

CASE STUDY

“How can leaders lead successful teaching school alliances which enable the development of consistently great pedagogy?”

North Liverpool Teaching School Partnership, Liverpool

Everton Nursery School and Family Centre, Liverpool is the lead school for the North Liverpool Teaching School Partnership, which was designated with national Teaching School status in April 2013, cohort 3.

The Teaching School Alliance (TSA) is one of now 19 Nursery School TSA's nationally, however started as one of only three nationally when first designated.

The TSA comprises of Everton Nursery School and Family Centre leading the alliance in collaboration with a group of strategic partners that enable the TSA to deliver on the Big 6¹ across a 0-11 years agenda. All schools within the TSA are situated within north Liverpool and work in partnership with the local authority and a range of Higher Education Providers to be successful in achieving the relevant and attached key performance indicators.

The TSA is led by the Headteacher of the lead school with specific roles and responsibilities delegated to the Headteachers, and thus the Senior Leadership Teams, of the strategic partner schools to foster a distributed leadership model. These roles and responsibilities are underpinned by the Big 6 with a clear and shared ethos that research and development underpins all work of the TSA. The lead school views research and development as the 'bottom rung of the ladder' and promotes a culture of enquiry, which is led and developed by the leaders within the TSA and organisations.

The aim of undertaking this piece of research and development was to consider and challenge the traditional remit of a Specialist Leader of Education (SLE) for deployment within an early years arena with the aim to design and develop Specialist Family Support Leaders.

The lead school considered that this was an opportunity to test and adapt the national model to consider how this could be tailored to meet the needs of the ever-changing early years landscape (both nationally but most importantly within the local authority that it sits) with a core focus on family support for the most disadvantaged children and families.

Once successful in the original bid, the Headteacher of the lead school delegated this piece of research and development as a project to a Senior Leader (Deputy Headteacher of the lead school) to drive forward with and champion for the TSA.

The Senior Leader undertook a literature review to draw upon existing research and work undertaken by a range of multi-disciplinary professionals

¹ The Big 6 comprises of: School-led Initial Teacher Training; Continuing professional development; Supporting other schools; Identifying and developing leadership potential; Specialist Leaders of Education; Research and development.

with the aim to develop aims and outcomes for the project. The Senior Leader was conscious through undertaking the literature review to capture information, data and research that had been documented both nationally and locally through an array of national and local policies, documents and reports. Drawing on the national work on 'Early Intervention' by Graham Allen MP (2011), as well as the work of Frank Field on 'Preventing poor children become poor adults' (2010) was instrumental in underpinning the local context. Using such research as the foundation literature enabled the lead school to draw upon local data demonstrating the need for more specialised leaders to work across education, health and social care models within Children's Centres and other early years providers.

The Senior Leader liaised closely with early years colleagues at a teaching school alliance in south west England that had trail blazed this way of working to unpick potential strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the project.

The Senior Leader developed a design brief for the project and presented this at a TSA strategic partner group meeting in which it was well received and agreed.

Work started in the development and construction of how the aforementioned Specialist Family Support Leaders could be 'spotted' and recruited with consideration given as to how the TSA could share this project across its TSA to foster curiosity and involvement of potential applicants.

On-going involvement with ISOS Partnership enabled the research to be unpicked from a leadership perspective, which in turn enabled the Senior Leader to engage within the plan, do, review process of action research.

Although this remains as an embryonic and developing model for SLE deployment, the gains in terms of collaborative capital and joint practice development for the TSA have been great. Joint practice development meetings have underpinned the developmental work of this new and innovative system leadership model, which in turn have provoked challenging yet supporting discussions to test the proposed impact of the role on improved outcomes for children and their families.

The TSA have successfully recruited to the newly established position of Specialist Family Support Leader and aims to foster a 'bottom-up' model in partnership with this leader to grow interest for the model further. The Senior Leader intends to work in collaboration with the strategic lead for SLE deployment within the TSA to utilise the expertise and areas of specialism of the newly appointed Specialist Family Support Leader to work to engage other leaders across multiple layers and levels and across the range of professional platforms including education, health and social care.

The designated Specialist Family Support Leader will at this stage work primarily within and across the TSA to build up and strengthen mutual trust and respect, as well as extend her own coaching and mentoring skills. A senior leader from within the TSA will support the Specialist Family Support Leader during the first deployment to monitor and challenge consistency and impact. This is a model that has been trialled and tested through other SLE deployments and one that has been found to be successful – both for the SLE

themselves as well as the receiving school/setting. In undertaking this approach, the aim is to foster interest from other leaders within schools and settings (both within the TSA and wider across other alliances and local authorities) to then grow the number of Specialist Family Support Leader's within the TSA. This in turn will build capacity for the TSA and embed the work of system leaders in action.

The Senior Leader intends to monitor the impact of the Specialist Family Support Leader's work over time through joint practice development meetings and through the evaluation of deployment action planning and case study material, which is produced post-deployment. The aim of this level of monitoring is to consider and evaluate the effectiveness of the new model with the aim to improve outcomes for children and their families. Evidence to underpin the effectiveness will derive from external validation such as Ofsted reports.

The Senior Leader continues to drive forward research and development work across the alliance in collaboration with the Headteacher of the lead school to ensure that the established culture of enquiry is further embedded with the sole aim to improve outcomes for children through consistently high expectations.

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