

System Leadership – Briefing February 2019

Background Information

In 2010 David Hargreaves published a series of four think pieces about ‘Creating a Self-improving School System’ in which he set out a new way of thinking about how school improvement should be delivered: *‘increased decentralisation provides an opportunity for a new vision of school improvement that capitalises on the gains made in school leadership and in partnerships between schools. It would usher in a new era in which the school system becomes the major agent of its own improvement and does so at a rate and to a depth that has hitherto been no more than an aspiration.’*

The Government’s White Paper ‘The Importance of Teaching’ (2010) committed to give schools greater autonomy and to design and enable a wider system where the best schools and leaders can take on greater responsibility, leading improvement work across the system, and where all schools work together to improve outcomes for pupils. This development has been facilitated by an increased focus on autonomy for school leaders, the development of partnerships between schools, Teaching Schools, new regional structures and a changing role for local authorities in school improvement. Resources for school improvement now follow these new structures.

Since then much research has been undertaken and much written about what a self-improving school system might look like, how it matures and the benefits of system leadership and the impact on raising standards. More recently in a paper entitled, ‘Inside Out and Downside Up’, published by the Education Development Trust (January 2016), Michael Fullan and Steve Munby identify the critical factors for system wide collaboration and talk about a ‘connected autonomy’ where schools work collaboratively to effect change and learn from evidence based practice.

The Council’s Excellence for All Strategy 2017-2019 sets out how we are building a sustainable model of system-led improvement by developing and supporting a range of partnerships. These partnerships include early years hubs, education improvement partnerships (EIPs), teaching schools and formal partnerships such as federations and multi-academy trusts: *‘East Sussex schools have a strong track record of working in partnership for the benefit of all children and young people in their area. Education Improvement Partnerships (EIPs) and Teaching School Alliances (TSAs) provide strong collaborative networks in local areas across the county, working together to identify and address common priorities for improvement.’*

The role of the local authority is changing; the current educational landscape is complex and now characterised by a variety of overlapping partnerships, networks and alliances. This paper covers some key elements of the new system leadership structure within East Sussex.

- ❖ Teaching Schools
- ❖ Education Improvement Partnerships (EIPs)
- ❖ Early Years Hubs
- ❖ Secondary Improvement Board
- ❖ Development of a Primary Improvement Board
- ❖ Governor to Governor support

Teaching Schools

There are eight Teaching Schools in East Sussex as shown below.

Teaching School	Phase	EIP
Newick CE Primary School	Primary	Ashdown
Robsack Wood Primary School	Primary	Hastings
St Mark’s CE Primary School	Primary	Wealden

St Richard's Catholic College	Secondary	Rother
Polegate Primary School	Primary	Eastbourne
Priory School	Secondary	Lewes
Cuckmere House	Special	Eastbourne
Beacon Academy	Secondary	Ashdown

Teaching schools are good or outstanding schools that play an important role in a school-led system, working with others to provide high-quality training and support for school improvement in their local area. They have three key roles:

- Co-ordinating and delivering high-quality, school-based initial teacher training (ITT)
- Spreading excellent practice by supporting other schools, particularly those most in need (School to school support)
- Providing professional development for teachers and leaders across their network (CPLD).

Teaching schools work with a local alliance of schools, and with other local schools and providers to ensure every school is able to engage in school-led improvement. In East Sussex, teaching schools extend this work to other schools within the EIP they are situated within and to schools beyond their EIP.

East Sussex teaching schools have formed a collaborative network with the local authority as a partner. The network, East Sussex Teaching School Network, (ESTSN) has agreed terms of reference and established three working parties focussed on each of the three key priorities. This is a particularly strong model not replicated in all other local authorities. Through this collaboration the ESTSN intend to ensure equitable access to training and development for teachers and to schools across the county, and to reduce duplication.

In this last year the ESTSN have taken responsibility for the provision of initial teacher training (ITT) for primary school teachers and the ongoing training of newly qualified teachers (NQT), both previously run by the local authority.

Teaching school status is agreed by the DfE through a rigorous application process. Usually the headteacher of a teaching school is designated as a National Leader of Education adding capacity for system leadership. Teaching schools currently receive an annual grant from the DfE which is known as core funding. This is paid directly to the school to build the leadership and administrative capacity and is more heavily weighted in the start-up year. Currently funding is: Year 1: £60,000, Year 2: £50,000 and subsequent years: £40,000. Teaching schools are also able to draw down DfE funding for ring-fenced initiatives and training. The DfE is required to monitor the financial assurance of all grants that teaching schools receive.

The Teaching School Council plays a critical role in shaping the work of teaching schools, connecting teaching school alliances to each other and influencing government policy through its communications with ministers and officials. The Council is a peer-elected group made up of 20 regional and national representatives, all of whom are serving school leaders of designated teaching schools. Within the South East England and South London region, East Sussex is grouped sub-regionally with West Sussex, Brighton and Hove.

Education Improvement Partnerships

Nine Education Improvement Partnerships (EIPs) were established in East Sussex in July 2014 and, in the intervening four years, all have undergone significant change in responding to their local context so that there are now notable differences between the EIPs both in terms of structure and capacity. The priority for EIPs is to have a beneficial impact on **student outcomes** and their 2017/2018 plans clearly identified where outcomes needed to improve and stated what that the impact of the proposed activity would be.

EIPs are expected to employ the same approach to improvement planning as a competent school. To maintain an **audit-plan-do-review** approach through which they monitor the impact of interventions on an on-going basis. Plans focus on the coming year but also include longer term ambitions in response to data trends rather than as a reaction to single sets of results. There are set points in the annual cycle when EIPs have to report. The EIP Executive moderates draft plans and provides robust feedback both on the deliverability of plans and on whether the proposed actions were appropriate and in-line with EIP priorities. The EIP model has evolved over the last four years to be more flexible and responsive to local need and the EIP executive has become a positive and robust body which takes its leadership and oversight role seriously.

EIPs work with their local Teaching Schools to support local priorities through CPD and school to school support. The teaching schools' strategic partners are distributed across the county, however the teaching schools themselves are each located within an EIP and most work well with their EIP. This support is increasingly well targeted and effective as it reflects closer working with the local authority and responds, in part, to specific school needs identified through EIP action plans.

Early Years Hubs

It is well known that good early education builds essential foundations for learning which impacts on a range of pupil outcomes. The EPPSE longitudinal study (UCL 1997-2014) shows the positive impact of high quality pre-school on attainment at the end of primary and secondary school, particularly for children from low-income families. Further, the research shows that improving the quality of provision by training staff is more promising than taking other measures such as increasing hours of attendance or making changes to a setting's physical environment (Education Endowment Foundation 2018). To this end Early Years Hubs for Excellence provide a vehicle to enable schools, pre-schools, childminders, children's centres, other key partners and the local authority to work in partnership across their local area to secure high quality early years provision for all children.

Hubs seek to ensure that:

- All children are able to attend an early education provision that is rated at least 'good' by Ofsted.
- All children achieve the best possible outcomes from their early education.
- All children experience consistent and wherever possible seamless Foundation Stage learning.

Early Years Hubs sit within the EIP structure with between 1 and 4 in each EIP (with the exception of Lewes) and are led by school-based early years practitioners in partnership with local authority officers. They engage with the range of providers in the local area to share good practice and provide practitioners with an opportunity for professional development within a culture of collaboration and trust. Combined Central Hub meetings are held termly to share more widely, for example what has been learned from the recent Transition Project which linked pre-school with school settings to provide continuity for children moving from one setting to the other. In line with EIPs, improvement work follows an annual audit-plan-do-review cycle. Hubs are supported by LA officers in planning meetings and executing action plans.

Secondary Improvement Board

East Sussex Secondary Schools and the local authority have been working together to develop a school-led system of improvement for secondary phase schools over a number of years. Building on the Consultant Headteacher programme, the schools established a new Secondary School Improvement Board and three Area Groups in September 2018.

The Secondary Improvement Board has overall responsibility for setting the strategic direction and overall priorities for improvement for secondary schools. It is informed by the work of Area Groups who work to ensure all schools have the right challenge and support to improve and building school-to-school support at a local level. The Area Groups report regularly on their progress to the Secondary Improvement Board and

challenging each other on their progress through the Board. The Board also has responsibility for commissioning additional resources and expertise to support the work of Area Groups.

The Secondary Improvement Board places school leaders even more firmly in the driving seat for the next phase of improvement. The Board is collectively responsible for improving outcomes in the secondary phased and also for building capacity for school to school support. The ambition of the board is 'to become a great school system with no student or school left behind, where all young people are prepared for success in life whatever they choose to do'. The Secondary Improvement Board includes representation from each Area Group, the Chair of the 11-19 Strategic Group, and a representative from Teaching Schools, Special Schools and the Local Authority. The 3 Area Groups include all secondary schools in the county and are supported by experienced External Advisers. Secondary schools continue to be closely involved in their local EIP.

Development of a Primary Improvement Board

Representative headteachers on the EIP Executive and the primary Strategic Management Board (SMB) are working with the local authority to develop a model for primary with a proposed Primary Improvement Board that will work alongside the Secondary Improvement Board and build on the successes and structure of the EIPs. This work is in the early stages of development

Governor to Governor Support

Teaching Schools, EIPs and the Secondary Improvement Board all have priorities that focus on developing and supporting school leadership, of which governance is a key part. Teaching Schools designate National Leaders of Governance (NLGs) and will have a greater role in deploying NLGs. Many EIPs have active governor networks that are meeting to share good practice and for training on key themes.

The local authority is further developing the capacity for governor to governor support. In the summer we invited expressions of interest for Local Support Governors, experienced and skilled governors who can provide support to other governors and governing bodies through filling an interim governor or chair position at another school, sit on governor panels, and provide one to one support on specific issues. We now have 13 Local Support Governors appointed. We have also facilitated governor networks on requested themes to support the sharing of good practice between governors. The East Sussex Governors Forum will be establishing a Chair's Network this year.

Presentation at the Local Area Forums on System Leadership

The proposed presentation will cover the information provided in this paper. There is 1.5 hours for this topic and the presentation will include a number of activities/discussions to break up the presentation. The presentation will be led by a Head of Service, with input from a secondary headteacher on the Secondary Improvement Board and a primary headteacher on the EIP developments. The headteachers will also refer to the work of the Teaching Schools, EIPs and aspects of collaborative work that they are involved in.

Questions for governors to consider (some of these questions will be explored at the local area forum through the discussion/activity):

- What do we mean by system leadership?
- What does system leadership mean for my school?
- Why do we need a system wide approach to school improvement?
- What is the rationale for strategic collaboration and partnership working?
- We already work in partnership with other schools so what else do we need to do?
- Can governors contribute further to the development of system leadership in their schools, local areas and across the county?