighbourhood and to work in partnership with other schools, services and voluntary and community sector organisations to realise this broad vision of education and well-being. MCA's partnerships have been developed by identifying and acting on shared priorities for the students and the community as a whole.

There were a number of circumstances which enabled MCA to pursue this vision and which determined its development. These included a thematic curriculum structure, an extensive programme of out-of-hours activities for students and community members, and wide-ranging partnerships with other organisations. However the most important factor was that MCA was brand new,

and did not replace an existing school. This meant that much of the consultation with staff and students around habits and transition into new ways of working, which characterised many of the other sponsored academies, did not happen. It did mean however that the design of the building could not be determined by the views of the users as they did not exist – much of the planning was based therefore on research, the analysis of existing new builds, and the vision itself.

The academy benefited from a focused two-year planning phase, during which the sponsors and trustees developed their distinctive vision for working in one of the most disadvantaged areas in the country, with the ambition that learning should determine the design. The footprint and layout of the building had already been decided to a large extent so the focus was on the internal configuration of space, the curriculum structures and the adjacency of specialist facilities. As principal designate I was fortunate to have worked in another local authority which was part of the BSF programme and this enabled me to identify key aspects of successful school design, gleaned from visits to new schools both in the UK and abroad.

I had also spent time with other headteachers analysing curriculum models, staffing structures and leadership competencies and so was in a position to try to marry together the habits and habitats described by Sir Ken Robinson. I also worked with a project manager, appointed by BT, who helped me to understand the vision and values of the sponsor and to work through how these could be operationalised in the new school, particularly around community engagement and neighbourhood regeneration.

In order to inform this process, I undertook an intensive programme of listening to the local community to find out what the future users wanted from the new school. Young people, parents, community organisations, councillors, and local residents were all invited to participate, with discussions taking place in residents' homes, in community venues, in local primary schools, on the streets and in the supermarket! During the lead-in process the design process was responsive to the wishes of these future users, as well as the research findings and the sponsors' vision, as the £32 million build began to take shape.

Key features

There are a number of features worth noting about the design which illustrate this responsiveness. Future users felt that the academy needed to be highly visible, as a symbol of investment in the neighbourhood but also to signify its ambition to become a community asset – hence its location at the junction of two major roads and its open access. They also emphasised the need for security for young people and that MCA be a safe space. There is a large secure reception area for visitors, and the building has been designed with four connected wings surrounding a central court yard, creating a safe outdoor space for students.

In addition, the building was designed to encourage and support its development as a community asset. MCA has a range of facilities, including adult learning, community meeting places, and sports, performance and catering facilities, with a separate entrance and reception area, which can be easily accessed, especially outside the standard school day. Through its design, MCA has therefore been able to establish itself as being physically part of the community and open to the community, while also offering a safe environment for students, staff and community members alike.

The design clearly reflects the vision for educational excellence and draws on international research into school design. Flexible spaces were created to promote easy flows between whole-class work, individual work and group work. The curriculum structure, with 3 x two-hour sessions per day, team teaching and subjects distributed across five faculty areas required collaborative planning to ensure that time, as well as space, was used effectively. Each of the learning bases is self-contained with toilets, office space, small rooms for intensive support and appropriate technology. This reduces unnecessary movement around the building, reduces the opportunity for off task behaviour and reduces the divide between formal and informal learning. The aim was to foster a culture of learning and well-being for staff and students, with transparency of practice and consistency of process modelled at all stages.

The use of the space in a building designed for up to 1320 young people with only 230 students and 40 staff in the first year of opening required careful thought, as it could well have been an overwhelming experience for all concerned. The habits of the users had to be carefully nurtured to ensure that the

new staff and students arriving on a yearly basis over the next four years could be modelled, replicated and remain consistent with the habitat. We ensured that the large flexible bases were used with an entire year group and staff teams in order to develop experience and expertise of open plan, project-based learning and did not allow 'drift' into the additional free spaces. Staff by necessity worked in multidisciplinary teams on a number of occasions and this promoted the permeability of learning across and between subject areas.

What is particularly important in all this is that compared to 'failing' schools, which were converted to academies to 'kick-start' their rapid improvement, MCA has been allowed the time to engage in thoughtful, long-term, strategic planning – and, quite literally, to build its vision into the school. MCA has, furthermore, also been able to build its student admissions year-on-year since opening, with this slow build being crucial in allowing us to operationalise and embed these plans. This opportunity extended to the staff recruitment process which actively sought to appoint people who were committed to MCA's emerging vision of working with and for the community, and thereby improving the life chances of young people.

There cannot be enough emphasis on how crucial this time has been to the development of this academy as it has allowed us to grow into a new type of learning environment, learning from mistakes without the pressure of external exams. The capacity to think beyond the present proved to be invaluable and even with the cost and design restrictions associated with new school builds today, it is still possible to influence and create future learning. Currently we are in the design process for a new primary academy, financed by Targeted Basic Needs Funding and despite the financial constraints have been able to pressure the constructors to provide appropriate and customised learning spaces, within the designated framework.

Lynne Heath is principal of Manchester Communication Academy, a new build, 1200-place, sponsored academy in north Manchester. In addition to being an experienced academy principal with over 30 years' experience in inner-city education, Lynne has been a LA adviser, an Ofsted inspector and a teacher fellow in industry.

www.manchestercommunicationacademy.com

Getting the physical environment right

LEARNING THE LESSONS

While the opportunity to grow slowly and avoid the inheritance of an existing school gave significant advantage to our development, there were however different challenges inherent in our programme that we had recognised without necessarily knowing the solutions. The challenge of growing and expanding new teams of staff and students year-on-year, and maintaining the habits and culture of the original vision was one such example. In particular, how did we ensure that the first intake of students accepted the newcomers in year 2, sharing what they considered as their territory? How could we ensure that the microscopic attention to students that characterised our first year could be balanced and shifted to encompass 1200 students in 2014, while maintaining those great relationships and effective communication with individuals that was so much a part of our initial culture? How would the flexible learning bases cope with key stage 4 and the inevitable separation into subject disciplines that the exam system would demand? Could we maintain our commitment to community space and use as our numbers grew? Would we be able to recruit skilled staff in specialist areas to work in such a non-traditional learning environment? And what would be our USP once the novelty of being a new build had worn off? Fortunately we have weathered all of these possible storms – some of the challenges never arose, and in other cases the solutions presented themselves.

The success of this academy is largely due to the talent and skills of our staff, their willingness to take risks, their commitment to social justice; our parents who were prepared to take the leap of faith with us by entrusting their children into our care; our governors and sponsors who remain constant about the vision for this academy and its neighbourhood; and above all our students who respond to every opportunity and take every challenge in their stride. In terms of advice, and despite the economic constraints that govern the design process today, my top tip would be to articulate and operationalise your vision of educational excellence. Never allow the vision to be compromised by planners and architects or you will never achieve the habitat or the habits that will ensure success.

Getting professional capital right

Appointing the best leader and building capacity in a new school

Mike Phillips

A new beginning

What a fantastic opportunity. A green field, a chance to set up a new school; to produce a blueprint for education and make that a reality; a chance to shape the future; no legacy issues to deal with. Brilliant! But is it…?

This is not normal headship as we know it. It is different, very different. And it will not suit all.

Starting a new school is not a task for the faint-hearted. Nor is it an easy option. Those who do so will inevitably be faced with significant challenges with a limited margin for error. You have one shot to start a school and get it right! And the community at large is watching your every move!

The opening of a new school in the UK is set against a backdrop of a challenging and changing educational landscape. Some may argue education is becoming more politicised. Heads are being asked to do more with less, to make difficult decisions in a culture of austerity, reduced budgets and greater competition, this at a time when more heads are retiring from the profession than ever before and more are being moved on, with job security being likened to that of Premiership football managers in the UK. Might we follow their lead and turn to Spain, Portugal and Italy? In such a context, it is not surprising that fewer deputies have the appetite or desire to take up headship positions. Having said all this, there are some dedicated professionals, willing to take on the challenges and risks associated with a new school. Anyone deciding to do so does not do so lightly. Schools need to choose the right person but candidates also need to choose the right opportunity for them. Choosing the wrong opportunity and 'failing' will create an issue for the school but it also creates an issue for the individual. The nature of school leadership is such that it is a very unforgiving

place. Schools need to take this into consideration when they are recruiting and use it to their advantage.

1. Recruiting the right leader

So what skills do you need to lead a new school? The world of school leadership has changed significantly in the last ten years. There has been a move away from the 'hero head', autocratic model to one where leaders' personal characteristics and the empowerment of a leadership team, combined with systems, processes and methodologies, improve outcomes and learning for young people. This is a team game now.

But, setting up a school from scratch is different from school leadership in an existing and established school. The leader sets the tone. They will be the embodiment of the school alongside the chair of governors. There is a whole new set of challenges to be faced and attitudes need to be different. The culture will be different – 'sorry it is not in my job description' does not exist here – 'All hands on deck' is the call. Not only are you expected to make the tea, but you will probably have to buy the cups, the saucers, sugar, milk, and kettle – all this assuming the water supply is connected.

Then there is the elephant in the room – the skills and experience you are looking for in a leader to establish a new school may not be the same as those that are needed in three years' time. So you might have to do this again in a couple of years. There are a selection of dimensions to consider on page 150.

2. The appointment process

So how do you go about appointing a leader for a new school? There are plenty of people who have run appointment processes very successfully. However, these need to be undertaken in the context of the marketplace. This marketplace is different to what it was last year. In a context of insecurity, where people are risk averse, attracting a pool of appropriate candidates is no easy task.

Many have been burned by appointment processes in the past. How can you be sure? Well, you can't be sure. However, you can mitigate risks by taking the right steps and taking advice.

The proposition - do some thinking but not all of it

Attracting people to consider these sorts of roles is a skill in itself. If you are appointing a new school leader, it is important to establish a framework within which your appointed person has to operate. What is non-negotiable/negotiable is made clear. There is no need to make stipulations on a new post-holder just for the sake of it. Present the framework and get your candidates to explain how they would take the school forward. You then judge appropriateness.

To agree or not to agree – that is the question

Get buy-in from stakeholders at the start of any appointment process, not at the end. Get key people involved in briefings. If there are disagreements, then these need to be discovered early, not at the end. Time spent searching for agreement and clarity is time well spent.

How do you attract the right people – should we headhunt?

Headhunting is a word that not all people use comfortably. Search is a more refined word but ultimately is the same thing. There is no mystique here. The key is that an effective headhunter builds relationships through an appointment process. They proactively inform high-quality prospective candidates about the role and provide answers to queries and advice around suitability. They should be

well briefed, well informed and able to have a grown-up conversation as they are dealing with grown-up people. Be warned, not all are like this.

It is not about generating large numbers of people – in fact this can be a drawback. It is about small numbers of good people – and the focus is on this. Headhunters/recruitment companies should be opening doors, not standing in the way of making the best appointment. Alongside the headhunting element, they can provide support as regards the process and independent assessment of the suitability of candidates if they also provide a rigorous preliminary recruitment process.

3. Growing capacity beyond the headteacher

The challenge is to recruit and retain skilled specialised staff with the leadership behaviour and flexibility to see the challenge of working in a new school as a positive benefit to their development. However, it is unlikely initially you will be able to employ enough people to perform all of the functions required in a school. In adding to the team, you will need to choose carefully, recognising where economies may be achieved – some services can be bought in on a part-time or contract basis.

There is a need to ensure the right mix of skills and talents in a small team, while maintaining strong professional relationships. The risk posed by 'toxic' relationships in a new school is much greater because people spend a lot more time together. All need to share the vision of the school and get along well.

And remember prior planning prevents poor performance. The success of any school relies on appointing the right leader and the right team. During its early years, you will not have a big team that can support weaker members. Once you have the right people, develop them, nurture them and value them.

Mike Phillips is managing director and the founder of Pentir Talent Solutions. Pentir's work includes leading complex, high-profile senior recruitment projects, headhunting for roles that are difficult to fill, providing high-quality interim support to satisfy urgent need, coaching/team development and running assessment centres to support key appointments and organisational restructures.

www.pentir.com

DEFINING THE PERSON SPECIFICATION

Visibility and people skills
Yes, you need to be able to run a school and know about getting young people to be the best they can be. Visible leadership is non-negotiable. These roles are not for people who want to sit behind their desk. Often there isn't a desk to sit behind or a room to sit in! Recruiting students, staff, partners, teachers, and suppliers requires exceptional people skills and emotional intelligence.

Comfortable with ambiguity
Often prospective candidates want to know every point of detail about a role. While there are some answers around, there will be many areas left undeveloped. Schools need a headteacher to convert the vision into a strategy and direction of travel.

Candidates that want everything defined for them are unlikely to be the most suitable. However, those that see the ambiguity as an opportunity are.

Entrepreneurial and practical
There is an entrepreneurial dynamism to leading new schools. Interestingly, these don't differ from running small businesses. A recent survey concluded the top ten characteristics of business entrepreneurs were:

- goal-orientated
- committed to the business
- hands-on
- thrive on uncertainty/resilient
- continually look for opportunities to improve
- willing to take risks
- willing to listen and learn
- possess great people skills
- inherently creative
- passionate and full of positivity.

Who can argue with these in the context of a new school?

Carrying the community
There are certain technical skills that come to the fore – marketing skills are far more important than is the norm in established schools. New schools are in the spotlight, so being able to work with the media and to establish confidence in the community are other key attributes.

Planning for growth
The ability to plan for the future, while continuing to drive the day-to-day is a difficult balancing act. Planning for growth requires a well-developed understanding of the challenges of resourcing – be it finances and cash flow, people and staffing, property and technology. Decisions for today will always impact tomorrow and failing to take this into consideration limits the flexibility of any organisation. Doing fewer things and doing them well to establish a very clear basis for moving forward is the key.

Matching values and ambitions
Competencies and capabilities are one dimension. Values and levels of ambition are different. Many organisations develop a highly testing and rigorous process – an intellectual challenge. They end up appointing the last person standing. They then discover the fit may be wrong.

Organisations need to be very clear that an appointment process is two way – the school chooses the candidate and the candidate chooses the school. It should not be a one-way set of hurdles for the candidate to jump over. Yes, there is a need for rigour, but alongside this there needs to be space for discussions and sharing of vision, issues and challenges. This allows candidate and organisation to match their values and levels of ambition. Teasing these things out is just as important as assessing competencies.

TOP TIPS

Do:

- Start early – the more time you allow for a recruitment process, the greater your choice of candidates.
- From the outset be clear about what you are looking for in terms of experience and skills – recognise these are likely to change as the school evolves.
- Be clear about what your 'offer' is to the market – this may be salary, opportunities for development, breadth of the role, overall vision – these all play a part.
- Remove/mitigate barriers which may prevent potential candidates showing an interest in your school.
- Make a real effort to engage with candidates and treat them with courtesy – if they have lifted their head above the parapet and applied for a role, they deserve to be treated with respect and be supported through any assessment process.
- Recognise the importance of having a two-way process and of candidates self-selecting themselves out of the recruitment process.

Don't:

- Underestimate the challenges of recruiting and retaining skilled specialist staff that have the behaviours you need and the desire to work in your environment.
- Appoint a second rate person just because you have a role to fill.
- Repeatedly advertise a role - it is costly and can create a negative perception in the marketplace.
- Create a recruitment process with lots of hurdles just for the sake of it – be clear on what you are looking to judge – many candidates judge the organisation on the quality of the assessment process they run.
- Work in isolation – work with others and share the challenges and barriers to success.

Creating and developing professional capital

Michael Whitworth

You do not begin with a blank page. All new schools need to fit within an educational model defined by society's expectations and the more prosaic constraints imposed by budget and the inevitability of external examinations. However the sense of opportunity and trepidation encountered when looking out towards the building site that will be your new school is a uniquely exciting career experience.

It has become something of a truism to state that people make an organisation. However this, like most truisms, is rooted in some fact. Recruiting and developing staff was at the heart of Wren Academy's strategic approach to becoming an exceptional school from the earliest days of our journey when I was the only employee. Building a great team has proved to be probably the single most challenging, satisfying and valuable thing we have done.

Our school started with year 7 only and built incrementally by one year group annually thereafter. This meant we needed only a small number of teachers and student services staff (our name for colleagues who do not teach). Our approach to recruiting the best people was founded upon honesty, recognising quality, and an attempt to share our excitement at the journey to come. We realised straight away that a brand new school would put off some people as well as appeal to others. While the ability to shape a curriculum, teaching approach and ethos from the beginning proved enticing to many, others were put off by the lack of certainty and sense of the unknown. Some, I found out, baulked at the prospect of no examination classes for several years.

Despite the reservations of some, we generally had lots of applicants for jobs in our inaugural year (and in the years which followed). Clearly we succeeded in generating a sense of enthusiasm for the task ahead. Much of this success was based upon getting the right senior leaders in place role by role and ensuring they

were able to communicate a vision which incorporated lots of opportunities for new staff together with the promise of clear and robust structures which meant that colleagues would not be working unsupported.

In our recruitment processes we were very open about what working in the new school would involve. We talked about the vision (and as it began to happen, the reality) in such a way that the faint-hearted would be discouraged. I well remember some candidates whose eyes glazed over as we passionately expounded upon what the school would be. Others exhibited visible discomfort as they were subjected to our zeal. This was all fine; they were not right for us, nor we for them.

We ended up with a very young staff. In particular, the middle leaders appointed in our early years were inexperienced and may well not have got equivalent roles elsewhere at that point in their careers. We appointed them because they were gifted teachers with the capacity to grow professionally. One of the benefits of a small school beginning with year 7 only is that you can give colleagues a couple of years to mature into their roles – as long as they are good enough to do so.

I cannot claim that the sense of excitement we attempted to generate and the openness and robustness of our selection procedures led to plentiful applicants and perfect appointments in every case. One or two roles were difficult to fill and we had to work very hard to find competent candidates. These appointments would challenge our leadership skills and our professional development strategy.

So, in September 2008 the school opened with our first complement of 20 teaching staff. Young, enthusiastic and inexperienced, our structures and professional development activities were based around meeting their needs. There was an obvious need for clear and robust school systems, understood by all and consistently applied. Once established, these set the foundations for the professional growth of our staff team. With a teaching cohort of 20 people, staff training was focused and individualised. Our strategy identified the technical aspects of teaching and leadership that colleagues required alongside more personal needs. As a result, they developed quickly, weaknesses were speedily picked up and remedies put in place. The leadership team had an unusually close understanding of colleagues' needs and was able to devote an equally unusual amount of time to addressing them.

Alongside the individual approach, it is crucial to construct a team ethos and a sense of collegiality. We did this in a range of ways, sharing working and social spaces, getting to know each other on training days and having the occasional evening out as a whole staff. Wren's first year was an exceptional opportunity to create a shared central culture for the school, a time to be enjoyed and fully exploited. And keep talking about the vision as long as people are prepared to listen and make sure that everyone is aware of the school's ultimate staffing structure. Repeating these messages will pay you dividends as the years go by.

If you want to be radical, it is much easier to be so from the start. Everyone joins an embryonic school expecting it to do things differently. When staff join a new school they view its systems as just the ways things are done and accept them as such. As time progresses, even with the most flexible and outward-looking staff, introducing big changes becomes harder. Habits become established, changes need more planning and consultation. I suggest taking the view that your new school will never be as innovative as it is on its first day.

Although our first year presented its challenges, it was in retrospect something of a honeymoon for us. It is vital that new schools make the most of this period, planning their activities wisely, the opportunities and time available will never come again. It is all too easy to let these precious three terms slip by. Arguably, the real business begins when new schools start recruiting staff for year 2.

If we flashback to the first spring term of Wren's life, teachers and students settling in and our planning beginning to turn to year 2, the staff recruitment and development challenges appeared superficially similar to those facing us in year 1. However, there are important differences which can become pitfalls for the unwary leadership team. Two things are worthy of particular mention:

- Assimilating large numbers of new staff into an existing team is difficult. New schools will have to do this for their first four or five years. Make sure your induction programme for new staff is excellent and that new and existing staff are made to mix together. One unforeseen consequence for us of establishing a strong culture in year 1 was that some new staff

found it hard to break into. Some great new teachers found our classroom expectations challenging (or perhaps merely idiosyncratic depending upon how you see it). We learned to be patient with new colleagues who initially struggled to gain their teaching momentum before flourishing.

- Another situation to watch out for is the possibility that first year staff come to see themselves as being part of some kind of elite vanguard and therefore feel deserving of special status, maybe even treating those who join later with some initial disdain. This is a tricky one. Pride in one's workplace is, to a large extent certainly, a good thing. Once it becomes off-putting to others then we must be careful. This was, in fact, not much of a problem for us at Wren but it is worth flagging (if anything, it has been more of an issue for our first student cohort).

So did we overdo the pride and culture bit with our inaugural staff cohort? Were they made to feel too special to the disadvantage of those who joined us later? I don't think so. The fact is that they were, and are, special and we should celebrate that. Creating a strong sense of staff identity and shared purpose was essential to our early success and a flying start is (almost) everything. The key is to ensure you recognise that the more highly performing your starting team is, the harder it will be for those who join them later. The most effective schools plan to manage this.

A few thoughts about governance, which presented different challenges but was a very important part of our early journey… there is a great deal for governors to do in a school's early years but a vital element of making the governing body effective is to have it in place and making decisions well before the school opens. We had a shadow body working on the opening for 18 months prior to our start-up. While this group did not have the legal status of a governing body, there was recognition by all parties that most of its members would transfer across officially to become governors when the school opened. This lead-in time gave us some big advantages. Firstly, the shadow group could make decisions about budget, staffing, curriculum, uniform and the myriad of other planning issues new schools face. Secondly, when Wren Academy opened, most of the governors already knew the school. They understood the journey we had taken to get to

'Day 1' and appreciated why decisions had been taken – because they had taken them. This combination of factors that made our governors a much sharper unit in year 1 than they would have been had they come together later, meant we were always on the front foot in preparing for year 2 and beyond.

A practical hint, do use your governors in a new school start-up project. There is so much to do and, in the earliest days at least, so few people to do it. Judicious allocation of tasks across governors and the embryonic leadership team can create more time to think and plan properly. However, do communicate relentlessly and effectively to make sure that everyone knows their brief intimately and sticks to it.

To conclude with a few reflections and the inevitable 'what ifs'. I am a happy principal, in most ways very content with the school we have created and extremely proud of the staff who have grown together over the last six and a half years. What would I have done differently given the opportunity again? One big thing springs to mind – I would have looked outwards quicker. Because you believe you are setting up something completely without parallel (which is no bad thing to think) and because you are so consumed by getting everything right with your new staff team, focusing on the benefits of collaborating with others can be something of an afterthought. I spent most of our first two years overly preoccupied with the internal dynamics of Wren. I could, and should, have spent more time building networks earlier. This would have given an extra dimension to our professional development work at that crucial time. Once again, leaders need to strike a balance. If your school is to succeed then it demands a fierce pride on your part, a belief that you are building something utterly unique and of the rarest quality. Hold that dream, but recognise that very little in education is entirely new. You will discover very few new ingredients, it is the way you put the existing ingredients together that will make your school special. So get out there early, build relationships and find the ingredients that are best for your school.

Michael Whitworth is the founding principal at Wren Academy, an 11–18 sponsored academy which opened as a brand new school with just year 7 in 2008. The academy has grown by a year group annually since then.

www.wrenacademy.org

Lessons from The East Manchester Academy

Dr Jill Richford

In 2008, Laing O'Rourke and Bovis Lend Lease formed a partnership with Manchester City Council to develop a brand new academy for secondary education in Beswick, east Manchester as part of the council's academy programme. The East Manchester Academy (TEMA) was opened on time in 2010 for 180 year 7 pupils. There was no predecessor school, and thus no previous building. The principal designate was officially in post from January 2009, although much work was undertaken prior to taking the post. Since 2010 the academy has grown and has developed a strong reputation. It was heavily oversubscribed in its first year and has continued to be so. It is now a well-respected school within the heart of Beswick.

The vision for this new academy was to provide outstanding and high-quality teaching and learning within an inclusive environment with a global outlook; our mission was to raise attainment and improve life opportunities for the community the academy serves. Our aims were to provide an exemplar secondary school that had high expectations, raised aspirations and provided opportunities for the young people of east Manchester to be successful participants in 21st century society and the world of work.

The first few months of 2009 were spent engaging the community and establishing the academy as a credible educational establishment. This involved establishing links with local primary headteachers and their schools, undertaking significant community and pupil voice activities to inform planning and ethos, attending parents evenings, Ward meetings and local community events, and generally embedding oneself in the wider 'corporate' and community infrastructure of the north east/central east districts of Manchester.

Early strategic plans included action planning and review, marketing and community liaison/consultation, curriculum development, staff recruitment, etc.

Another key area was working with sponsors and architects to ensure the academy vision. The academy is co-located with the district library which presented significant opportunities for the academy and wider community. Further, the academy is in close proximity to the world-class facilities of Manchester City FC and Sportcity. The concept of 'community entitlement' with regard to such resources underpinned our wider curriculum planning and respective partnership working.

Managing a brand new build, sponsors, the DfE, the local authority, recruiting staff, marketing, library staff and the community is no easy task. Recruitment of the then current year 5 pupils into a first year 7 cohort of 180 pupils for September 2010 was the highest priority (and a very challenging target, given sudden revised BSF projections and local and global economic circumstances at that moment in time) as well ensuring the new building and infrastructure were completed on time.

Establishing a brand new school required a whole planning programme from appointment, to opening and future development and included the important areas of:

- curriculum offer
- academic and pastoral structures
- buildings, facilities management, ICT, catering
- marketing, the academy's profile and branding
- engagement with prospective pupils and parents
- engagement with primary schools and working with those schools before opening
- engagement with other local organisations and local services
- recruitment of staff
- legal agreements
- governance
- development of the full range of policies
- finance
- collaboration with other primary, secondary and tertiary education providers.

Tasked with establishing a sixth form involved a great deal of work. However, the political climate changed within Manchester and this was later deferred and then halted. Nevertheless, recruiting potential students was time-consuming and ultimately a significant frustration.

Developing professional capital for sustainability and growth

The establishment of a new academy is an exciting prospect but also a huge risk for staff applying. For example, growing one year at a time means no KS4 subjects to be taught. Collaborating with previously known colleagues did have a positive impact on the academy as it allowed curriculum planning and the implementation of systems and structures to progress more quickly. Furthermore, working with a small group of highly trusted colleagues with the same vision and expectation for the academy reduced the time spent on getting to know people – it was hands on right from the start. Thus, the principal designate (PD) started with a seconded member of staff from his previous school with a particular skill set – strategic vision, versatile, good work ethic, and excellent community knowledge - and, as soon as possible, appointed a crucially important finance director who had worked with the PD, in a variety of capacities, for many years. The seconded member of staff had significant links already within the primary sector of the community the new school would serve, as did the PD. This was very useful as we could use such links in an advantageous way allowing a faster gateway to primary schools and thus potential recruitment of pupils. Such appointments served the academy well as they knew the expectations of the PD right from the start – high expectations, creativity, hard work and loyalty.

Despite regular budget planning as the recruitment progressed, changes were made to the original structure. Predicting a staffing structure for 2010-2014 presented its own challenges and thus the inevitable changes in structure as the curriculum and the academy grew. The initial recruitment structure was regularly re-examined and evolved once recruitment started due to the different staff talent and skills appointed. For example, the post of director of specialism & post-16 was accommodated within the assistant vice principal post.

Some posts disappeared as the skill set of appointed staff grew and some were created. Flexibility and constant reappraising of staff skill sets was a good way of ensuring we appointed staff in-line with initial development.

It was made clear throughout the recruitment interview process that teachers would have to be prepared to teach outside their subject area. This was fine in year 7 but, thereafter, lack of specialist teachers had obvious impact. With hindsight, recruiting more than required English, maths and science teachers would have been preferable.

How do you support staff to take on additional responsibilities in the context of a small starting staff body?

At each stage of recruitment staff were audited as to what they could teach, their leadership potential, the extra-curricular activities offered and training needs required. Performance management and informal learning walks within a small staff quickly enabled the Senior Leaders to identify future leaders and to match the staff skillset to developments planned. For staff appointed who taught outside their specialism much CPD support was given and, as the staffing grew, they later returned to their specialism. This did have impact in the first two years of the academy as some pupils did not have specialist teaching in some subjects and additional support was needed.

How does talent management ensure that staff grow as the school grows?

Governors were keen to reward staff who were good to outstanding practitioners, worked hard, had obvious talent and showed loyalty. It was important that talent be recognised, nurtured and developed. The staffing structure clearly indicated progression paths for appointed staff and, later as the academy evolved, new posts were created to ensure retention of good to outstanding staff. This did bring certain difficulties later on, as some inexperienced staff took on positions of responsibility that came to prove too much for them, as the school grew more quickly than their skills.

How do you foster leadership skills and opportunities?

The academy has invested in a considerable amount of CPD in order to equip new leaders with the skills and expertise required. We became an outward looking academy using SSAT, other academies and Ofsted to support our acquisition of knowledge and to keep up-to-date with KS4 changes while only having KS3 pupils.

All CPD was related to developing sustainability, leaders within the academy continually developing others and building capacity within the academy.

What are the essential principles of good professional capital? Why does it matter?

Appointment of staff was largely successful but our advice would be not to rush, to wait, if possible, for the right candidate, and until one does, to use outstanding teachers already appointed and encourage staff to teach their second and third subject. We were warned, on the one hand, against appointing staff who were experienced, as just teaching year 7 may be viewed by them as an easy option leading to problems as the school grows and, on the other hand, that a complete novice brings significant training requirements. Caution is needed with appointing both new to the profession and experienced staff.

Area leaders, while relatively young, with a few years of management experience only, were mainly enthusiastic. Some brought good leadership skills and had clear potential to progress further. Area leaders inevitably had limited opportunity for leading and developing other staff at this stage of the academy's development but this aspect of their role thereafter expanded as more staff and pupils arrived. Significant CPD opportunities were afforded them.

CONDITIONS OF SERVICE ARE:

- The academy is open all year with the exception of the statutory public holidays.
- The senior leadership team comprising the principal and vice principals are entitled to 35 days' holiday per year in addition to the statutory closures listed above. There is an expectation that a member of the senior leadership team will be on site at all times when the academy is open.
- All other full-time teaching and support staff will work a standard year of 38 weeks and 37.5 hours per week (excluding lunch breaks) that will support the innovative structure of the academy day and year. In addition all staff are required to commit to 10 days of professional development and 10 days of curriculum enrichment throughout the school year (aggregated to 42 weeks annually).
- Flexible working patterns may be negotiated at the convenience of the academy.
- During term time the teaching and learning week for students is 29 hours a week.
- All support staff will work a standard year of 52 weeks and 37.5 hours per week. The annual holiday entitlement is 25 days, excluding bank holidays and Christmas closure.
- All allowances and performance payments are subject to the ability of the academy to financially support such rewards.
- The number of days when pupils are in attendance may vary but is unlikely to exceed 190 days in an academic year.
- The pattern of the academy year is as follows:

  term 1: September-October
  term 2: November-December
  term 3: January-February
  term 4: March-May (including a short Easter break)
  term 5: June-July.

From the outset the principal's modus operandi was both strategic and highly visible, setting high expectations for himself and others. Performance objectives were challenging and reflected the academy's high aspirations and goals; they operated on a consistent basis with demanding targets for teaching and learning and pupil achievement. The development of staff was a priority and we invested heavily in following up issues that arose from monitoring activities and performance management discussions.

With each new cohort of staff comes the need to remind staff often of vision and ethos. Each year we underestimated the time required for the appointment and induction of staff.

Own pay and performance framework

For the academy to be at the heart of its community we needed to be open almost all of the year round to make maximum efficient use of its resources. The academy therefore required conditions of employment for its staff to fulfil this intent, and terms and conditions had to be bespoke to this commitment and with respect to the proposed five term year.

All staff are appointed to an individual salary range through the identification of our own specific grade on the staffing structure. Each grade has an individual salary range. The highest levels of each grade are accessed by members of staff that have clearly demonstrated to governors through recommendation by the principal the contribution they have made to the academy through the performance management scheme.

As an academy we had a degree of flexibility as to what we wanted the school day and curriculum to be. This gave us the opportunity to ensure our vision and ethos were linked to the needs of the local area and the city as a whole. The engagement of the community was crucial to our success. The importance of sustained and consistent parental/carer and community involvement and engagement cannot be underestimated, nor pupil voice as this enabled the wider community to be involved and buy into the academy.

We took time to research best practice from around the country to ensure we were well informed and used the flexibility of being an academy to:

- implement an exciting and engaging theme-based learning curriculum.
- implement an extended school day with 29 hours' teaching per week (excluding extra-curricular activities. This has had an enormous positive impact on accelerating progress and 'closing the gap').
- introduce a five-term year to give pupils greater opportunities for periods of continuous study, enabling them to develop and sustain momentum in terms of academic progress and personal development.
- introduce Flexible Friday as part of the wider curriculum offer in which pupils explore additional extra-curricular options, based on pupil voice, and the capacity of local amenities. This is geared to ensuring local pupils have the confidence to use every amenity that the community can offer as part of a longer-term aim of developing a more socially-cohesive and equitable community culture.
- foster strong relationships with those key economic and cultural sectors which have a presence in the wider community.

What did you not do that with hindsight you wish you had done?

We should have appointed staff with key stage 4 experience – 'growing one's own' is good but needs to be balanced with staff understanding the pressures of GCSE examinations.

A decision to grow middle leaders into senior leaders was taken but, as the academy grew, it became apparent that relatively inexperienced middle leaders found the step to senior leadership hard – young middle leaders were excellent while we had key stage 3 pupils only but as we grew, lack of GCSE experience showed.

Our first cohort is now going through the stress of exams – our inexperience of this has been an area that we have had to work hard on. We underestimated the sense of entitlement our first cohort felt and while we could mould our pupils into ambassadors for the academy, lack of older pupils has impacted on their understanding of what exam stress actually means.

Retrospectively, the appointment of NQTs was very labour intensive given the support they had to have for qualification. It would have been preferable and perhaps easier to have appointed RQTs.

Staff recruited really need to have experience of teaching in similar socio-economic areas to which they are appointed; there is a specific skill set required when teaching within a deprived inner city. Some staff appointed had little experience working in an area of such deprivation and simply did not 'get the kids.'

We were not prepared for certain aspects of working with national and local agencies and the constant scrutiny we were under at every stage of development which made significant demands on the senior team.

LEARNING THE LESSONS

The strategies and planning that TEMA adopted have been recognised as being exemplary and the academy was seen as being part of the community before it was even opened due to the excellent engagement with all local stakeholders and the high visibility of the principal and his team across local primary schools and the community in the two years leading up to the opening date.

TEMA learnt a number of valuable lessons through its evolution including:

- The importance of active involvement in primary schools within the locality through bespoke curriculum activities for year 5/6 pupils, governance and assemblies, facilitating community engagement opportunities and supporting local community events; providing pupil-voice' activities with regards to uniform, curriculum and ethos, extended school hours, play and eco-habitat areas.
- The need for significant marketing within all local primary schools and community hubs through monthly newsletters, assemblies, parent/carer evenings and community events; promote active primary school participation through primary pupil challenges to inspire pupils about the new academy.

- Prospective pupils need to buy into the new academy and much time was afforded to parents/carers – why would they send their child to a new school with no exam results history? However, many of our pupils made the decision themselves and thus persuaded their parents/carers to take the risk.
- Establishing a 'Friends of the Academy' voluntary community stakeholder group to ensure on-going community involvement and engagement.
- Setting up an academy website as early in the programme as possible to support brand and marketing.
- Having a summer schools programme for prospective pupils in order to develop perennial relationships with families.
- Involving community service providers to increase awareness of the new academy and the potential for community involvement.
- Securing early on the involvement of local providers with respect to curriculum and extracurricular activities.
- Maximise the benefits of cohesive and collaborative teamworking from the outset.
- Do not underestimate the value of employing some known staff who can be relied upon to support a united vision with a solid understanding of loyalty, risk taking, trust, hard work and commitment.
- Recruiting outstanding practitioners who have a background in inner city education environments has been crucial to the success of TEMA.
- The recruitment of RQTs, as opposed to NQTs, to ensure the new academy hits the ground running.
- TEMA benefited greatly by the fact that the principal and some members of the leadership team had worked in the local community throughout their careers thus understanding the needs, challenges and the potential that exists.
- Be outward looking.
- Time is of the essence and a great deal of hard work will lead to success.

- Vision is paramount.
- Trust your instincts.
- Don't get frustrated with bureaucracy and endless meetings.
- Be prepared for a labour intensive journey - long hours are required but you will reap the dividends.
- Knowing pupils inside out and having only one year group brought about many CP issues that may have been undetected had pupils gone straight into a full school. Each year, the ability to know our pupils has led to a culture of 'you must tell an adult if something is wrong'.
- Stick to what you believe in. For example, we introduced two-hour lessons which we veered away from but now wish to return to as this consolidates learning far more effectively and reduces movement considerably.
- Be prepared to be micro-managed and scrutinised.
- Keep the momentum going at all stages of development and beyond.
- Be prepared for the building being ahead of schedule, which brings its own challenges.
- Take time to have away days (this enabled us to focus on vision, strategy, goals and improvements).

Finally, it has been an amazing journey, an unforgettable experience and an opportunity of a lifetime.

Dr Jill Richford is vice principal at The East Manchester Academy. TEMA opened in September 2010 with just year 7 (PAN 180, but 204 enrolled in first year only following appeals). Numbers had grown to 900+ by September 2014 (PAN recently increased to 200 to assist with demand for places). Original plans for post-16 postponed.

www.theeastmanchesteracademy.org.uk

Making the most of your staff

Mark Emmerson

Principal designate sounds quite grand but there I was, sitting in my office on my first day with no staff, no students and no school. At one side of the desk a handful of pretty drawings of what the academy would look like, on the other an educational vision statement which was full of aspiration and short on practical detail.

So where do you start when you have to define the undefinable, when you have to commit to a form of words that convey high aspirations in every communication with prospective staff and parents? I did two things, first I bought a new brushed steel pen so I looked the part in meetings, and then I looked up the meaning of one of the recurring words in the educational vision statement, ethos. The one I came across said 'the characteristic spirit of a culture, or community as manifested in its attitudes and aspirations'.

I had been a headteacher for over eight years in a successful school but in that school I had inherited an ethos, I had had a set of values already in place that I could deliver better, improve or change. In this post all I began with was a belief. Like many idealistic teachers I started with the fundamental belief that the vast majority of students can attain a strong set of GCSE grades but come up against obstacles that undermine their progress. There are of course lots of reasons why nationally the average figure remains just under 60%, but in starting a new academy from scratch I really did feel that this was an opportunity to design out many of the drags on progress that young people experience.

There are tomes of educational research on outstanding schools that generate exceptional achievement for young people. Research invariably cites outstanding leadership, high expectations and the quality of teaching as the three key common ingredients found in every successful school. All well and good, but there is less written about what this would look like, how it should

be implemented, systemised and built into the DNA of a school that would deliver 90% 5+ A*-C E+M whatever the student starting points. What is rarely researched, but much more interesting to me, is where the routines, rituals and traditions of a school provide an environment where excellent outcomes are the norm. This must clearly be the case in some of our best state and public schools, because no school, of any nature, can ever appoint only exceptional staff, or attract only exceptional students. Starting from scratch my aspiration was to create a school like this and it was this vision of what our academy could be that I reflected in everything I communicated to others, every policy, and every decision I took. Everything had to be aligned, clear, simple and sustainable if a high expectation ethos was to be created and maintained.

All I then needed to do was recruit staff who were similarly passionate about what we could achieve through this approach, build a £28 million building and convince enough parents that we could and would deliver a fantastic educational experience for their children. Easy.

The City Academy, Hackney ethos - 4 key strands

In order to get the right people it was important to articulate in all the literature about the school what the academy was to be about. There are always four key features of excellent schools and I believe there is a clear hierarchy, an order of importance in which each should be addressed. I established that first and foremost we would ensure that only the highest standards of behaviour would be acceptable and that this would be the top priority and the responsibility of all staff in the school. This was closely followed by excellent teaching, which was the responsibility of the teachers and all other staff who support the function of teaching. The next priority is assessment and the use of data to inform practice, set targets and track the progress of students. All staff are required to be personal advisers to students, whether they are teachers or support staff. It is was therefore critical that we appointed people at every level who were comfortable with the use and generation of data. The final strand in a high expectation school is the curriculum. We decided at a very early stage that the vast majority of students would pursue an academic high status English Baccalaureate curriculum with 90% of qualifications taken being straight GCSE courses. We needed to find

staff who believed that this was the right thing to do, but more importantly that this was possible for all.

Fresh start shadow structure and how to achieve 'forward continuity'

I spent some time visiting schools that had started from scratch and looking at other models in Hackney and across the country. I was very interested in the leadership and management models that had been established and how they had evolved. It became apparent that nearly every school that had opened and grown like our school was to do had started with a principal, vice principals, and assistant principals who doubled as heads of faculty. Only one school had adopted a slightly different approach and that was Mossbourne Community Academy, less than 800 metres from my academy, led by Sir Michael Wilshaw and the most successful of the fresh start schools I visited. They had set up with a small senior team and ASTs as heads of department. I decided we needed a small senior team and to concentrate our staff resources on the middle leadership tier. I also thought through in some detail how the staff structure would grow and although there have been some amendments the founding structure I modelled in November 2008 is now largely in place. On the teaching side we started with one principal, one vice principal and two assistant principals; all the other teaching staff were subject leaders but not ASTs apart from two or three main grade staff. This assured what we called 'forward continuity' and allowed the departments to grow under a leader who was part of the initial visioning of the team. The subject leaders then trained and supported new staff and drove the consistency which most schools, even those who have been fresh start, crave but never quite achieve.

Recruitment process

In a fresh start school it is imperative that the recruitment process follows a strict order to ensure that budgets are met and that functionality and capacity are built at the correct time. So who do you recruit first? Without question, every time, it must be your personal assistant and this appointment must be right. In the early stages that person has to understand what it is you are trying to do, they must be multiskilled, adept and able to work independently. It is a varied, interesting but demanding role in the start-up phase. Once in place, the next

appointments are the vice principal and then a business manager. With that core team in place we were then able to really start recruitment in earnest.

We set up a small website as a reference point for the key stakeholders and as a recruiting vehicle. In between site visits and endless value engineering meetings we wrote a vision statement, a series of job descriptions, advertisements, introductory letters and a set of approximately 50 statutory policies all in our newly devised simple and clear two sides of A4 format.

There was a lot of interest in every post, but one of my stipulations is that we must see every member of staff teach a lesson with outstanding features before we even interview them. We had no school and no children for candidates to teach. We were therefore enormously grateful to a series of Hackney schools and City of London School Southwark, their staff and students, for enabling us to carry out lesson observations and interviews in their schools.

We were also determined that we should get the correct calibre of staff and so went through many rounds of interviews for some posts until we found leaders with the right blend of creativity, strength of purpose, energy, ambition and approachability. In fact many candidates did not even get to interview as we had decided at the end of the lesson that we would not be appointing them. We always gave detailed feedback as to why they were not being taken forward but high expectations clearly have to apply to the process of recruitment as to every other facet of the school.

The principles of leadership and management of staff (and Investors in People)

Over time we have built a strong induction process. Once appointed, every member of staff goes through a detailed programme which covers the technical and routine elements of their post, but also the broader ethos and strategy of the academy. There is an uncompromising focus on consistency across the key systems led by staff. These are behaviour, approaches to teaching, including literacy and numeracy, assessment, and the ethos of professionalism that we promote at every opportunity.

This consistent delivery of high expectations by all staff is so important to us we put ourselves forward to be assessed as an Investor in People (IiP). The reason for this is that the IiP standard examines how staff are recruited, trained, led and

managed in order to deliver the overall aims and targets of the organisation as a whole. In keeping with the high expectation culture, we were not satisfied with attaining the accreditation and set about creating a culture that would ensure that the gold award would eventually be reached.

Overcoming difficulties

It would be wrong to assume that there were not difficulties along the way. Staffing, governance and outcomes in a rapidly growing and constantly changing academy are tremendously difficult to deal with. Growing by about 18 staff a year presents its own difficulties, even without taking into consideration the loss of many excellent staff to promotion or relocation. Also the growing reputation of the school meant that it was often difficult to recruit excellent senior managers and subject leaders as the progress and achievement levels at the academy can be quite intimidating to some people. It is also difficult for some staff to see how they can improve on 80%+ 4 levels of progress.

However, the detailed planning in which we engaged at the outset, particularly in relation to the staffing structure, recruitment phases and the development of staff meant that by sticking to our principles and never recruiting permanent staff unless we are clear that they have the potential to develop into outstanding practitioners, served us well. The main point to remember is not to look for shortcuts, not to overpay staff or create unfair internal structures. Always recruit with integrity, keep the playing field level and never favour internal staff. I have seen many people in pressurised situations look for expedient solutions to staffing problems which invariably lead to longer term unforeseen issues that are much more complex to unpick.

Where we are now

We have achieved two outstanding Ofsted inspections, 91% 5AC, 82% 5ACEM and 66% EBacc. We are in the top 1% of schools in terms of Progress 8. In fact, the most recent data place the academy in the top four schools in the country for added value. These are really good outcomes but the fantastic thing about the staff we have here is that they think we can do better for the students

and the pressure is now placed back on to me to lift our expectations higher and to improve the outcomes of the cohorts of students that now follow.

In the latest performance tables City Academy, Hackney is the top co-educational school for Progress 8 in the country.

After 14 years leading schools, what I now know is, however good your outcomes, wherever you are in the league tables, the pressure to improve is relentless and we have to learn to enjoy the challenge that brings.

Mark Emmerson is principal of The City Academy, Hackney. The academy has two sponsors: financial services firm KPMG and the City of London Corporation, which both have first-class track records in supporting education. The shared vision is to provide a professional ethos that gives students the confidence, skills and ambition to move on to the wider worlds of higher education and work.

www.thecityacademy.org

Getting the networks right

Collaboration or competition?

James Croft

James Croft is director of the Centre for the Study of Market Reform of Education, with responsibility for strategic and organisational development. He also leads on government and parliamentary, sponsor, key stakeholder, and practitioner engagement. In this piece, James sets out to challenge our thinking and assumptions and raises thought-provoking questions.

Educationists in the public sector are especially attached to the idea that there is a right way, and a right spirit, in which professionals should engage in public education. If the object, as some would have it, is that we work for 'the most equitable outcomes that society can afford' (Bridges & Husbands, 2005), then, so the logic goes, we should expect professionals in this context to be characterised by a sense of collective responsibility for improvement, not just of the lot of their own pupils in their own schools, but of local provision more generally, and across the system as a whole (Hargreaves, 2010). Professionals collaborate, in a spirit of mutual aid, to share knowledge, stay abreast of best practice, and to develop their pedagogical strategies and curricula. And if they don't, they should.

It's a compelling vision, but as with many such visions, it can work to obscure the importance of getting on with the day job. After all, first and foremost (and indeed it's difficult to see what else they might reasonably be held responsible for), teachers are tasked with the education and care of the young people in their charge, not those of the neighbouring school.

This is, of course, especially applicable where teachers engaged in a school start-up are concerned (and indeed the reason why many are locally opposed). Born with high and politically charged expectations of them, and expressly designed to bring something new to the local school landscape, new schools

require particular diligence and an especially keen focus on setting standards and fostering the kind of ethos and culture that will promote attainment. Establishing a strong track record from the off is critical for forging the reputation for success, and pupil numbers, that school start-ups need to demonstrate their value.

There are of course, many other matters to attend to, which may or may not have an impact on the quality of education and care young people receive. For new school proposers and their project managers, regulatory compliance in all matters of policy and procedure is a condition for the possibility of opening, as is also securing the right expertise at board level in respect of auditing and knowledge of legalities. Maintaining that compliance, and ensuring that best practice guidance is adhered to in all aspects of school management, may require considerable investment of time and resources in seminar and conference attendance and/or online forums. This is the cost of doing the business of school in our system. But consistent with heads' ultimate responsibility for the educational performance of their schools, whatever networks they and their staff need to bring into service to maintain this priority, should always be the priority.

Sadly, even a cursory survey of the literature on the subject shows that the volume of studies that have investigated the advantages of collaboration for teachers far surpasses that concerned with ascertaining impacts for learners. This emphasis appears to stem from the (often explicit) assumption that the interests of teacher and pupil are one and the same and the conviction that, properly supported, teachers' efforts must therefore result in the best that can be reasonably hoped for in terms of attainment.

Yet the literature reveals a marked lack of quantitative evidence of the impact of networks on attainment, let alone analyses of the salient features of effective networking practice. This should give us pause for thought, with respect to how informed their design to date can possibly have been (CUREE, 2005; Muijs, West, and Ainscow, 2010). The truth is that we know very little about when and when not to network and under what conditions networks are likely to be successful.

Meanwhile, studies investigating the advantages of collaboration for teachers are overwhelmingly qualitative (see Caldwell's 2008 review for example). There's a heavy reliance on interviews and survey data addressed to capturing such

subjective indicators as teacher perceptions of improved efficacy, more positive attitudes toward teaching, and higher levels of professional trust – generally issuing from a premise that working together is paramount if teachers are to maintain resilience within a climate of increased school autonomy and what are generally viewed as increasingly rigid accountabilities.

It's at this point that we should ask whether much networking activity might have more to do with mutual support and maintaining teacher morale than (at least directly) with improving outcomes. Clearly teachers must be integral to any meaningful change in schools. It may not be unreasonable to suppose that benefits to pupils might result from positive experiences teachers have of outcome-focused association and partnering with other schools, but given the lack of interest in quantifying this benefit, and given that any benefit so derived is structurally indirect, it's important to recognise that the difference between really impactful collaborations and time-wasting efforts is going to lie with how rigorously such have been purposed.

While we don't yet have evidence with respect to comparing specifically how stand-alone new schools fare against those started by a sponsor already

engaged in running schools, this conviction is, at any rate, certainly supported by what research there is on federation effects in the English context. This suggests that new organisations, comprised of two or more schools that have come into being expressly for the purposes of raising attainment and improving efficiency, apparently enjoy greater efficacy. Tellingly, the effect is more significant in the case of 'hard' (or merged) federations than for 'soft' (collaborative) federations. And it's especially significant for 'performance' federations (typically pairing under-performing schools with high achievers) and academy federations, which are the most rigorously purposed to outcomes.

This would appear to provide some evidence in support of the theory that competitive market dynamics, far from undermining collaboration between and among educators and their institutions, may not only encourage it, but supply the conditions for the possibility of effective networking and exchange.

James Croft is founder and director of the Centre for the Study of Market Reform of Education, an education research and policy unit exploring the potential and limits of markets to improve education.

www.cmre.org.uk

Some further reading:

Bridges, D. & Husbands, C. (eds.) (2005). *Consorting and collaborating in the education marketplace*. London: Falmer Press

Caldwell, B. (2008). *The power of networks to transform education: An international perspective*. London, UK: Specialist Schools and Academies Trust

Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE) (2005). *Systematic research review: The impact of networks on pupils, practitioners, organisations and the communities they serve*. Nottingham, UK: NCSL

Chapman, C., Muijs, D., MacAllister, J. (2011). *A study of the impact of school federation on student outcomes*. Nottingham: National College for School Leadership

Hargreaves, D. (2010). *Creating a self-improving school system*. Nottingham, UK: National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services

Muijs, D., West, M. and Ainscow, M. (2010), 'Why network? Theoretical perspectives on networking' in *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 21(1)

Smith, C. (2014) *Collaboration and networking*. Redesigning Schooling, SSAT

Networking with business and higher education at the JCB Academy, a University Technical College

Jim Wade

The JCB Academy was opened as a brand new 14-19 school with the first cohort of students joining year 10 and year 12 in 2010. The academy is housed in a converted mill (we are housed in Arkwright's third mill built in 1780) with a modern glass-fronted extension. Building work started in January 2009 with completion scheduled for June 2010 (eventual occupancy August 2010).

Opening a new school or academy requires overcoming a range of challenges. These include everything from overseeing the build to recruitment of staff and students, as well as developing a unique identity. It is easy, given the nature of some of these tasks, for them to become all-consuming and clearly, unless they are achieved, the academy will not open. However, educational establishments are developed to enhance the learning opportunities that are available to young people, not to be just beautiful buildings with fantastic facilities.

The JCB Academy was established with a clear mission to 'develop the engineers and business leaders for the future'. With students joining the academy at the start of year 10 for a two or four-year programme of study, we were keen to develop a curriculum that would draw on our business partners and provide examples from those business organisations for students to study. The questions for us were: how were we going to go about this and how would our vision, based around developing employability skills, be embedded within the curriculum?

The sponsor and trustees were keen for us to ensure that the curriculum was based, as much as possible, on best business practice and used the world of industry as a backdrop to the activities undertaken by students. Our first task was to understand how this could be achieved and what examples of best practice existed within the educational and business communities. To this end we carried out a range of visits to providers of the Diploma in Engineering, universities and further education colleges. We were keen to understand how such organisations used real world contexts to enhance the learning process for

Vision: Developing engineers and business leaders for the future

Mission:

- develop employable young people with:
  - positive attitudes
  - emotional intelligence
  - intellectual horsepower
  - appropriate competencies
- achieve excellence in academic and vocational education
- a catalyst to improve provision across the region for engineering, manufacturing and business skills.

students. Furthermore, a range of organisations within the engineering sector (The Institution of Engineering and Technology, The Institution of Mechanical Engineers and The Royal Academy of Engineering) provided exemplar material for both lesson delivery and projects. This gave us some interesting insights into how material was being developed and used at the time. Finally we discussed in detail the curriculum content with some of our key engineering partners to identify key skills they wished us to develop in our young people.

Following this research we started to model a thematic approach and produced a sample curriculum project based around the production of an 'off-road' vehicle. The aim was to identify what would be required if this was to become a whole-school approach and how this might be achieved. We were unfortunately not in a position to trial the project in any real sense as we had no students at this point in time, but were able to discuss the fundamental principles and practice behind it with a range of subject experts.

Production of the sample unit gave us good evidence that our approach would be effective at achieving our mission. It was therefore agreed that we would develop a thematic based curriculum around challenge activities with each challenge activity lasting eight weeks in length (the academy year is 40 weeks long with a 35.5 hour teaching week). To this end we approached a range of local business organisations and asked them to become involved in both the planning and delivery of these challenges. We were in a fortunate position,

through JCB contacts, to be able to speak to relevant decision-makers within each organisation to persuade them to come on board. These approaches were not always successful, but the following companies agreed to work with us:

- JCB
- Rolls-Royce
- Toyota Motor Manufacturing (UK)
- Bombardier
- Network Rail
- Bentley
- Parker Vansco
- Parker Hannifin
- Bosch Rexroth
- National Grid
- Zytek Automotive

In addition, OCR agreed to work closely with us in the development of the curriculum to ensure it met the examination board requirements. We organised a series of three-day conferences (we had three businesses represented at each conference) where:

- each business sent three representatives
- OCR sent three representatives
- the academy had three senior staff present and governors
- English, mathematics, science and ICT specialists from Staffordshire local authority were also in attendance.

The outcome of each conference was an outline eight-week plan which mapped the curriculum content across engineering, business, mathematics, science, English and ICT. The plan also identified the inputs from the business organisations and the support that would be required to ensure a successful outcome for the students.

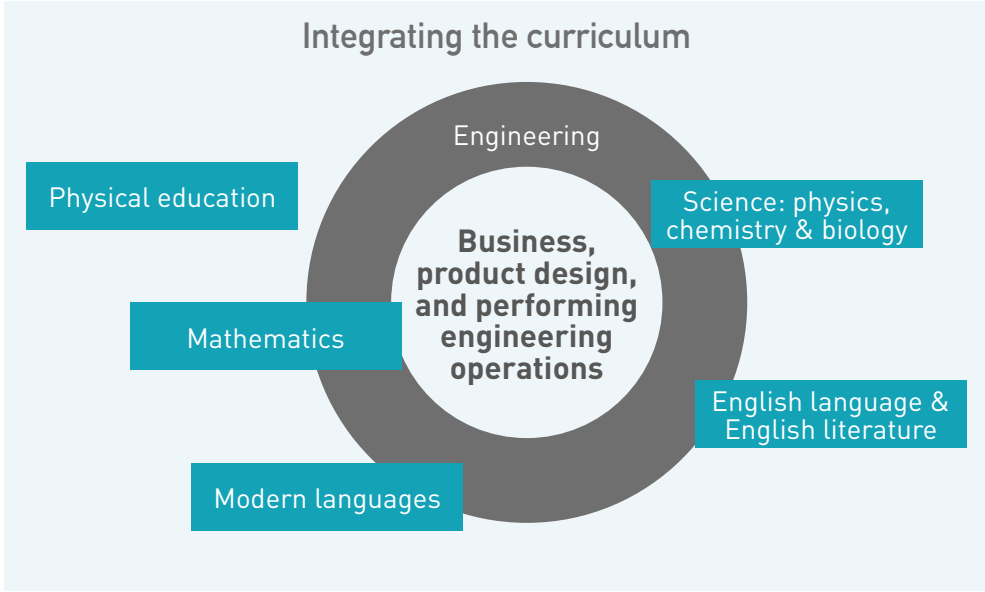
KS4 offers the following qualifications to all students:

- Cambridge Nationals: Principles in Engineering and Engineering Business, Engineering Design, Engineering Manufacture, Systems Control in Engineering, and business and finance.
- To increase their skills-base, all students undertake a programme in Performing Engineering Operations.
- In addition, students undertake GCSEs in mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, product design, English language and English literature.
- To compete in a global economy all undertake a range of modern languages – German GCSE is offered for those wishing to gain an academic qualification, alongside an entry level certificate in Mandarin. All other students undertake an entry level qualification in German and Spanish.

The curriculum has engaged students to a high degree and is leading to excellent outcomes as measured through the standard metrics. Students have also become very focused on developing a career in engineering or business and have a good understanding, through their work with partners and on the challenge activities, of what a career in engineering or business would be like. In addition it has engaged our partner organisations and made them feel an integral part of the academy.

Due to the changes to vocational education following the Wolf Review we have adapted our challenge programme to fit the new suite of OCR national qualifications in engineering. The current programme of challenge activities delivering the four engineering qualifications listed above is as follows:

Off-Road Challenge - Harper Adams University
The project is based around the design and manufacture of a remote control off-road vehicle. Students spend the first full week at the academy away on a residential stay at Harper Adams University. The morning of each day is run by university staff delivering sessions related to the project.



Principles in Engineering and Engineering Business (units 1-3) - JCB Challenge
The challenge uses the backhoe loader (JCB's iconic product) as the centrepiece for looking at basic principles in engineering and engineering as a business.

Engineering Design (units 1-4) - Rolls-Royce Design Challenge
Students investigate the design and manufacture of pumps for the Trent 900 jet engine and then go on to design and manufacture their own pump.

Systems Control in Engineering (units 1-2) - Ultra-PMES Electronics Challenge
During this challenge students study how nuclear submarines detect threats. They go on to design and manufacture an electronic circuit that is plugged into a model submarine that is dragged across a track on which a range of threats are present.

Systems Control in Engineering (units 3-4) - Network Rail Systems Control Challenge
Students study the rail network and look at increasing flow on the East Coast Main Line. Similar to the PMES challenge, they then design and manufacture a circuit to control a level crossing.

Engineering Manufacture (units 1-4) - Toyota Cylinder Head Challenge
The project is based around manufacturing a set of parts for a Toyota cylinder head and then setting up an assembly process to fit collets around the valves.

Principles in Engineering and Engineering Business (unit 4) - The Institution of Engineering and Technology (Understanding the World of Engineering)

Additional qualifications woven through the challenges:

- Product Design
- Performing Engineering Operations (PEO)
- business and finance.

All of the challenge projects:

- were designed alongside the relevant business partner organisations
- were owned by the business partner organisation
- involve visits to business partner organisations
- involve delivery for some elements by employees from the relevant business partner
- contribute to the relevant engineering specification and deliver the Product Design GCSE, PEO and business and finance qualification
- are used as a basis for some of the teaching across English, mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology.

LEARNING THE LESSONS

The development of a thematic KS4 and KS5 curriculum, based around engineering challenge activities, has provided a fantastic learning experience for our students. From our experience, the following might be questions to consider, or pitfalls to avoid, in developing a thematically-based business-led curriculum.

- The development of a holistic curriculum has taken a significant amount of time and the role of the business partners in this is clearly central. Development of effective relationships has been of prime importance to ensuring projects were experienced in a way that delivered our mission.
- Initially we tied the curriculum across subjects very tightly. In practice this meant that when something had to change (e.g. staff being absent due to the severe weather we encountered in the winter of 2010) it was extremely difficult to coordinate this across different subjects with examination requirements which were fixed. To ameliorate this problem we have loosened the tie to give staff more flexibility.
- The business environment is a constantly changing one and we could not predict the impact of the loss of the Cross Rail project on Bombardier, which made it impossible for them to run the challenge in August 2011. Through JCB we were able to implement their unit more quickly than originally planned – having this type of fall-back position has been essential.
- We were fortunate to have agreement from senior people within each business organisation which ensured commitment and allocation of resources to the project. In our view this senior level support would be essential before embarking on this route.
- Ongoing liaison has been expensive in terms of time for both ourselves and the business organisations. This needs to be carefully built into the time plan to ensure this is achievable for all.
- Recruiting students to a new school – particularly when they need to leave their current school at the end of year 9 (not a point of transition in our area) – is extremely challenging. We firmly believe that

parents understood the benefits of our holistic approach and bought into how this would prepare their son/daughter for further study or employment. The fact that we were oversubscribed in our first year and have remained so ever since is testament to the way our partnership working is valued by both students and parents. Developing meaningful partnerships with industry has been essential to enable our vision to be achieved. This can only be successful when a business organisation has taken ownership of its element of the curriculum and feels empowered to both work with the organisation and develop the material in light of feedback from students and staff. Unless the process is managed with a degree of transfer of ownership it is unlikely that success will be achieved. As leaders we recognise that if we wish any team within our school to strive for success we need to ensure they feel that they own what they do and therefore feel passionate about it. If, as educational providers, we just ask our business partners to contribute to a particular task – by giving a lecture or talk for example – then this may well add value, but at the same time will almost certainly not lead to a long-term effective partnership, one which adds real value to young peoples' educational experience.

We believe passionately that the engineering challenge activities provide a fantastic context within which high-quality learning can take place. By providing a real-life link it gives the curriculum a coherence and relevance which both enthuses and inspires our young people.

Jim Wade has been principal since January 2009 of The JCB Academy in Staffordshire, a 14-18 University Technical College specialising in 'Developing the Engineers and Business Leaders for the Future'. He also sits on The Institution of Engineering and Technology's Education and Skills panel.

www.jcbacademy.com

Schools working together to open a new school and meet demand

Paul McAteer & Jo Rockall

Who are the Slough Association of Secondary Heads (SASH)?

SASH was established when Berkshire was split into six unitary authorities in 1999. The vision for this group was to work in collaboration to help all young people in Slough. This has manifested itself in numerous ways, despite the wide range of schools in the town. SASH was made up of four grammar schools, seven non-selectives, a special school and an alternative education provider, Haybrook College, with both Church of England and Catholic faith schools involved. This has evolved over the years into a range including a type one sponsored academy, converter academies and community schools. The strong collaboration between SASH members has contributed to the success of Slough local authority in placing it seventh in the country for key stage 4 results. Slough is a small authority stretching approximately four miles east to west and two miles north to south. Close proximity helps the collaboration.

Why open a free school?

SASH had been aware of a growing school population needing secondary places since 2011/2012. The local authority predicted a need for an extra 39 forms of secondary entry by 2017/2018. While some of this could be absorbed by the expansion of secondary schools, most SASH heads and governing bodies wanted to maintain the integrity of their schools by not expanding beyond a published admission number (PAN) that allowed for the personalisation of learning. As a town, Slough has most of the characteristics of a London borough but without the same levels of government funding, hence the desire to personalise learning and keep to manageable PAN.

The decision by SASH to open a free school was made in 2012 ready for a 2014 opening because this was the first year that needed the extra forms of entry. The feeling was that if we did not do it, someone else would and this could have a damaging impact on future collaboration. Despite this, two other applications were made for secondary free schools, one a Sikh faith school and one sponsored by a local primary school.

Establishing the vision

Supported by all 13 secondary heads, a steering group was established consisting of the SASH officers (chair, secretary and treasurer) to oversee the project but with wider support when needed. We were keen to establish a non-selective 11-19 comprehensive school that helps young people to become community leaders and made best use of the enormous business community resource within Slough. We wanted our young people to be able to think for themselves, appreciate the multifaith society of Slough and contribute to the aspirations of the area. To aid our thinking we visited three other schools around the country that had introduced a curriculum that we thought would support our aims. This, combined with the expertise within Slough, with seven Ofsted-rated 'outstanding' schools, helped to formulate our vision. The school would open with a year 7 cohort of 120 pupils in the first year while in temporary accommodation and then 180 in the second year in a new build school. The sixth form would open in the fourth year.

Securing the expertise

Since the project was addressing a need for school places in Slough we were able to secure some initial investment from School Forum to fund the application and secure some expertise from two education consultants, who had a track record of working with Slough schools. They managed the project to the point at which the application was approved, helped pull the application together and ensured we managed the process properly. The application is an important and detailed document and while we had the expertise to write it, their capacity and knowledge of new schools was invaluable given we all still had day jobs. We also set up a steering group of SASH members with delegated

decision-making powers from SASH. Once approved, we engaged a project management company which had worked with several free school provider groups and which agreed to working with our existing consultants to provide continuity. They kept us on track, provided valuable policy documents which were known to be compliant with DfE needs, and liaised with the DfE and the Education Funding Agency (EFA). Complying with DfE procurement guidance in securing the project management was time consuming and complex and, of course, had to be done by the steering group.

Writing the education plan

Actually, for us this was the great bit! Having a blank canvas on which to design the education experience for young people was both exciting and a privilege. The collaboration of SASH works because, despite their differences, our schools share the same values and aspirations for young people. The education plan started with these values and aspirations. We looked at what makes Slough unique, including the biggest trading estate in Europe and the strong community cohesion, but also some of the issues around social mobility and poverty. We wrote the education plan ensuring we used the strengths of our collaboration and our context, while addressing the issues for young people in our town. Input from the special school, schools with SEN resource bases and our alternative education provider ensured we wrote an inclusive plan.

Working with the DfE

The free school process is a political initiative, that has very close, and what felt like almost operational, involvement from ministers. We were approved in Wave 03, and certainly the DfE were still adapting to the different situations and unforeseen obstacles as they went along. Having said that, we worked with some excellent people at the DfE who genuinely wanted our project to work.

Securing the site

The site was our biggest challenge. Slough is small, densely populated and with limited available sites. We were committed to this being a Slough school and for various reasons, were not prepared for the site to be located over the border

in another LA. We had identified the land we wanted for the permanent site and had Slough Borough Council's support for this. It is at this point you begin to work with the EFA as well as the DfE, and of course, new builds are the most expensive way to site a new school. At the EFA's request we looked at various office blocks and commercial buildings. However, these weren't ideal, with the biggest sticking point tending to be around outdoor space, and fortunately for us, they were prohibitively expensive. Months of negotiations and diplomacy has eventually come to fruition but has meant a considerable delay, and the school is likely to be sited in its temporary accommodation for a further year.

Dealing with the capacity questions

Any free school opening will cause anxiety amongst other schools in the area that it opens in. Even working in a collaborative like SASH, some heads were anxious about the effects of another school. When we heard from the DfE that our bid had been successful we were very pleased, only to find that all three bids had been given approval despite there not being the demand for places for three schools. The Sikh school was given approval to open in 2013 with SASH resisting pressure to open at the same time and sticking to a 2014 opening. The primary sponsored secondary was also approved for 2014. This meant that locating and securing a site was even more difficult for both the temporary and permanent site.

Marketing

This was tough. While we were confident that the numbers stacked up in terms of school places needed when we wrote the application, the approval of the other two free schools in the town meant a surplus which had the potential to upset our existing schools. The DfE also wanted to see actual commitment from parents long before they had to complete their common application forms (CAF). We did all the usual print and web-based marketing, targeted primary school events and book bags, but probably the most successful events were those we held in some of our schools. Putting the six/seven steering group heads in front of potential parents seemed to inspire confidence in the project, despite the fact that we were not able to announce where the temporary site would be until

May 2014. That was really difficult. However, because the school didn't have an Edubase number it couldn't be part of the CAF, therefore parents were able to apply to the SASH school and complete their common application and hold two places. Good for them, not so good for certainty around numbers in our own schools. Slough Borough Council Admissions were great too. They coordinated the process alongside the CAF. The appointment of the principal designate also galvanised the process. Parents had a tangible presence to invest in. We opened in September 2014 with 100 pupils of the 120 PAN and are now up to 113.

Principal designate (PD)

Appointing the PD was one of the most important decisions we had to make. We had to find someone who would share our vision and become a committed member of SASH; someone who wanted the involvement of 13 existing headteachers in his/her school and someone who would take that leap of faith when we had no agreed permanent site, no temporary site and no funding agreement. It took a while! We had budgeted for a PD from January prior to the September opening and while we didn't appoint on the first round of interviews and had to advertise again, we managed to meet this deadline. Knowing how difficult it is to recruit in the South East we had anticipated two rounds in our budget. We were delighted to make a successful appointment. Nick has hit the ground running and his vested interest in getting the absolute best deal for his pupils has been invaluable in moving the project forward. In approaching our SASH 2 project we are determined to reduce our project management costs in order to appoint a PD a whole year in advance of opening.

Appointing staff

Until the funding agreement (FA) has been signed by the minister, the school is not guaranteed to open. There have been occurrences of schools not opening even after the FA has been signed. Trying to staff a school that may not open is even more difficult than finding staff under normal circumstances. Opening with just a year 7 cohort also requires teachers to teach a number of different subjects and this limits those that may apply. Key to the success of the school is the financial management of the budget. Other schools in Slough have

been able to help by seconding staff to teach specialist subjects and by appointing staff to share with the free school. Another school provides the catering.

Temporary site

The temporary site took a long time to secure despite all the best efforts of the EFA. Up until mid-August it was a derelict university building in the middle of Slough, 1.5 miles from the permanent site (another leap of faith for parents). Contractors moved in on 18 August (three weeks later than scheduled) and converted the existing university building into a school in 19 days. The staff turned up for their first day of work on 1 September to find a building site. The team spent the first week working in a conference room in the centre of Slough. They not only galvanised as a group around preparation for teaching and learning but they also bonded, doing landscape gardening, painting and decorating and moving furniture at the temporary site. We had delayed the opening until 8 September, knowing the issues we faced, but parents and students were hugely impressed with their school when they viewed it for the first time on 5 September. A huge amount of work took place and continues to happen to turn a basic facility provided by the EFA into a fully functioning school. The students love it! The staff are superb and adapt to make the most of temporary/basic accommodation.

Governance

Good governance is essential for any successful school. Using the networks available to us we were able to appoint a former assistant director of education and children's services as chair of governors. This brought an understanding of the complexities of Slough and a clear understanding of the challenges ahead. Slough is an economic powerhouse with many global companies based on the largest trading estate in Europe. We placed an advert for governors with the Slough Business Community Partnership and attracted some high-quality applications, particularly from Heathrow. We also used existing networks such as mentors from Young Enterprise to attract governors. The three officers of SASH are trustees and governors.

Working in partnership

All good schools are outward looking and want to develop partnerships to enhance the learning experience for pupils. SASH 1, now called Ditton Park Academy (DPA), was developed from a partnership between secondary schools in Slough. To further support school improvement in Slough SASH established the Slough Learning Partnership (SLP). This provided school to school support, signposting for best practice and established a teaching school alliance overseeing professional development, newly qualified teacher validation and operating the local offer for Schools Direct. This provided a blanket of support for DPA. In addition to this, Slough secondary schools work in partnership with support groups such as SSAT and the National Education Trust (NET) to ensure a constant stream of advice and support.

Monitoring

Having now opened in temporary accommodation (in 19 days, 24 hours per day, from start to finish in a derelict building) the work of monitoring the quality of delivery of education and the effective use of resources has begun. Drawing upon existing partnerships a senior HMI has been engaged to make termly visits and to report back to governors about the quality of learning. Governors make regular visits to the school during the working day.

Future thinking

A permanent site has been identified (not easy in Slough) and DPA pupils will move into it during the summer of 2016. SASH 2, an all-through school, has been approved by the DfE and will open with a reception intake in September 2016 and a year 7 intake in 2018.

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Printed on 100% recycled paper

3/2015