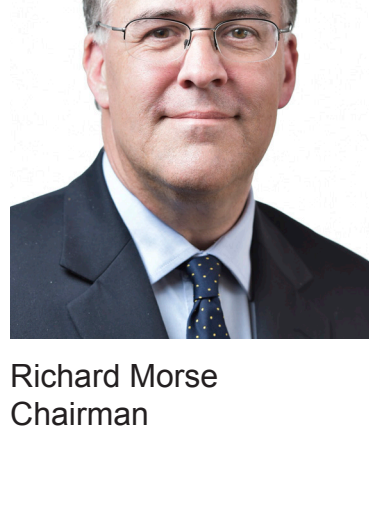


Woodard Voice



Autumn 2018



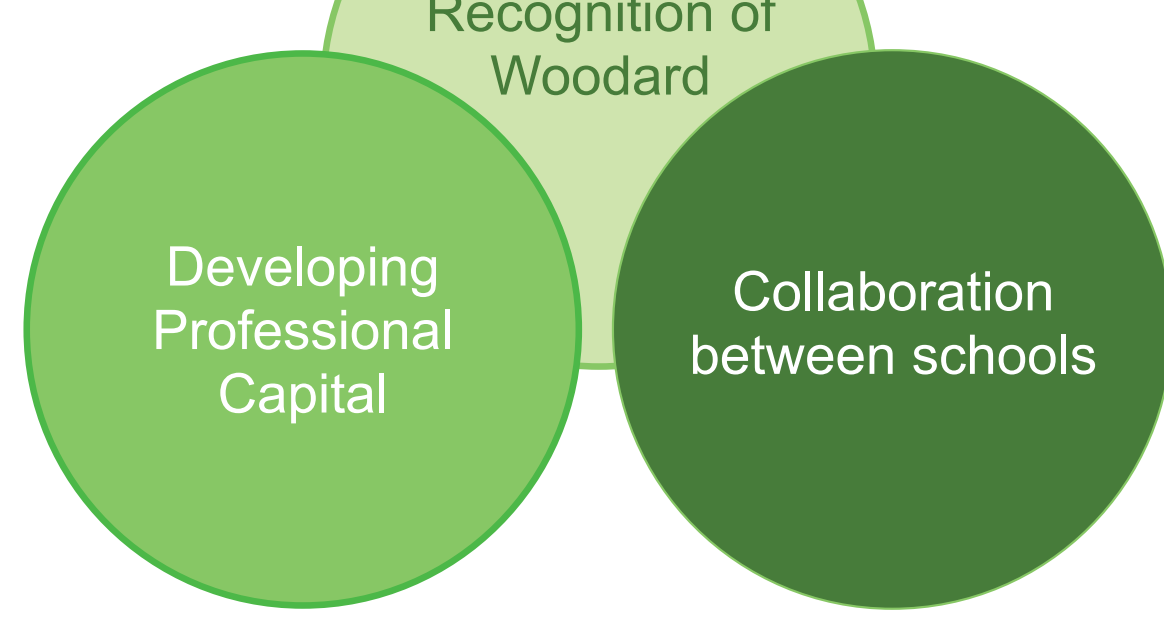
Richard Morse
Chairman

Dear Colleagues, Fellows and Members of Woodard,

It was very good to see so many of you at the round of Corporate Chapters at which we promised to collect together the themes emerging from that consultation and publish them in an edition of the Woodard Voice. The input that we gathered from the three meetings is really valuable and has helped us build on themes developed at our Board strategy day and also the consultation with Custodes, Heads, Bursars and Chaplains at their respective conferences.

Welcome to the latest edition of Woodard Voice, which I hope will also serve as a useful update on some of our present thinking and initiatives for the year ahead.

By way of context, back in the academic year 2013/2014 the Woodard Board produced and published a strategy document. That strategy enunciated three themes – DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL CAPITAL, COLLABORATION and RECOGNITION – very much with the view that the Recognition of Woodard as an educational provider would come about through a focus on Developing Professional Capital and Collaboration.



An important practical response to this strategy was the establishment of the Hub school projects hosted by Wren Academy, St Olave's, and Lancing College and other initiatives including investing in procurement, the project to create one finance system and exploring opportunities with a Chinese university. You can find further information about the hub projects on the Woodard website, and we have reported on other projects at each of the Corporate Chapter meetings. There is no doubt that the hub projects have made an impact on the group and on teachers and pupils' outcomes, and that investment in procurement has been financially beneficial to schools.

The projects undertaken so far have certainly demonstrated that we have within the family of schools some outstanding practice which, when shared across the group, builds collaboration and helps with the sustainability challenge. Professional development has been offered by Wren Academy. This has involved visits to schools, staff visiting Wren and some regional gatherings. Wren will continue to be our professional development provider. In addition we have offered courses for Aspirant Heads and Middle Leaders.

Developing professional capital is of course one answer to the sustainability challenge. Getting and creating the best teachers is fundamental. But there are other things we can do. In real terms, in the independent sector, fees have risen 40% over the last ten years. The procurement function run from the centre helps to produce economies of scale that can help reduce the cost base for our incorporated schools. In the fullness of time we hope to roll that programme out to all the schools in the group – and maybe beyond. But the Board's potential collaboration with a Chinese educational provider also seeks to help. We will provide more detail about this work at a conference for the Custodes of the incorporated schools and academies on 28th and 29th November 2018.

In terms of Woodard and a national voice there is still much to do but the past three years have seen the publication of three books, each of them applauded for their content and reviewed as outstanding.



Our aspirations remain high. We want Woodard Schools – in whatever category of membership – to be the schools of first choice. We want Woodard and Woodard schools to be the employers of first choice.

It is in this context then that our consultations of the last academic year took place. The emerging themes do not contradict the strategy of 2014, but amplify it.

These then are the consistent themes emerging from the Corporate Chapter sessions:

- **Political context:** There is a moral imperative for encouraging social justice and cross sector working. Woodard needs to be able to clearly demonstrate the benefit of belonging to a family of independent and state-maintained schools within the current political context, and the potential challenges to the independent sector of changes in tax rules and the on-going dialogue regarding public benefit. How can we better work together across the independent-state sectors so that we bring benefit to all students within the Woodard family? We should be leading this debate rather than having to be reactive to the challenge of governments (of whatever hue).
- **Ethos:** Our Christian ethos is an essential part of our DNA. Woodard needs to ensure that this is a strength in all of our schools (not least in chaplaincy) and that it is inclusive and broad. It is something that we should shout more about.
- **Vision:** Woodard needs to have both an outward-looking as well as internal-servicing role. (a) Outward-looking: a clear vision for Woodard's role and voice in education and its impact on society, it being a 'force for good' with a national voice; (b) inward-servicing: helping the individual schools to collaborate as well as fulfilling their own ambitions; the extra-value of belonging to a family of schools. Examples include acting as a catalyst for teacher recruitment; professional development for both teaching and non-academic staff and developing networks that would benefit all schools e.g. universities for initial teacher training etc.
- **Quality:** We need to ensure that Woodard stands for an 'outstanding quality of education', whether this be in the independent or state-maintained sectors and whether viewed from the perspective of pupils and their parents, or teachers and those who work in our schools. There is a need to work towards being 'excellent' in all that we do, including academic excellence.
- **Woodard Corporation and the Woodard Academies Trust:** Woodard has an opportunity to clarify its role as sponsor of academies. How can Woodard broker stronger relationships between the independent sector and the academies in order to realise the vision of the DfE's paper on schools working together? How can Woodard work with dioceses to form stronger regional alliances?
- **Investment:** There needs to be clarity and openness in strategies for investment in order to benefit Woodard schools and academies. The role and responsibilities of an Investment Committee, and the criteria to be used as the basis for its investment recommendations, including priorities and timescales, need to be defined.

This is a brief collation of the themes discussed. We have retained more detailed notes from each session that we are using to help inform our strategic development as we look forward to the next annual cycle of planning, Board meetings and conferences.

WORKING TOGETHER TO BUILD A BETTER WORLD



It was a pleasure to have been part of the conversations at the Corporate Chapters and I am grateful for the honesty and enthusiasm shown at each of the three meetings.

As a brief summary of "work in progress" as it touches on the themes set out above, the Woodard Corporation Board is presently considering the following initiatives, using our more operational filters of Education, Spirituality, Finance and Governance:

- A more rigorous engagement with our independent schools and academies based on analysis of performance and trends in each area;
- A continuation of the existing hub programmes but on a basis (probably web-based) that makes them more accessible to those for whom the lead school is geographically remote
- Taking a lead role in the establishment of a National Centre for School Chaplaincy to better resource those who have this vital ministry in schools (and not just in our schools)
- An investigation into other potential hub programmes, which might involve areas such as compliance, development, human resources, schools chaplaincy etc
- The establishment of an investment advisory committee involving representatives from all our types of schools, to provide a sounding-board about Woodard's potential investment in hubs, and possibly on broader issues
- A closer alignment of the executive teams of Woodard Corporation and WAT, aimed at a more efficient and effective use of the skills in both organisations
- A comparable bringing together of the Boards of Woodard Corporation and WAT, with more common membership and adjacent committee meetings
- Reform of the Corporate Chapter structure to bring make Board appointments easier to effect, without losing the valuable input and protection that Corporate Chapter represents
- A more open consultation with all our schools about the annual plan and budget for Woodard Corporation

We will continue to report back on these initiatives as they develop, and we look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at next year's Corporate Chapter, which will be a single meeting in London. We felt that the experiment of doing three regional meetings was a good success, so we will almost certainly want to repeat that formula every so often.

This comes with my very best wishes to one and all

R. Morse

Richard Morse
Chairman



Contact Us

For more information, or if you have any queries, please contact Canon Brendan Clover via the Woodard Schools head office address below:

Woodard Schools Head Office High Street, Abbots Bromley, Rugeley, Staffordshire WS15 3BW | Tel: 01283 840120

www.woodard.co.uk

Woodard Academies Trust 1 Adam Street, London WC2N 6LE
Tel: 020 3397 5100

www.woodardacademies.co.uk