

Leadership and Governance Development

Overview

This project aimed to equip school leaders and governors in the local area to improve outcomes for children and young people in the town. It was developed on behalf of the local School Improvement Board, and was integrally linked to two other SSIF applications which the board had commissioned - on mathematics transition and on inclusion.

The proposal aimed to add value to existing leadership development programmes in three ways:

- By developing bespoke leadership development training which addressed some of the specific challenges faced by local schools
- By creating opportunities in applied leadership for aspiring school leaders which would enable them to deepen their leadership in different school contexts.
- By improving the quality of governance in local schools by focusing governing bodies on their core functions through co-ordinated developmental activity.

Once the proposed new leadership development activity was evaluated it was intended that it would be embedded in the local delivery of the National Professional Qualifications in school leadership (NPQML, NPQSL, NPQH, NPQEL) and in local governance capacity.

Good practice to share with others interested in running school improvement projects to ensure projects deliver the intended outcome.

- Locally based funding of this nature targeted at areas where there are challenging circumstances. Challenging circumstances breed school leaders who are resilient and innovative and understand their context in a way that someone from outside the context cannot. We would encourage others to ensure they balance the use of external specialists with local experts, and that those external to the area have the credibility and track record of working in similar contexts successfully. As advised in the EEF Implementation Guide, there is real benefit in forming or defining an 'Implementation team' who have a strong understanding of the context, are engaged and supportive of the objectives of the project and have existing networks to begin to build momentum for the project. We have found it particularly effective to work within existing school improvement structures where possible and avoid creating barriers to engagement, using existing project plans for example rather than requiring a specific new format.
- For our project we brought together groups of local school leaders to consider specific challenges, identify the existing best practice and develop learning materials to ensure that provision was very

specifically tailored to the context.

- A multiplicity of funding streams and projects within locality places demands on the time of school leaders. For this reason it is important to:
 - Work within existing structures and networks rather than try to create new ones.
 - Use the time of busy school leaders wisely. For example, when developing our leadership modules, we paired our local school leaders without own professional content writers so that the prospect of an additional administrative burden did not preclude them from engaging and sharing their expertise.
 - In principle, providing funding for staff cover so that school leaders can engage in professional development is a strong approach. However, in practice, even with cover, it is difficult for schools, particularly smaller schools, to release multiple staff or release staff for extended periods. It isn't necessarily easy to secure appropriate cover. For this reason, careful timing of activities is essential and also needs to take workload into account.
 - For middle leaders, we found that short sessions offered as twilights spread out over the year worked well. It also appeared that not having to go through an approval process in school to attend was a factor – middle leaders could just come alone to any session that interested them.
 - Below headteacher level, for many school leaders there are few opportunities to network with colleagues from other schools. Participants in our activities stress how much they enjoyed networking with others at the sessions.

What the project may do differently in the future

- In future we would keep the 70-20-10 model at the core of our programme design but without the requirement to be out of school for significant time. The benefit of applying leadership learning within the context of a leader's role is proven but it is more achievable to do this within their own setting for schools in challenging contexts. The opportunity to 'swap' might allow for leaders to observe different practice and, with the support of a coach, evaluate this, applying their learning to their own school.
- One of the main barriers was competing for attention and capacity in a crowded environment. The local area had multiple funded opportunities taking place simultaneously and many schools were finding it difficult to navigate the offers. Our programme met barriers due to requiring time out of school and in future we would focus on interventions that could be easily incorporated into the day to day running of the school.

- The ambition to create Local Leaders of Governance was a good one but in an area of challenge, we underestimated the time required to embed a new structure like this. The development of SLE / LLE and NLEs and their deployment into schools has developed over time and we believe, with more time the LLG programme become embedded in the local system.

Sustainability measures taken by projects to ensure improvement are sustained beyond the funding period.

- During the course of the project, we have ensured that all our activities have been both developed and delivered in close partnership with existing local structures such as the Teaching School Alliances, the Council and system leaders such as the National Leaders of Governance (NLGs).
- The development of project activities such as Leadership Modules had strong input from local school leaders and were, where relevant, delivered by local school leaders. We have seen these have an impact on enhancing the leadership skills for participants on NPQ programmes, providing them with tailored content focused on the specific contextual challenges in the local area.
- In order to support and sustain the Governance development strand of the project, initially a Governance Steering Group, was established comprising the NLGs, the local Council Governor Services and a local Teaching School Alliance, ensuring that governors from the vast majority of local schools were represented. Subsequently we have focused on the development of a Governors Network, driven forward by an Executive Group elected by local governors and supported by an NLG who will provide a direct link to the local School Improvement Board.
- Leadership modules will be handed over to a local Teaching School Alliance (Transition, Transience, Raising Aspiration and Behaviour and Attendance) and to the local Council SEND Team (Speech, Language and Communication, SEND). These organisations were key to the development of these delivery modules and will ensure that they are updated as required and form part of the wider portfolio of CPD for local school leaders.
- The Governance Steering Group members have expressed a strong view that the relationship they have built as a group is a valuable one and therefore have a strong desire to maintain this beyond the end of the project. It has been agreed that this Group will be expanded to take in representation from the Governors' Network Executive Group and a local Education Trust as sponsor of the Network.
- In order to maintain momentum for the Governors' Network, we have

secured a 'sponsor' in a local Education Trust. They will provide support to maintain the momentum of the network and provide logistical support for meetings and events.

- Membership fees paid by school governing bodies will support the Network. The Teaching School Alliance have already agreed that all of their school governing bodies will become members.
- The local Council Governors' Services have agreed to provide clerking for the Executive Group and to provide support in administration of finances.
- The Network has also been provided with a full set of templates and materials to support the marketing of Network events, etc.
- A major dissemination conference, 'Collaborating for Success,' run in partnership with the Research School and local Teaching Assistants, took place on 1-2 March with two major keynote speakers and 15 workshops. 117 delegates attended and feedback was 92% good or outstanding.