

# magazine

ISSUE 02/MAY 2018



**A Spotlight on Social Mobility:  
Creating Opportunities for all  
Children to Succeed**

## **EXPERT VOICE:**

Dr. Lee Elliot Major

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## **THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF HIGH QUALITY TEACHERS:**

Parkland Primary School

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## **INVESTIGATING THE LINK BETWEEN PE AND RAISED ACHIEVEMENT**

Redhill Academy

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## **RESEARCH DIGEST**

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**+ MUCH MORE!**



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# welcome

# SOCIAL MOBILITY



Above: Andy Burns



Above: Chris Wheatley



Above: Dawn Wigley



Above: Paul Stone



Above: Rebecca Meredith



Above: Trish Stringer

**A very warm welcome to our latest edition of Inspiring Leaders magazine, which is focused on a theme close to our hearts: social mobility.**

At Inspiring Leaders, we firmly believe that no child's future chances should be defined simply by the circumstances into which they are born, and we constantly strive to provide equality of opportunity for all the children that we serve. We believe that every child should have the opportunity to reach their full potential, and that, as educational professionals, we must be their champions.

Whilst we realise that education alone cannot solve all of our country's social mobility problems, we certainly have a large part to play. Equality of opportunity begins with education, and children's crucial formative years lie in the hands of school teachers and leaders. It is an awesome responsibility. As educationalists, we must therefore ensure that every child has access to the very best individualised provision to enable them to excel, and this must include assistance to overcome any barriers which may stand in their way. With the right strategies in place, we have a unique opportunity to unlock potential, identify strengths and change futures.

In the pages ahead, we will be looking at some of the amazing ways in which schools from across our partnership are working to raise the attainment, aspirations and life chances of disadvantaged pupils, and are endeavouring to close the attainment gap. We have also included an expert piece with Dr Lee Elliot Major, Chief Executive of the Sutton Trust, and a summary of some of the latest research developments related to social mobility through education. We hope there is much that you feel you can take away from the ideas and approaches outlined in these articles, and that you enjoy reading about them as much as we did.

With best wishes,

Andy Burns (The Redhill Academy Trust)  
Chris Wheatley (Flying High Partnership)  
Dawn Wigley (Ash Lea School)  
Paul Stone (Discovery Schools Academy Trust)  
Rebecca Meredith (Transform Trust)  
Richard Ludlow (Ebor Academy Trust)  
Trish Stringer (Inspiring Leaders)

# Who are Inspiring Leaders?

Inspiring Leaders is a not for profit organisation led by Flying High Partnership and consisting of five outstanding Teaching Schools, a Special School and three delivery partners spread across the East Midlands and Yorkshire who came together through a shared passion and commitment to develop the inspirational school leaders of tomorrow. Over the past five years, we have trained over 1300 leaders via our high quality, school-led programmes which utilises the skills, knowledge and experiences of existing, influential school leaders from across our partnership.

All lead partner schools are outstanding teaching school alliances and trusts in their own right and have a proven commitment and track record of developing effective leadership. The NPQ programmes are central to our approach to school improvement, allowing us to develop leadership capacity, identify talent and build effective networks.

## Director level partners



### Affinity Teaching School Alliance

Affinity Teaching School Alliance is a partnership of over 50 schools in Leicestershire, Leicester City and Northamptonshire, led by Kibworth CE primary school.

Affinity Teaching School forms part the Discovery Schools Academy Trust (DSAT), a growing primary multi-academy trust.



### Ash Lea Special School

Ash Lea School is a Special School in south Nottinghamshire which caters for the educational needs of children and young people (age range 3 to 19) that experience complex learning difficulties and brings a wealth of leadership expertise.

“ALL LEAD PARTNER SCHOOLS ARE OUTSTANDING TEACHING SCHOOL ALLIANCES IN THEIR OWN RIGHT”



### The Flying High Partnership

The Flying High Partnership consists of the Candleby Lane Teaching School Alliance and Flying High Trust. The teaching school alliance consists of 54 primary schools across Nottinghamshire, led by Cotgrave Candleby Lane School. The Flying High Trust is a growing partnership of 18 primary schools. The Flying High partnership acts as the lead for Inspiring Leaders, as both the employer and base for the central team.



### Redhill Teaching School Alliance

The Redhill Alliance is a cross-phase collaboration led by a number of outstanding institutions, consisting of nearly 40 schools. The Redhill Trust is a growing multi-academy trust of secondary and primary schools.



### Transform Teaching School Alliance

Transform TSA includes 53 schools with a diverse membership of primary and special schools in Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, Derby and Derbyshire. The Transform trust is a growing multi-academy trust predominantly based in Nottingham City.

## Delivery partners



### Ebor Academy Trust

Ebor Academy Trust is a mixed multi-academy trust comprising of over 20 small village and large urban primary and secondary schools across York and north east Yorkshire. Ebor lead an Inspiring Leaders delivery hub based in Yorkshire.



### Synergy Teaching School Alliance

Synergy Teaching School, leads an alliance of over 35 nursery, infant, primary, secondary and special schools, which are collectively known as the 4Derbyshire Alliance, as they span the length and breadth of Derbyshire.



### Leicester Teaching School Alliance (LeTS)

LeTS is part of the Rushey Mead Educational Trust, based at Rushey Mead Academy in Leicester. It consists of 15 primary and secondary schools across Leicester City.



A close-up portrait of Dr. Lee Elliot Major, a middle-aged man with short brown hair and light-colored eyes, wearing a light pink shirt. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression.

# Social Mobility in Schools

## Expert Voice – Dr. Lee Elliot Major

**Dr. Lee Elliot Major is Chief Executive of the Sutton Trust, the UK's leading foundation for improving social mobility through education. The Trust improves educational opportunities for thousands of non-privileged young people each year and influences Government policy through its research advocacy work.**

Lee is a founding trustee of the Education Endowment Foundation and chairs its evaluation advisory board. He commissioned and co-authored the Sutton Trust– EEF toolkit summarising evidence on what works to improve school attainment for disadvantaged pupils, a resource that has been used by thousands of schools and replicated in countries across the world. He is currently writing a book on Britain's social mobility problem, to be published by Penguin later this year.

## **Why is social mobility such an important issue to you?**

One of the reasons social mobility is so important to me is because it has been an integral part of my own life story. I wouldn't be where I am today if it wasn't for the opportunities which I was able to access that enabled me to continue my education and attend university, despite adverse circumstances.

At the age of only 15 I had to leave the family home and fend for myself following my parents' divorce. I stopped attending school and lived alone, supporting myself by working as a petrol station attendant during the week. My mum worked at the local council and got me a job over the summer collecting bins on the dustcart and as a street cleaner at the weekends. My prospects were not looking good. However, with help from the local authority, family members, teachers, and friends, I was able to turn things around. I went back to school and completed my A-levels, and was the first in my family to go to university. I now have a PhD and three degrees!

One of my greatest concerns is that things are getting harder rather than easier for disadvantaged young people in today's society. Inequality continues to increase, and we continue to see a disproportionate amount of people from privileged backgrounds in positions of power and influence. Doing my bit to help to turn this around, and to create a society where anybody can succeed, no matter their background, is what drives my work and my passion for improving social mobility. I want every child and young person to have the same chance that I did to improve my life, and I believe that education is the key vehicle for making this happen.

***"I want every child and young person to have the same chance that I did to improve my life, and I believe that education is the key vehicle for making this happen."***

## **Do you think we have enough of an evidence base for making social mobility through education a reality?**

We are certainly in a better position than we were ten years ago in terms of having an evidence base

to improve social mobility for disadvantaged school pupils. One of the things I'm most proud of is the work that the Sutton Trust has done with the EEF to produce the EEF Toolkit. This has proved to be a very useful resource for thousands of schools across the country, as it summarises the key research on what has been shown to work in practice to help to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in a way that schools can easily access and implement. Of course, the evidence we have found comes with a caveat; this is what we have found to work in most schools, most of the time. The EEF Toolkit is compiled to include strategies that have been shown to work, more often than not, to help to raise attainment. Individual schools, however, must also trial any of strategies that they want to implement, and experiment to find the strategies which work best for the context of their own school.



## **What are the barriers to making social mobility a reality in schools and in children's lives?**

First of all, I should say that there are many schools out there doing an amazing job. It is not an understatement to say that there are schools out there that are transforming the lives of young people, by making sure that they leave school with all of the skills that they need to succeed. On the other hand, we are also faced with the reality that 30% of children are finishing their education effectively illiterate and innumerate. These children have not been given the basic skills to succeed.

I get frustrated when governments put so much emphasis on the structure of schools and other generic matters, rather than on the importance of excellent teaching, which is, unsurprisingly, what we have found at the Sutton Trust to be the most vital component of a good quality education. High quality pupil-teacher interaction and teacher feedback are absolutely key, and while the EEF Toolkit provides very good bets for what will work to increase attainment, it's as much about how it's delivered as what is delivered.

More emphasis needs to be placed on improving teaching quality across the board. There need to be more systems in place for teachers to continually learn from one another, and for the sharing of best practice in the classroom. Teachers must be invested in; not only through more professional development, but also through higher pay, which more accurately reflects the responsibility of the role.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that not everything can be solved by schools. Inequality must also be reduced outside of the school gates, through government action. Schools cannot be expected to solve all of society's problems alone.

***“One of the things I’m most proud of is the work that the Sutton Trust has done with the EEF to produce the EEF Toolkit. This has proved to be a very useful resource for thousands of schools across the country.”***

### **What can be done at Primary school level to help to close the attainment gap?**

The work of Primary schools in this area is vitally important. Early years is a crucial time to invest in disadvantaged children, so they can start at KS1 on an equal footing to their peers. Closing the gap early has been shown to greatly reduce the attainment gap in the education system further down the line, while failing to close the gap early means that this inequality is more likely to persist throughout a child's education. For this reason, it is very important to have the best quality teachers possible teaching at EYFS level; they must be well qualified, and their

pay should reflect the responsibility and importance of their role.

Research has also shown that if disadvantaged pupils have fallen behind by age 11, it becomes extremely difficult to ever close the gap, and in many cases the attainment gap will continue to widen. Strategies that have been shown to be helpful in raising attainment at primary level include: incorporating meta-cognition into the curriculum (making the learning in the classroom more explicit), using ***philosophy4children*** (an enquiry-based learning strategy which encourages questioning and discussion), and introducing structured tutoring programmes (especially for pupils who have already fallen behind). However, as previously mentioned, high quality pupil-teacher interaction always remains the central facet of raising attainment.

### **What can secondary schools do?**

There seems to be a drift around the ages of 11 – 14 where, on average, the attainment gap widens between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. No doubt some of this is due to external factors, including the ‘peer effect’ starting to kick in. However, for secondary schools, it's all about what can be done early on (in KS3) to prevent that drift. Counter-intuitively perhaps, it would be more productive for secondary schools to devote their best teachers to the younger year groups, rather than to exam classes, to help to address this problem. This would make it more likely that all pupils would be in a better position to achieve by the time they reach KS4. When it comes to social mobility, you have to have a long-term approach. However, I appreciate that, unfortunately, this is not always easy for schools when there is immediate pressure to produce the best exam results possible.

Another thing which secondary schools can do to improve social mobility is to give more advice and information on the opportunities available next for pupils, whether this be apprenticeships, vocational routes, technical routes, or university. While some secondary schools do this very well, others can put so much emphasis on exams that these practical matters regarding a pupil's ‘next steps’ are not addressed adequately enough. In other instances, it may be that the good intentions are there, but that the teachers themselves are not fully aware or informed about all of the options available.

Often young people are not as prepared as they need to be and can lack the guidance that they urgently need at this crucial stage in their lives.



***“High quality pupil-teacher interaction always remains the central facet of raising attainment.”***

### **How can schools increase the opportunities for the development of essential life skills for disadvantaged pupils?**

We are still developing evidence about which interventions work best at promoting essential life skills, but we do know that they are at least as important as academic skills in determining life prospects. They may also be more malleable at later ages, which opens up the possibility of helping to equip pupils with these skills at all stages of their educational journey. One of the unintended consequences of the modern-day focus on league tables, Ofsted, and exam results has been less focus on this important area. However, there are many schools who are recognising the importance of helping children to develop essential life skills, in order to adequately prepare their pupils for the future and to increase social mobility.

***“The talent is out there in our young people, from all backgrounds, and we need to make sure that it is encouraged and harnessed, and that no young person is left behind.”***

### **What doesn't improve social mobility that has often been assumed to?**

On average, reducing class sizes doesn't work as well as you might think, and the evidence is just not there to support the idea that smaller classes improve social mobility. Politicians and parents may like the concept, but ultimately it detracts from the issues which have been proven to make a real impact; such as high-quality teaching.

Ability setting is another strategy which people often assume helps, but again, there is in fact very little evidence to show that it makes much difference.

Finally, there is often a debate about which type of school is best for social mobility, whether that be academies, free schools or grammar schools. However, all of this actually means very little compared to the difference and positive impact that high quality teaching and leadership have upon schools, whatever 'type' of school that is, and that is where the focus should be.

### **Final thoughts...**

A focus on social mobility is more important now than ever before. This generation are the first that will be less well off than their parents, and things are becoming increasingly competitive. Many middle-class parents have 'upped their game' in the light of this fact, ensuring that their children attend the best schools, get private tutoring, and make full use of any contacts they may have for work experience, internships and job opportunities. All of this inevitably puts disadvantaged pupils in an even more difficult position, and as such, means that more needs to be done to help to ensure greater equality of opportunity. The talent is out there in our young people, from all backgrounds, and we need to make sure that it is encouraged and harnessed, and that no young person is left behind; for the sake of the next generation and society as a whole.

# WELCOME TO MAPPLEWELLS PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL



*"The curriculum at Mapplewells has been designed and developed around two central questions; 'what are the key needs of the children at our school?', and what sort of children do we want to leave our school in year 6?"*

Photo: Karl Clowery, Headteacher, Mapplewells Primary & Nursery School

# Developing a Curriculum to 'Diminish the Difference': Mapplewells Primary School

**Mapplewells Primary and Nursery School is located in Sutton-in-Ashfield and is part of the Flying High Trust. Staff at Mapplewells have been working hard to create and deliver a new curriculum which supports their goals of raising aspiration and attainment, and to 'diminish the difference' for disadvantaged pupils at the school.**

The number of pupils eligible for pupil premium at the school is roughly in line with the national average, though there are many other pupils who, while not eligible for free school meals, are considered socially disadvantaged or vulnerable. The ultimate goal of the curriculum is to enable every child at Mapplewells to achieve their fullest potential, and it includes a strong focus on engaging the groups most at risk of underachievement, as outlined in the East Midlands Challenge; namely, pupil premium pupils, vulnerable pupils, and working-class boys.

Karl Clowery, Headteacher, explains, "the curriculum at Mapplewells has been designed and developed around two central questions; 'what are the key needs of the children at our school?' and 'what sort of children do we want to leave our school in year 6?' We focussed on answering these questions together as a staff, both at SLT meetings and whole staff meetings, considering what experiences the pupils should have at school, the key skills they need to learn, and the values and qualities that should be fostered throughout their time at Mapplewells. Some of the key needs which were identified for the pupils at the school, especially disadvantaged pupils, included; the need to develop language and literacy skills in the early years and beyond, the need to fully engage and immerse pupils in their learning, the need to help pupils to develop a better understanding of the wider world, and the need to foster high aspirations. Staff also decided that they wanted the curriculum to help children to develop qualities such as curiosity, independence, resilience, open-mindedness and confidence, to

effectively prepare them for the future, and to leave Mapplewells as caring, respectful, democratic and responsible young people.



## Language and Literacy Skills

As a number of pupils starting at Mapplewells at EYFS begin their school career below the expected age level, often with weak language, communication and literacy skills, it is important that the curriculum helps to close this gap. The emphasis is very much on providing a curriculum full of opportunities to develop language and literacy skills, and this is done in a number of ways. Foundation stage leader, Lisa Kania, shares some of the strategies that have been put into place; "one of the key ways that we develop language and communication skills in the early years is through a focus on play and outdoor learning", Lisa tells us, "we use play as an opportunity to scaffold and model language use, and to increase the breadth of the children's vocabulary. We find that our quieter children are more inclined to talk and communicate outdoors, in response to their experience of the environment, and that this gradually helps their confidence and speech growth." Mapplewells have a Forest School for their foundation stage children, and an outdoor play area has also been developed at the school for EYFS children, with nine separate play zones, each based on a theme; Lisa tells us, "these include a literacy zone, a maths zone, a 'petrol station', mud kitchen,

a water zone, music zone, and stage show area. This has helped to give the children more of a focus in their outdoor play, and has created a multitude of opportunities for them to develop their language and literacy skills through play, as each zone opens up chances to practise both speech and writing”.

Indeed, the central focus on literacy is maintained through EYFS and beyond, throughout the whole curriculum at Mapplewells. The curriculum approach is based around high quality texts, and it is these texts that are the leading drivers in the curriculum planning and delivery. Each half term, a topic of study is based around a leading fictional text, and this text introduces a theme around which the rest of the curriculum is centred. This opens up the opportunity for pupils to explore the theme in further detail through subjects such as history, geography or art. Other texts are also used which lead off the main text, including non-fiction and poetry. Karl explains, “this approach has been introduced not only to help to engage and immerse pupils in their learning, but also to enthuse children to read for enjoyment, and to improve language and literacy skills from EYFS onwards. It will also ensure that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, have had the opportunity to engage with a rich and diverse selection of books by the time they leave Mapplewells.”

Intervention programmes have also helped to improve the performance of disadvantaged pupils in Literacy, particularly with reading. For example, ‘reading buddies’, a programme where an older and younger pupil are paired together and read with one another, has proved to be a successful strategy. The older pupil can help to model good reading to the younger, while giving both pupils the opportunity to practise their reading. The pupils are carefully selected to ensure that disadvantaged pupils in particular can benefit from the scheme. The implementation of Switch-on reading, a literacy intervention delivered on a one-to-one basis by a teaching assistant, has been also been very successful. Added to this, parent volunteers also come in to the school to act as ‘Better Reading Partners’, and they regularly read with the children who need extra support. Karl explains, “one of the key reasons we have made reading such a prominent part of the curriculum is to help to improve the reading and literacy of our disadvantaged pupils in particular, and it is beginning to have a notable impact.”



***“One of the key reasons we have made reading such a prominent part of the curriculum is to help to improve the reading and literacy of our disadvantaged pupils in particular, and it is beginning to have a notable impact.”***

### **Engaging and Immersive Learning Experiences**

Each new topic in the curriculum at Mapplewells is launched with a ‘WOW starter’, the purpose of which is to engage, motivate and inspire all pupils at the beginning of each topic through a memorable learning experience. An example of this is the KS2 topic of Ancient Egypt, where the WOW starter is an Ancient Egypt dress up day, and the key text is ‘Mummies in the Morning’. Another example is the topic of police in KS1, which begins with a visit from police officers with their police car; “WOW starters help the topic to come alive for pupils” Karl explains, “and WOW starters such as the police visit also help to link the learning to real life and make it more tangible. The increased interest in learning produced by the WOW starters has been extremely beneficial for all pupils, and has particularly helped in engaging our disadvantaged pupils in their learning.” Continued interest and engagement throughout each topic is maintained with ‘Hooks of the Week’. These weekly ‘hook’ lessons continue to reignite the pupils’ curiosity by posing new information or further questions to explore, through experiences such as trips or creative activities.



Karl and his team have also been driven to ensure that the pupils at Mapplewells feel real ownership of their learning, and Karl has recognised the importance of developing meta-cognition skills through the new curriculum to encourage the development of independent, self-motivated learners. As a result, the curriculum is adapted around an inquiry-based approach, in which pupils have ownership of the direction that their learning takes. Topic lessons begin with the children completing 'KWL grids', where children list what they already 'Know' about the topic they are about to study, what they 'Want' to find out (in the form of questions), and, at the end of the topic, what they have 'Learnt'. The questions generated by the children (what they 'Want' to learn) are compiled, and the teacher uses the questions to tailor the direction of the curriculum, ensuring that the pupils questions are investigated and addressed. Karl explains the benefits, "this approach engages pupils directly in the learning process and feeds their curiosity; it also raises their confidence in putting forward questions and ideas, and helps them to develop independence as they take more ownership of their learning. The reflective element of the KWL grid, where pupils write about what they have learned, helps them to understand the progress they have made and to develop meta-cognition skills. It is a brilliant way of motivating pupils and actively engaging them in the learning process, especially the priority groups outlined in the East Midlands Challenge."

## Understanding of the Wider World

Awareness of the wider world, including the opportunities and challenges it presents, has been integral to raising aspiration and understanding amongst all pupils, including the most economically and socially disadvantaged. There is a key focus on relating children's learning experiences to news and current events, to support pupils in gaining a wider understanding of the world around them, and learning about different perspectives. Karl explains, "we have included a focus on news and current affairs in our curriculum to help our pupils to make sense of the events taking place in the world around them. Our aim is to support pupils to learn to engage with and discuss world issues in an open-minded and nuanced way, and to help them to become well-informed, responsible and respectful citizens. It is becoming more important than ever to help our pupils to understand the news, as there are so many ways that they are receiving information, for example, through social media; we are helping them to make sense of all the opinions and information that they may be exposed to, to examine the facts and learn to draw their own conclusions. The opportunity to discuss current affairs especially helps any disadvantaged or vulnerable children who may not have this opportunity in the home environment."

***"We have included a focus on news and current affairs in our curriculum... to support pupils to learn to engage with and discuss world issues in an open-minded and nuanced way, and to help them to become well-informed, responsible and respectful citizens."***

Knowledge of current events is integrated into the curriculum in several ways. Each class watches the BBC's Newsround in a timetabled slot each day, which also includes time for pupils to ask questions or to share their views. Each class also has a news display board, and children are encouraged to bring in news clippings which interest them (local, national or international), and to regularly add to the display. During the final week of every half term,

the pupils in each class vote for the news story that interests them most, which is then discussed and studied in a greater level of depth, and forms the basis of the curriculum for that week.

Another important way in which pupils are given the opportunity to learn more about the world around them is through the regular trips and residentials which are open to all pupils at Mapplewells, and which are funded for disadvantaged pupils at the school. The trips provided include a year 2 trip to Beaumanor Hall, a year 3 trip to Sherwood forest, a year 4 trip to Skegness, a year 5 trip to Hathersage, and a year 6 trip to Wales. "These trips give pupils an opportunity to experience the wider world, beyond the town of Sutton" says Karl, "and this is especially important for some of our most disadvantaged pupils, who may rarely get the chance to leave Sutton and visit new places otherwise. It is our hope that these trips are not only enjoyable, but are eye-opening too, and that they help pupils to learn more about the world around them, and develop a fresh perspective which they can then bring back to the classroom."

The curriculum at Mapplewells also supports pupils to gain a better understanding of the world around them through an annual topic focused on another culture, delivered during the summer term. Like all topics, this multi-cultural learning is based around a leading text. Last year, the theme of the summer term was Chinese culture and traditions, and the leading text was 'Dragon Dance'. The children across the whole primary phase were immersed in activities and learning based on Chinese culture, across all aspects of the curriculum, and this included music, dance, learning some Mandarin, and sampling a range of Chinese foods. Each week during this term the pupils participated in a focus assembly and shared their learning, as well as contributing to a whole class display on life in China. Karl explains the thinking behind this aspect of the curriculum, "our pupils are predominantly white, working-class British, so learning about other cultures in our curriculum is particularly important, as we are aware that some children may not be exposed to cultures which are different from their own or have the opportunity to travel to different places around the world. In the summer term pupils have an opportunity to enhance their understanding and appreciation of communities and cultures beyond

Sutton-in-Ashfield, so that they can understand that they are also citizens of the wider world. This year the focus of the summer term will be on native Australians and on the history of Australia, based around an Australian lead text."

***"Our pupils are predominantly white, working-class British, so learning about other cultures in our curriculum is particularly important, as we are aware that some children may not be exposed to cultures which are different from their own."***



### **Fostering Aspiration**

Karl has also ensured that the curriculum at Mapplewells strongly supports aspiration and encourages all pupils to aim high, and to achieve their full potential. This is particularly important for vulnerable or disadvantaged pupils, some of whom may experience a lack of encouragement or role models of aspiration in the home environment. This is achieved through a range of activities and events at the school, including an enterprise week, a school parliament, and the house system. Enterprise week gives pupils the opportunity to organise an activity or develop a product which they can market and sell at a school 'trade fair' which parents are invited to attend. "Enterprise week helps our pupils to develop important skills which put them in good stead for the future, including financial management skills, organisational skills, presentation skills and teamwork", says Karl, "around enterprise week we also invite members of the local community to come into school to talk about their jobs, which helps pupils

to learn about the world of work and to consider all the opportunities which are out there for them if they work hard. All of this encourages a can-do attitude of aspiration in our pupils. As for the school parliament and our house system, both are pupil led, and encourage the children to take responsibility, and to develop confidence in themselves and respect for others."

The school also works hard to engage parents in the culture of high aspiration at Mapplewells. Karl explains, "we sometimes encounter hesitancy from parents to engage with school and their children's education, especially if their own experience of school was not a positive one. In order to actively engage parents in our school community, and to break down any perceived barriers, we provide numerous opportunities for families to take part in school-based events, such as a Mother's Day lunch, Father's Day breakfast and parent picnics. We invite parents to come in to the school on open days, and we also offer curriculum workshops that are tailored towards empowering parents to support their children within the core curriculum areas. Parental engagement in these events is high and these enable a good home-school relationship to develop to support pupil performance." Parental questionnaires are sent home regularly, and show that parents are generally very positive about the culture ethos of the school. Questionnaires from disadvantaged families are individually analysed in order to gauge their feelings and opinions, and to help to support these pupils in the best way possible.



***"Our ultimate aim is for every single child who leaves Mapplewells to become the very best that they can be, and to ensure that disadvantage doesn't hold any child back."***



### Conclusion

The curriculum created at Mapplewells is opening up opportunities for all of its pupils, not only to raise their attainment, but to become well-informed, independent learners who are understanding and respectful of others. Disadvantaged pupils in particular are benefitting from a curriculum that not only engages and motivates them, but also supports them to develop the skills and aspiration to succeed. Karl concludes, "our ultimate aim is for every single child who leaves Mapplewells to become the very best that they can be, and to ensure that disadvantage doesn't hold any child back. We believe that our curriculum helps to open up opportunities for all of our children to achieve their full potential, and also encourages them to live out our school motto: **'success is in our hands.'**"

# The Recruitment and Retention of High-Quality Teachers: Parkland Primary School



Photo: Jo Andrews (Deputy Headteacher) & Sarah Bishop (Headteacher), Parkland Primary School

**The recruitment and retention of teachers is becoming an increasingly significant issue in schools across the country. High numbers of teachers are leaving the profession in the first 5 years (around one third) and fewer places are being filled on teacher training courses (a 7% drop from 2016 to 2017), with the government failing to meet its recruitment targets for the past five years.** To make matters worse, this has come at a time when the number of pupils in our schools continues to increase. All too often, it is disadvantaged pupils who are suffering the consequences of the recruitment and retention crisis the most sharply, with schools serving deprived communities particularly struggling to recruit and retain qualified teachers. Recent statistics show that vacancy rates are at their highest in primary schools in the most deprived parts of Britain, with teacher vacancy rates often double the number of those in less deprived areas. In secondary schools in England, there is also a strong association between relative poverty and the number of teaching slots filled on a temporary basis.

*According to Lee Elliot Major, CEO of the Sutton Trust, research has shown that high quality teaching, especially at primary level, is the most effective method of closing the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. It is therefore vitally important for schools with high levels of disadvantage to attract and retain teachers of the highest quality, to enable effective social mobility for pupils, and to provide them with the best possible chance for success. Rachael Gacs visited Parkland Primary School in South Wigston, Leicestershire, and spoke to Headteacher Sarah Bishop, and Deputy Head Jo Andrews, to find out more about the approach and strategies which have enabled the school to successfully recruit and retain teachers of the highest quality.*

Parkland Primary School is a large primary school (520 pupils), with above average numbers of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding (27%). Historically the school has faced challenges with the recruitment and retention of teachers and has experienced high levels of turnover. However, over the past 3 years, the situation has improved significantly. Levels of staff recruitment and retention

are now excellent, with all recent vacancies being quickly and successfully filled, and with no members of staff choosing to move on from Parkland in the last academic year (apart from for maternity leave). Sarah tells us, "there has been a lot of change at Parkland leading up to this point. One of the most significant changes was when the school became part of the Discovery Schools Academy Trust. It was as a result of this that I first came to Parkland, to take up the role of assistant head. I was on secondment from Kibworth Primary School, which is also a part of the Trust. I became acting head in 2015, and substantive head later in the same year. Jo became Deputy Head in the January (2016)."

***"A cultural shift was taking place. It was an exciting time as together we clarified our vision for the future of the school."***

As a result of Parkland joining the Discovery Schools Academy Trust, along with the changes in leadership, there came an opportunity for a fresh start at the school. Sarah explains how a change in systems and structures, and expectations, impacted on staffing; "it was a time of change, and not only in terms of structures, leadership and management. Changes were also being made to the curriculum at a national level, and to assessment too. Initially, all of the changes meant that a few teachers decided Parkland wasn't the school for them and chose to move on. However, for those that stayed and for the new teachers who started with us, a cultural shift was taking place. It was an exciting time as together we clarified our vision for the future of the school."

The school's vision is centred around high expectations and aspirations, for pupils and staff alike, with a key emphasis on the school meeting the needs of the whole child, emotionally and socially, as well as academically. The emotional and behavioural needs of pupils have been supported in a number of ways, and various systems have been put in place to support staff in meeting these needs. Most notably, a Pastoral Team has been put together at the school to support pupils going through difficulties; this includes supporting pupils with specific issues, or working generally with pupils who may have more ongoing issues. The Pastoral Team keep in close communication with parents regarding pastoral matters, and work closely with the Attendance Manager, the School Nurse, and outside agencies in order to give pupils and parents access to any help they need.

The role that the Pastoral Team fulfil is vitally important to ensuring that any emotional or social problems that pupils may be facing are dealt with. This is particularly important given the number of disadvantaged pupils that attend Parkland who may need extra support, for themselves or their families. Jo Andrews, Deputy Head, says, "the Pastoral Team has helped our teachers to feel much better supported and less overwhelmed. They take the pressure away from teachers to take on all the responsibility for their pupils' pastoral needs. While all teachers are constantly vigilant, they can refer issues on to the Pastoral Team where appropriate, leaving them able to focus on their class as a whole, and focus first and foremost on high quality teaching."



***“The {introduction of the} Pastoral Team has helped our teachers to feel much better supported and less overwhelmed.”***

The school also employs a Behaviour Manager who supports teachers in numerous ways. When a pupil presents challenging behaviour, they can be referred to the Behaviour Manager, and a behaviour plan is written, put in place, and closely monitored. The Behaviour Manager, along with the SLT, provides CPD for staff on behaviour management, and the school has consistent behaviour management strategies across the board. This includes methods through which all staff are trained to communicate with pupils, with an emphasis on using restorative language, and a restorative approach to problem solving. This approach encourages mutually respectful relationships and supports pupils to behave well by helping them to develop core values of care and respect for those around them. The result of this approach is summed up well in the school's recent Ofsted report (February 2018), “relationships are warm and supportive, both between pupils and between pupils and adults. Classrooms are calm and orderly places.... (challenging behaviour) is managed very effectively by the highly skilled staff, both in lessons and during unstructured times of the day.”

Alongside effective behaviour management policy and strategies, classes are also now much smaller at Parkland. Pupil premium money has been invested to make sure that all class sizes are below 30; at KS2 they currently average 27/28 pupils, and at KS1 they average 25 pupils. Sarah tells us, “we have found this to be an excellent investment; smaller classes mean that teachers can get to know individual pupils better. As a result, teachers are better able to understand any barriers that disadvantaged pupils, or any other pupils, may face, and respond more effectively to these barriers. The smaller classes have also made classroom management much easier.” Overall, the strategies put in place to help to support the emotional and behavioural needs of pupils have meant that teachers are much more able to make high quality teaching their key priority at Parkland. These strategies have helped to reduce some of

the ‘key stresses’ that can lead to teachers feeling overwhelmed, such as having to deal with a lot of challenging behaviour, and/or having to take on the bulk of the responsibility for dealing with pastoral issues within their class. The support teachers receive in these areas is almost certainly one of the key reasons that teacher retention has improved in recent years at Parkland.

***“Our staff are continually able to keep learning and growing as professionals, and have opportunities to further develop their career if they wish to do so.”***

Sarah believes that another key reason that teacher retention has improved so significantly at Parkland is because of the opportunities now available within the school, and also within the trust as a whole, for career development and progression. “We have a strong emphasis on continual professional development, which links in with our core value of high aspirations. We develop our teachers through high quality CPD and have coaching programmes at every level which link into our appraisal system. We also identify opportunities for career development for our staff through accredited programmes such as NPQML or NPQSL, and there are often opportunities for career progression within our academy trust or teaching school alliance. This means our staff are continually able to keep learning and growing as professionals, and have opportunities to further develop their career if they wish to do so.”

An increasing number of teachers at Parkland are also ‘home grown’, due to the school's success in



retaining its SCITT students into their NQT year and beyond. Sarah explains, "Our SCITT students generally really want to stay with us after their training year, and are keen to apply for any vacancies which come up. That's great for us, as they already know how the school works, and we know them really well too. We know that they have been well trained, what they are like as teachers, and that they understand our school and our vision and values." Laura Hollis, a SCITT student at Parkland who went on to secure a job at the school, remarked "I wanted to stay at Parkland for a number of reasons. Firstly because of the amazing support I received during my training year from senior leadership and the rest of the staff at the school, who were all very approachable and helpful. I also wanted to stay because I really believe in the ethos of school; we are all striving to do the very best for our pupils, and I know that Parkland is a place where I can make a positive impact of the lives of disadvantaged pupils."

***"We are all striving to do the very best for our pupils, and I know that Parkland is a place where I can make a positive impact of the lives of disadvantaged pupils".***

The senior leadership at Parkland have high expectations for both staff and pupils, but these high expectations, Jo tells us, are promoted through a culture of development and support, not one of judgement. "We have a culture at Parkland where we acknowledge that we are all on a journey together, learning and growing as professionals all the time. Our staff share this approach, and work with us in setting expectations and targets, rather than expectations simply being delivered from the top down, and everybody is involved in this at every level. We have an open-door policy and often go into each other's classrooms; it's not seen as a big deal. We are continually learning from each other, and when we observe one another we always try to offer constructive feedback to facilitate further improvement." Sarah adds, "we also have a culture of celebrating successes, whether that be the success of staff or the success of pupils. We always try to be positive, and we endeavour to thank our



staff regularly for their hard work. It makes a huge difference to teachers when they know that their hard work is valued and appreciated, and they are much more likely to go the extra mile for their pupils as a result. Letting staff know that they are valued also means they are more likely to feel satisfied in their work and, as a result, stay in the job long-term."

***"We have a culture at Parkland where we acknowledge that we are all on a journey together, learning and growing as professionals all the time. Our staff share this approach, and work with us in setting expectations and targets".***

Successful recruitment and retention of teachers at Parkland has had a very positive impact on the school's pupils overall, especially disadvantaged pupils. The school has been able to recruit high quality teachers who can get the most out of the pupils in their class, and the retention of staff has meant that pupils have benefitted from the consistency which comes from this. Teachers are able to form strong relationships with pupils over time, and can come to a greater level of understanding of the needs and/or barriers to learning which individual pupils may face. The recent Ofsted report reflects the positive difference which is being made to pupils at Parkland as a result, stating that "current pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and attainment is rising across the school... disadvantaged pupils are making increasingly rapid progress."

# Maximising Pupil Premium Funding to 'Close the Gap': Brocklewood Primary School

**Brocklewood Primary School is situated on the outskirts of Nottingham City, and is part of the Transform Trust, a trust of 14 schools across Nottingham and Derby. The school serves a community with high levels of need and deprivation, with well over half of the school's pupils entitled to pupil premium funding.**

Over the past two years, the school has made great strides in ensuring that pupil premium funding is used as effectively as possible to help close the attainment gap between the school's disadvantaged pupils and their peers. Rachael Gacs met Headteacher, Heather Tarrant, and Assistant Head, Richard Jones, who is responsible for pupil premium, to find out more about the strategies that have been put in place at Brocklewood to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, and how these strategies are making a positive impact.

## **Quality teaching**

The first priority in improving attainment at Brocklewood has been to ensure that there is quality teaching and learning across the board. Heather explains, "the overall quality of teaching is vital to enabling disadvantaged pupils to succeed, as they form over half of the pupils in every class". Quality teaching and learning has been supported and maintained at Brocklewood through a culture of high expectations. This includes high expectations of teachers' subject knowledge and teaching skills, high expectations of pupil behaviour and effort, and a suitable level of challenge for pupils in every lesson. "High expectations are not just in place for our pupil premium children but for everyone in the class, and everybody benefits", Heather tells us, "and that's an expectation right from nursery and early years, all the way up to the end of KS2." The latest Ofsted inspection report (September 2017) confirms that high quality teaching and learning at Brocklewood is supporting the progress of all pupils, stating that "quality teaching and learning are rapidly improving pupils' standards of attainment, and all groups of pupils make good progress."

Quality teaching and learning then, has underpinned Brocklewood's success; but Heather and Richard have been mindful that this can only have the desired impact on disadvantaged pupils when they are in school, and are also in a state of mind to access this provision. This is where the importance of the many other strategies and interventions introduced at Brocklewood have come into play. Richard begins by telling us "from the beginning, we have wanted to remove the barriers to learning for our pupils who are disadvantaged, and put a focus on supporting their social and emotional needs."

***"From the beginning, we have wanted to remove the barriers to learning for our pupils who are disadvantaged, and put a focus on supporting their social and emotional needs."***

## **Addressing the barriers to learning**

Indeed, there are a wide variety of ways in which Brocklewood has tackled barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils, in order to make sure that all pupils are getting help where they need it most. First, the school is doing all it can to ensure high levels of attendance. Starting at the very beginning of the day, the school offers a walking bus service which helps to get some of its most vulnerable pupils into school in a morning, on time. The walking bus specifically targets poor attenders and has dramatically increased the overall attendance of disadvantaged pupils. The school also provides a breakfast club which offers free places for pupil premium children, which not only encourages pupils to come into school, but also ensures that they get a healthy meal to start off their day. To tackle persistent absence, Brocklewood has employed a full-time attendance officer who works with individual children and families where absence is an issue to improve attendance.

Home visits from the attendance officer throughout the year have increased the percentage of next day returns to school by an average of 59%.

Secondly, the school is placing a significant emphasis on overcoming the social and emotional challenges faced by many pupils – including the most disadvantaged. For example, the school has employed a full-time school-based counsellor who offers one-to-one and group sessions for pupils experiencing difficulties. The school also employs two behaviour mentors and three safeguarding officers to ensure that there is always somebody for the children to approach or to be referred to when facing personal difficulties, including child protection issues. Teachers are able to refer particular concerns to the behaviour mentors or to the safeguarding officers where appropriate, who can deal with issues straight away, while the teacher can continue to primarily focus on teaching and learning within the classroom.

Pupils are also invited to 'drop-in' on the safeguarding officers anytime with pastoral needs, friendships concerns, or anything else which is bothering them. This open-door policy means pupils always have someone to turn to with difficulties and can get the focussed help they need quickly and effectively. "Helping these pupils to deal with difficulties in their lives means that they are better able to focus in the classroom environment", Richard says, "and therefore can make better progress."

***"Helping pupils to deal with difficulties in their lives means that they are better able to focus in the classroom environment"***

Thirdly, Brocklewood is working hard to address the needs of those pupils who are currently working at a lower level of attainment than the majority of pupils of their age, through additional needs classes. In these classes, pupils are taught at, and can make progress from, their own current level. At the moment, all the pupils in the additional needs classes are also pupil premium children. Pupils attending these classes may have language or literacy issues, emotional or behavioural issues, attachment issues or any other significant needs or difficulties. The additional needs



**Heather Tarrant**  
Headteacher,  
Brocklewood Primary School

classes are smaller than the mainstream classes, and also have a higher adult to child ratio compared to other classes in the school. A higher number of teaching assistants allows for much more bespoke provision, which takes into account each child's social, emotional and academic needs. Access to additional needs classes is often flexible; children can access the classes for a temporary period of time, or just for mornings or afternoons, while others may stay in an additional needs class on a more long-term basis. Pupils with SEN who are in the additional needs classes make faster progress overall than those who are not, which demonstrates that the classes play an important role in helping pupils with additional needs to 'catch up' more quickly.

### **Early Years**

Recently there has been a particular focus at Brocklewood on doing everything possible to close the attainment gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This has come about through analysing school data, which revealed that when

pupil premium children did not reach a Good Level of Development at EYFS at the school, this trend tended to continue through KS1 and KS2, and often the gap would continue to widen. Research from the Sutton Trust confirms that this is a nation-wide trend, explaining in their report 'Closing Gaps Early' (September 2017), "gaps at school entry make up a sizeable share of the later achievement gaps. Studies show that more than half of the gaps in achievement at age 11 are due to inequality that was already present at age five." Through studying the evidence, it became clear to Heather, Richard, and their team that concentrating on closing the gap in Early Years was crucial to raising and maintaining the attainment of disadvantaged pupils to a level in line with their peers throughout primary school and beyond. Richard explains, "we realised that we needed to put a concentrated focus on closing the gap at EYFS to give our disadvantaged pupils the best possible chance of success throughout their education."

***"We realised that we needed to put a concentrated focus on closing the gap at EYFS to give our disadvantaged pupils the best possible chance of success."***

Brocklewood managed to close the attainment gap at EYFS in the last academic year (2016/17) and buck the previous trend, with a higher number of disadvantaged pupils reaching a Good Level of Development (72%) compared with their peers at the school (69%), and also with a higher percentage of pupil premium children reaching a Good Level of Development compared to the national average. A strong focus was put on pupil's communication and language development, and also on reading and writing, and funding was invested in additional staffing, allowing for smaller classes (around 24 pupils) and providing a high adult to child ratio across EYFS classes. The high adult:child ratios allow for EYFS classes to split into smaller teaching and learning groups, and have also meant that teaching assistants can be used flexibly for intervention and targeted support of pupil premium children. This targeted support has included daily individual reading with pupils, speaking and listening groups, gross and fine motor groups, and music interaction groups. It has also allowed teaching assistants to strategically 'play'

alongside pupil premium pupils to support their language and communication development.

Heather tells us, "we have also put a great deal of effort into developing our teaching of phonics. We have made sure that pupil premium children are heard to read every day, since we are aware that some pupils may not have that opportunity outside of school, and research shows that being heard to read regularly is one of the biggest indicators of future academic success. To support regular reading, we also provide a free book bag to all pupil premium pupils, and replace this for free should it get lost, as not having a book bag would be a barrier to effective reading between home and school. This has all really paid off as standards have significantly improved"

Hopes are high that the pupil premium children from last year's EYFS cohort will continue to achieve in-line with their peers throughout primary school and beyond now that they have attained a solid foundation of success during EYFS. While the pupils will continue to be closely monitored and supported, they are currently continuing to achieve in-line with their peers. Heather and Richard are quietly confident that this success will continue throughout KS1 and KS2 since the gap has been closed so early in their educational career.

### **A child-centred approach**

The emphasis on closing the attainment gap at Brocklewood has by no means been limited to EYFS. Richard explains, "higher up the school we are dealing with an historic gap in attainment between our disadvantaged pupils and their peers, which makes closing the gap more of a challenge. Despite this, we have been no less determined to do all we can to close the gap for our older pupils and do not believe it is ever too late to make a difference." Again, strategies implemented to help to close this gap in KS1 and KS2 have been based on the analysis of internal data. Disadvantaged pupils who have not made the expected standard at key milestones have been identified from the data, and this group, made up of 41 pupils, have been made a priority.

A multitude of strategies have been put into place to support this group of children to make accelerated progress, facilitated through an assertive mentoring programme. The mentoring programme has enabled the school to identify the barriers to learning which

individual pupils in the group are facing, and to put together a support package for each pupil, tailored to their specific needs. "All of our pupil premium pupils fill in a PASS survey (Pupil Attitudes to Self and School)", says Richard, "this allows us to get a really good insight into what our pupils feel about their experience of school, and that, in turn, helps us to make sure our interventions are targeted and have a greater impact. This year, we've also introduced a 360 profile for our target group of pupil premium children who have not achieved the expected standard so far. To complete the 360 profile, we sit down with each individual child and talk to them about what makes a day at school good or bad for them, ask what motivates them and what they think their strengths are, and discuss with them any barriers that they may encounter, in or out of school, that they feel have a negative impact their learning. Alongside other forms of data, this can help to give us a real insight into some of the things that are obstructing the pupil from reaching their full potential, things that we might not have known about otherwise; then we can try our best to do something about it!"

***"We must never equate disadvantage with low achievement. The very brightest pupil in a class may also be disadvantaged... there should be no ceiling on their learning."***

Relevant information from the PASS questionnaire and 360 profile is passed on to classroom teachers and SLT, and is used to provide tailored support to help the pupil in question to overcome any barriers to learning which they may be facing. This support may include access to any of the extra provision that the school deliver to support academic, social or emotional needs, and is also discussed with parents at parents' evening, who may be able to offer their own support too. Pupils with a 360 profile also set themselves targets which are reviewed each half term; through these targets the children are able to have a voice, take responsibility for their learning, and can reflect on their progress over time through the achievement of these targets.

"The 360 profile has really opened our eyes to the issues that have an impact on our children and what

effects their ability to get the most out of their lessons", Richard reflects, "and we've seen some really positive results so far, at an individual child level. It's given the children an opportunity to have a voice, to identify their strengths and areas for improvement, and to develop their meta-cognition skills. It's also allowed them to set achievable targets for themselves, and to observe their progress through meeting those targets at regular intervals. The hope is now that those children who have met their targets so far will continue to do so as they move through the project, that those pupils will make accelerated progress, and that, as a result, the attainment gap will continue to close."

Heather, Richard and their team have much to be proud of. Attainment of all pupils, and especially pupil premium pupils, has improved considerably at Brocklewood over the past two years. As previously mentioned, the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers was completely closed at EYFS in 2017, and is also closing year on year at KS1 and KS2. Heather concludes by saying, "we must never equate disadvantage with low achievement. The very brightest pupil in a class may also be disadvantaged, and just because a child is disadvantaged does not mean they cannot achieve the very highest academic standards; there should be no ceiling on their learning. At Brocklewood, we try our very best to remove the barriers to learning that disadvantaged pupils may face, because our ultimate goal is simply to allow each and every child to reach their full potential, without allowing any circumstances beyond their control to hold them back."



**Richard Jones**

*Deputy Head, Brocklewood Primary School*

## East Midlands MAT Leaders' Network 2018/19



The Inspiring Leaders East Midlands #MATLeaders network enters its third successive year in 2018/19, and continues to go from strength to strength.

In 2017/18, members benefited from networking with and hearing from CEOs of organisations such as NHS Improvement, a leading children's hospice, a local foundation hospital trust, and MATs from other regions. Many members also contributed to a policy roundtable paper on the future of MAT accountability and inspection, sharing their views with senior colleagues from Ofsted.

In 2018/19, the network will begin with a national conference in Sheffield, bringing together Forum Strategy's other three regional networks. Leaders will also meet regionally throughout the remainder of the academic year to discuss relevant strategic developments and issues for sector. Membership includes:

- Attendance for you and a guest colleague at Forum Strategy's annual #MATLeaders conference (Improvement and Innovation at Scale) on 27th September. Guest speakers include award-winning entrepreneur Kate Lester; Mike Barton – Chief Constable of Durham Police; and Professor Toby Greany.

- Attendance at three regional meetings over the remainder of the academic year.
- An individual subscription for the CEO to Forum Strategy's weekly term-time strategy, research and policy briefings until July 2019.
- Opportunity to engage in two online policy seminars.

This year's network will take place on the following dates:

- **27th September, 9.00am – 3.30pm (Sheffield):** #MATLeaders Annual Conference: Improvement and Innovation at Scale
- **7th December, 9.30am – 1.00pm:** The evolving accountability system for MATs: where next for oversight and inspection?
- **7th March, 12.30pm – 4.00pm:** Franchising models and the balance between autonomy and standard operating procedure - lessons from business and industry.
- **20th June, 12.30pm – 4.00pm:** The role of technology in multi-academy trust improvement and success.

Each member is permitted to bring one guest colleague to each session.

[#MATLeaders](#)

### Feedback from last year's network

- *"Very relevant and thought provoking, supporting us to move forward."*
- *"As always, time to reflect with other people who share similar challenges."*
- *"Very inspiring and though provoking. Really moved on my thinking."*

**WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?** Email: [MATnetwork@inspiringleaderstoday.com](mailto:MATnetwork@inspiringleaderstoday.com)

# inspiring leaders

tomorrow's leaders inspired by today's



## Who's leading the network?

The network is led and delivered by Inspiring Leaders in partnership with Forum Strategy and its Director, Michael Pain.

Inspiring Leaders is a not for profit, partnership company consisting of five outstanding Teaching Schools, a Special School and three delivery partner schools spread across the East Midlands and Yorkshire and Humber. We passionately believe that great school leadership has the power to transform children's lives and we are therefore committed to providing the best possible learning opportunities to all of our participants.

Inspiring Leaders is licensed to deliver the network by Forum Strategy. Forum Strategy is an education consultancy specialising in providing high quality consultancy and training resources to multi-academy trusts. Forum Strategy operates three regional MAT Leaders networks across the country, as well as an annual National Early Headship Conference. Its Director, Michael Pain, was formerly Head of Policy and Special Adviser to the CEO at the National College for School Leadership.

## What is the cost?

The cost of membership for 2018/19 academic year is £995 plus VAT.

Network members are invited to bring along one additional member of their senior leadership team to each session.

As well as access to the network, CEO members will receive a FREE nine months' 'individual' subscription to Forum Strategy's policy, strategy and research briefing and also its regular funding and grants briefing.

Places are very limited. The deadline for booking onto the network is **30th June 2018**.

## How do I book onto the network?

Please email us at **MATnetwork@inspiringleaderstoday.com**

Or call us on

**0115 9891913**

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Discovery Schools Trust, Leicestershire  
Redhill Academy Trust, Nottinghamshire  
Transform Trust, Nottinghamshire

Flying High Trust, Nottinghamshire  
Ash Lea Special School, Nottinghamshire

# Investigating the Link between PE and Raised Achievement: Redhill Academy

**A broad and balanced curriculum is widely acknowledged as key to ensuring that children develop into well-informed and well-rounded individuals. A rich and varied curriculum can also help pupils to acquire the essential life skills that they will need to face the challenges of life beyond school, including interpersonal skills, self-motivation, resilience and creativity, all of which are vital for future success.** However, when it comes to closing the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, often schools can fall into the trap of encouraging a narrow and intensive focus upon the core curriculum subjects (English, Maths and Science) at the expense of subjects that are perceived as 'less academic', which can end up being side-lined as a result. While it is, of course, essential to focus on these 'core' areas, a significant number of schools are witnessing the remarkable impact that an emphasis on a broader curriculum can have, not only in terms of improving overall academic achievement, but also in equipping young people, especially those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged, with the life skills required to support their future success.



Sarah Johnson, Head of PE, Redhill Academy.

An excellent example of a school embracing the benefits of a broad curriculum is the Redhill Academy, a secondary school in Arnold, Nottingham, where Head of PE Sarah Johnson has been assessing the contribution that PE can make to raising overall achievement. Sarah has especially been focussing on how PE can be used to support wider academic achievement within the school, as well how it can help to improve the physical and emotional wellbeing of pupils, especially those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged. Sarah was initially inspired by the research of Professor John J. Ratey from Harvard University, and his work on the link between exercise and improved brain function. She explains, "scans of the brain before and after exercise have proven that the brain fires better after exercise, and that exercise can help the brain to learn, remember and concentrate more effectively. This made me realise the vast potential of PE, not only to improve skills and fitness, but to help to raise achievement across the board."

***"Scans of the brain before and after exercise have proven that the brain fires better after exercise, and that exercise can help the brain to learn, remember and concentrate more effectively."***

Sarah decided to conduct her own research, to gauge the potential of PE to raise academic achievement in her own school setting. She did this by analysing the GCSE exam results of pupils who had received 'Sports Colours' at Redhill, compared to the exam results of all the other pupils (Sport Colours are awarded at the school for very high levels of performance in sport for a sustained period). "There was a striking difference in achievement", Sarah tells us, "on average the Sport Colour students performed better in all measures in

their final GCSE exams, and quite significantly too. In 2015 90% of the sports colour students achieves A\*-C compared to 60% of the rest of the year group, and I witnessed a similar trend in GCSE results over the subsequent 2 years (2016/17) as well". Sarah acknowledges the limitations of this data, not least the challenge of proving 'definitive' data causality, with other factors potentially contributing to the success of the Sports Colour students. However, the apparent link between sport and academic success at Redhill cannot be easily ignored, and points towards the significant potential that a greater level of engagement with PE and sport could have in raising the academic achievement of all pupils.

The results of this research have made Sarah more determined than ever to reach out to as many pupils as possible, with the aim of helping everyone to engage with PE, and to incorporate exercise into their everyday lives. "It's becoming more and more clear how vital PE is, not only for health and fitness, but for the development of key life skills, for emotional wellbeing, and, according to the latest research, for overall academic success. Therefore, it is my aim to make sure that every pupil at Redhill can benefit from the improved life chances that PE has the potential to offer." Over recent years Sarah has repurposed the PE curriculum at Redhill with the aim of engaging all pupils (not just the naturally 'sporty' ones) and making improved wellbeing a key focus. In Year 9, a 'health programme' is offered through the core PE curriculum with a focus on all-round health and wellbeing, including emotional wellbeing. The programme recognises the difficulties often faced by adolescents and gives pupils the opportunity to learn about and discuss topics such as self-esteem, confidence, nutrition and diet, and mindfulness. Pupils also learn about the positive impact that physical exercise can have upon their own physical and mental health.

***"On average Sport Colour students performed better in all measures in their final GCSE exams, and quite significantly too."***

At Key Stage 4, pupils are able to choose one of three different pathways in core PE; a games pathway, a



fitness pathway, or a sports leadership pathway. Sarah explains, "the games pathway engages those who respond well to traditional PE and enjoy playing competitive sports such as football or netball. The fitness route is aimed at pupils who are not necessarily interested in competitive sport; we give them the opportunity to try a number of fitness activities which they may not have tried before, including yoga, pilates, and archery. Finally, the leadership pathway is best suited to those who have an interest in coaching, teaching or leadership. Offering these choices helps pupils to take ownership over their experience of PE, and we endeavour to offer 'something for everyone'."

Sarah has also made sure that the PE department has a clear vision statement which clearly communicates its mission to the pupils. She explains, "the vision statement outlines what we want our pupils to gain from PE, and that's not just limited to skills and technique, but includes things such as 'having the confidence to try new physical activities', 'understanding more about how fitness contributes to physical, social and emotional health', and 'building a firm foundation for life-long physical activity'. Pupils therefore know what we are aiming to provide for them, and we refer back to the vision often, so that the pupils can continually relate their lessons back to the overall purpose of PE." All pupils are also encouraged to use PE lessons to help to develop essential life skills, through 'My PB' (My Personal Best), which is a Youth Sport Trust (YST) programme. 'My PB' aims to explicitly develop 12 key characteristics/life skills through the PE curriculum, including: resilience, responsibility, self-motivation, communication and empathy.

Sarah says, "My PB uses sport to help pupils to develop skills and characteristics that will be useful throughout their lives, including in their future careers. It is helping to equip pupils with the skills they will need to succeed in all aspects of life; academically, and beyond."

***"My PB uses sport to help pupils to develop skills and characteristics that will be useful throughout their lives, including in their future careers."***

PE is also used at Redhill as a vehicle to increase the confidence of pupils who are vulnerable, disadvantaged, or struggling socially or academically. There are two key initiatives which have been set up to benefit these pupils; they are the 'Girls Active Project' and 'Active in Mind', and both are wellbeing projects available through the Youth Sport Trust. The Girls Active Project is a mentoring project, where older girls mentor younger girls who are disadvantaged, vulnerable, or who are starting to display concerning behaviour. The project is a way of intervening quickly, before problems become more serious. The older girls run sporting and fitness activities with the younger girls, and also meet up on other occasions just to talk. The aim of the project is to build the confidence of the younger girls, as well as providing positive role models, and fun activities to take part in. Sarah says, "the younger girls get a lot from being part of the project. They feel like part of a close and caring group, and they usually look up to the older girls, who are a positive influence. They

often develop a close bond. The project has made a valuable difference to many of the girls involved, helping them to become more confident and engaged, both in PE and in school more generally."

***"I truly believe that PE has the potential to enhance the achievement of all pupils, and the research and activities we have undertaken at Redhill in this regard have definitely reinforced that view."***

The second initiative which has recently been implemented at Redhill, 'Active in Mind', is part of a Sport England funded Youth Sport Trust pilot project, with 25 schools taking part nationwide. The project is specifically aimed at pupils in KS3 and KS4 displaying signs of mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, or OCD. Sarah tells us, "we selected ten mentors from the sixth form who helped us to run the project. We were very careful to choose students who we knew had the maturity to deal with the kind of issues that the younger pupils were facing. The project began with a day at an outdoor adventure centre, where the mentors and younger pupils got to know each other.

After this the mentors ran weekly sessions for the younger pupils, which included various fun games and physical activities, and also offered opportunity to talk." The research results from the 'Active in Mind' project, based on questionnaires completed by pupils before and after the project, are currently



analysed by researchers at Leeds Beckett University. However, Sarah tells us that pupil's verbal feedback on the project has been very positive, with many pupils expressing how much they enjoyed it and got from it. A year 10 boy, who had been struggling with symptoms of anxiety and OCD, said the following, "it's made me more confident at school, and I feel confident to go to the after-school activity sessions led by the mentors too. I enjoy working with them as they encourage me". Sarah tells us, "we have been really happy with the results of the 'Active in Mind' project that we have observed first-hand, and we now eagerly await the outcome of the research analysis. Several of our mentors and younger pupils enjoyed the project so much that they have asked if they can carry on, even though the official YST pilot project is now over."

***"Offering disadvantaged pupils high-quality and engaging PE as a key part of their curriculum could really help to level the playing field."***

Finally, Sarah reflects on the difference that she believes that PE can have on raising attainment and improving life chances; "I truly believe that PE has the potential to enhance the achievement of all pupils, and the research and activities we have undertaken at Redhill in this regard have definitely reinforced that view. I am also certain that, with a well-considered and ambitious PE curriculum, and with effective approaches in place, PE in schools can play a significant role in raising attainment and improving the life chances of disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils. However, this can only happen in schools where PE is sufficiently valued within the curriculum. If recent research linking exercise with better academic achievement is accurate, then offering disadvantaged pupils high-quality and engaging PE as a key part of their curriculum could really help to level the playing field. For this reason, we are making a real effort to particularly engage vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils in sport and fitness at Redhill, and we are witnessing positive results.



## **The Youth Sport Trust: Believing in Every Child's Future**

"A passion for the power of sport and improving children's lives has been at the heart of the Youth Sport Trust since its inception. It is great to support committed leaders of PE like Sarah who are pioneering new approaches to PE to better meet the needs of today's youth and address whole school improvement concerns. Seeing how she has embraced curriculum design ideas, and taken messages from the likes of Dr John Ratey at our conference and made it her own to meet the needs of Redhill students, is really encouraging.



Sarah is a key member of our national network of PE CatalYSTs, leading the way to innovate and advocate for a more purposeful physical education experience. This movement forms an important part of our four-year strategy to transform PE's place in the curriculum, putting it at the centre of wellbeing and achievement in education, so that every pupil can enjoy the life-changing benefits that sport and fitness can offer."

**Will Swaites, Head of Physical Education and Achievement at the Youth Sport Trust**

To find out more about the Youth Sport Trust's 'Believing in every child's future' strategy please visit: <http://strategy.youthsporttrust.org/>

# The Transition from Lead Practitioner to Corporate Leader

An overview of the East Midlands MAT CEO Event 19th April

**Colleagues from the East Midlands' MAT CEO Network met on Thursday 19 April, hosted by the Djanogly Learning Trust in Nottingham, to discuss the key transition from lead practitioner to corporate leader, and the support processes that need to be in place for the CEO to succeed.**

They heard from Ifti Majid, CEO of Derbyshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, whose career has seen him move from being a front-line mental health nurse, to becoming substantive CEO of the Trust at the end of 2017.

Ifti spoke passionately about how undertaking a Duke of Edinburgh award when he was 15 led to his decision to pursue a career in mental health nursing at the age of 18, and the many and varied career opportunities which had led to his current role. He discussed the three main decision points during his career and the factors that had led to him making the move first into operational management, then into a director role and finally into becoming CEO of the Trust. Ifti spoke about the important role of the CEO in setting the vision and values for the organisation.

***"The vision is the connecting artery that runs through the organisation, and everything else comes from it."***

*Ifti Majid, CEO Derbyshire Healthcare  
NHS Foundation Trust, April 2017*

Ifti shared how, at each point in his career, his front-line clinical experience and strong reputation in the field of mental health had given him credibility with colleagues. He emphasised the importance of management and leadership training in enabling him to make the transition to non-clinical managerial

and leadership roles, as well as the need to build a team of skilled people around you as CEO.

Both Ifti and the Chair of the Trust's Board, Caroline Maley, emphasised the vital relationship between the CEO and the Chair, which Caroline described as "friendly" but not "cosy" (so that challenging conversations can take place).

Caroline described her varied career, from qualifying as a chartered accountant in South Africa, to spending two years as a partner in a large multinational corporation, to pursuing different interests and taking on different roles that made use of and expanded her skills, including five years as Chief Operating Officer at the National College for School Leadership (NCSL). Caroline then decided to pursue a portfolio career, which included joining the Trust, leading to Caroline becoming acting Chair at the beginning of 2017 and substantive Chair from September.

Caroline said that a core skill of the COO/CFO is their ability to bring out the best in people. They must also have a good understanding of how businesses work, the ability to work across a wide range of areas and to manage teams of skilled people. MATs are multi-million pound businesses so having access to a really good COO or CFO is vital.



*Ifti Majid,*  
CEO Derbyshire Healthcare NHS  
Foundation Trust



*Caroline Maley*  
Chair Derbyshire Healthcare NHS  
Foundation Trust

Whilst it is often tempting to appoint an experienced school business manager to the role, MATs should be prepared to look beyond their organisation to appoint someone with the skills required to match the scale of the organisation.

Caroline described the very complex governance arrangements in foundation trusts, which are quite different to those in MATs, including their ability to pay for the services of their non-executive directors.

Caroline advised MAT colleagues to approach businesses and organisations beyond education in order to enable both to learn from each other.

Colleagues then heard from James Brown, Deputy CEO at Discovery Schools Academy Trust, about the launch of the new National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership (NPQEL), which Inspiring Leaders has been licensed to deliver. The qualification has been designed specifically for: serving executive heads working across two or more schools; aspiring CEOs; and significant strategic leaders within a MAT or equivalent group of schools. The application round is now open (deadline Friday 27 April) and the first cohort will begin the programme at a residential on 4-6 June (2018).

More information on next years MAT Network can be found on page 23.

## Inspiring Leaders YouTube Channel



'Watch the following videos for more information on the articles in this edition of Inspiring Leaders Magazine on the Inspiring Leaders YouTube channel.

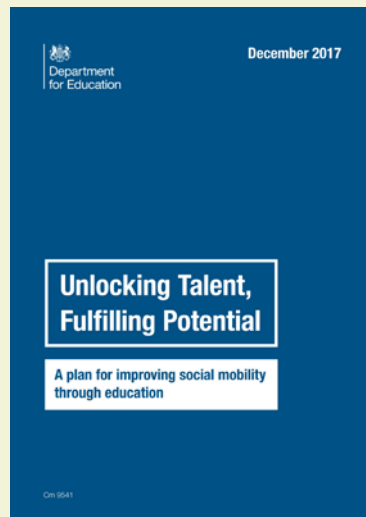
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGEeXhtmTzbbY4oB4j46eBg/videos>



# RESEARCH DIGEST

## Social mobility action plan

The Department for Education (DfE) has published (14 December) the government's national plan to support children and young people to reach their full potential, regardless of background. The plan – 'Unlocking talent, fulfilling potential' – has an overarching ambition of 'no community left behind', putting a real emphasis on the range of places where resources and additional targeting are needed the most, with Opportunity Areas at the sharp end to tackle the most entrenched disadvantage.



1. Close the 'word gap' in the early years – children with strong foundations start school in a position to progress, but too many children fall behind early. We need to tackle development gaps, especially key early language and literacy skills.
  - a. Identify communities with low take-up of early education – particularly for disadvantaged children – and provide bespoke support to improve this.
  - b. Develop and deliver a comprehensive offer of support to improve early language and literacy – especially for disadvantaged pupils.
  - c. Spread best practice to where it is needed, including from high performing local authorities to underperforming areas.
  - d. Improve the outcome goals in reception, with a particular focus on reducing burdens and strengthening literacy and numeracy in the early years.
  - e. Identify and share best practice on what should be taught in reception year.
2. Close the attainment gap in school while continuing to raise standards for all – the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their more affluent peers at school is closing. But, these pupils still remain behind. The DfE will build on recent reforms, and raise standards in the areas where it is now most needed.
  - a. Ensure the accountability regime gives full credit to what teachers and leaders achieve in challenging schools.
  - b. Ensure that the consequences of accountability are about ensuring the right support at the right time, rather than simply imposing punitive sanctions or structural change.

- c. Introduce smarter incentives to train, attract and retain the best teachers in challenging areas.
- d. Provide £30 million in tailored support to schools with disadvantaged intakes that are facing significant recruitment and retention challenges.
- e. Transform the quality of professional development available in challenging areas, by investing over £115 million in evidence-based approaches.
- f. Prioritise the growth and coverage of high quality MATs and Teaching Schools in challenging areas.
- g. Provide £300 million of targeted, evidence-based school improvement support for underperforming schools across the country.
- h. Increase access to the most effective curriculum support in more challenging areas and schools.
- i. the needs of the most vulnerable children and how best to improve their outcomes.
- j. Ensure that disadvantaged pupils can access the core academic subjects that unlock opportunity.
- k. Spread evidence-based approaches to supporting disadvantaged pupils.

Further information can be found: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-social-mobility-through-education>



## The attainment gap

**The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has published (23 January) its report – ‘The Attainment Gap’ – which looks at the scale and nature of the attainment gap, as well as the factors most likely to help close it. The key points from the report are summarised below (source: EEF):**

- Impact on children and young people:
- The attainment gap is largest for children and young people eligible for free school meals and those assessed with special educational needs.
- The gap begins in the early years and is already evident when children begin school aged 5.
- The gap grows wider at every following stage of education: it more than doubles to 9.5 months by the end of primary school, and then more than doubles again, to 19.3 months, by the end of secondary school. This shows the importance of intervening early and then of continuing to attend to the needs of disadvantaged pupils.
- While the attainment gap has reduced a little over the past decade, it remains significant. The current slow progress in narrowing the gap means it will persist for decades.
- The school perspective:
- The attainment gap is not a problem found only in schools assessed by Ofsted as performing poorly – the gap is as large in schools rated ‘Outstanding’ as it is in schools rated ‘Inadequate’.
- The Pupil Premium is a valuable focus for closing the attainment gap – but it is important schools consider how they can best use all their resources to improve the quality of teaching, as this will benefit all pupils, but particularly the most disadvantaged.

- There is huge variability in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils between schools with similar levels of disadvantage.
- In 10% of primary schools and 8% of secondary schools, disadvantaged pupils are doing better than the national average for all pupils. This shows it is possible to narrow the attainment gap, if we can find effective ways to learn from the successes of the best-performing schools.

The report also sets out 15 key lessons that have been learned in the EEF's first 6 years:

- Early Years education has huge promise in preventing the attainment gap becoming entrenched before children start school.
- Targeted small group and one-to-one interventions have the potential for the largest immediate impact on attainment.
- The transition between phases of education – notably early years to primary, and primary to secondary – is a risk-point for vulnerable learners.
- Pupil Premium funding is a valuable focus to support senior leaders in raising the attainment of disadvantaged young people.
- Essential life skills (or 'character') are important in determining life chances and can be measured in a robust and comparable way.
- Sharing effective practice between schools – and building capacity and effective mechanisms for doing so – is key to closing the gap.

Further details can be found: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/closing-the-attainment-gap-a-lot-still-to-do-says-new-eef-report>



## Child poverty

The End Child Poverty coalition has published (24 January) new figures on the level of child poverty in each constituency, local authority and ward in the UK. The new figures reveal that there are some areas of the UK where more than half of children are now living in poverty, compared to one in ten in the areas with the lowest child poverty rates. Examples of some of the local authorities with the highest child poverty rates are: Manchester – 44%; Birmingham – 42%; Oldham – 41%; Leicester – 41%; Nottingham – 38%; and Newcastle – 36%. The figures also show that some of the most deprived areas of the UK have seen the biggest increases in child poverty since the coalition's last local child poverty figures for December 2015.

Further information can be found: <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/poverty-in-your-area-2018/>

# Educational disadvantage

The Education Policy Institute (EPI) has published (19 April) its latest report – ‘Educational disadvantage: how does England compare?’ – which examines how disadvantaged pupils in England compare with those in other countries. The key findings from the report are summarised below (source: EPI):

- Maths - Performance of disadvantaged pupils in England vs. other countries:
- In maths, the performance of disadvantaged pupils ranks England 25th out of 44 countries.
- England has a long tail of underperformance amongst its disadvantaged pupils, with just 1 in 10 disadvantaged pupils achieving a high score in GCSE maths of grade 7 to 9 (A-A\* under the old grading system). This is in contrast with Singapore, where nearly twice as many disadvantaged pupils achieve this grade.
- The attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in England is equivalent to one whole GCSE grade, ranking England 27th out of 44 countries.
- Reading - Performance of disadvantaged pupils in England vs. other countries:
- England's performance in reading is better than in maths. The performance of disadvantaged pupils ranks 17th out of 44 countries.
- In reading, the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in England is around three-quarters of a GCSE grade (0.76) – around the average of all other countries in the report.
- Educational disadvantage: What can England learn from other countries?
- This research finds that high performance and greater equity in educational opportunities and outcomes are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Countries which achieve both tend to have policies which avoid selection by ability and segregation between schools. They also tend to have a significant focus on attracting, supporting and retaining high quality teachers.

Further details can be found: <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/educational-disadvantage-england-compare/>





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