

Grammar School
Heads' Association

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Sustainable Leadership

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this issue

The rhythms of the school year are rather different from those of the natural world. As green turns golden and then brown and the sap sinks to the roots, the very opposite happens in the world of school leadership. The long summer holiday provides a time to dream. It's the time when new projects are born and nascent development plans acquire flesh. It's the time when anything seems possible. There's an energy about the Autumn Term, a feeling that if great things are to be accomplished this is the term in which to do it. There's time for a second brief flowering in the Spring Term, even next term when Easter is early but it always feels as though the success of the year rides on the next three and a half months. There's a natural inclination to approach the new term at a gallop. Personally, I can't resist this. I want Rome built in a day (preferably less) and need to be reminded by my more sensible colleagues that although everyone's very willing, a slower pace would ensure that we all reach our goal without collapsing.

Maintaining a balance between development and the routine maintenance of high standards is tricky. One wants staff to be free to experiment: none of us wants to become the Kodak of the educational world. By the same token our licence to be avant garde only lasts until the next crop of public examination results and is only renewed if standards are maintained or rising. Change requires others to invest in it and to be successful therefore needs to be collaborative. Professional associations are warning about impact of change and accountability requirements on work life balance. *The Workload Challenge Analysis of Teacher Responses* published by the DfE in February suggests that although accountability framework, curriculum and qualification changes are all responsible for reducing teachers' leisure hours, in the eyes of many of their colleagues senior leaders are responsible for generating unnecessary burdens.

As headteachers and as representatives of the employer, we have a responsibility and a duty of care to those who work for us. According to the DfE research, what teachers would really appreciate is more PPA time, reduced class sizes and fewer changes to the curriculum, the accountability framework and public examinations. These are things that I can't currently deliver, however creative I try to be with my dwindling budget. But there are some things that headteachers can do as ASCL's position paper *Reducing Teacher Workload: A Ten Point Plan* suggests.



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I am currently doing my best to internalise the sensible suggestion that that one should focus on the Impact on learning. If something has no impact, do we really need to do it? I've been thinking hard about how to slim down what I ask of staff so that for the next four years we can focus on getting it right in the classroom for the guinea pig generation who, as well as facing changes to the curriculum and the way in which they will be assessed, have to make their way in a world which is increasingly shaped by technology. My staff and I are in the process of climbing the hill as far as our own use of technology is concerned. We are still learning to use SISRA, School IP and Frog effectively. The hours that we will save as a result still hover mirage-like on the horizon but one fine day..... In the meantime, we have stripped down our school development plan, encouraged departments and teachers to plan in outline rather than in detail (unless there is evidence that there is a real need to plan in detail) and tried not to ask for data that we already have and which we could extract ourselves by customising reports. We encourage staff to share resources and planning and to balance teacher assessment with peer and self assessment.

Without a decent work life balance, we run the risk of losing the next generation of teachers and school leaders. It's important to have such a balance in our own lives, for staff to know that we take time out to renew ourselves and to rest and for them to be able to do likewise. So this Autumn Term I am determined that the only galloping that I'm going to do is on Gwilym, the Welsh Section D pony that I have spent the last two years between the hours of 5am and 6.30am breaking in.

Charlotte Marten

THE FUNDING CRISIS

In August GSHA representatives met with Senior Advisors from the Secretary of State's Office and the EFA. The meeting focused on the disproportionate funding loss faced by many mainstream schools including most Grammar Schools. We were encouraged by the positive and constructive response to the arguments and evidence we presented.

It was evident that the flaws of the current Pre16 local decision making process and the anomalies it creates are now clearly recognised. Further there was an understanding of the various reasons why the local decision making process is problematic and not easy to resolve. It is clear that the new Government is committed to move as quickly as possible to a National Funding Formula (NFF). Encouragingly there appeared to be a recognition that to be a truly fair National Formula it should not include any element of local decision making. Further they did not seem concerned that such a system would be difficult to achieve or too bureaucratic to implement. However, there will continue to be strong pressure from local authorities and others to retain an element of local decision making. The reality also remains that it will take time to determine and implement a NFF and there will be a period of transition and funding protection.

Consequently, we put particular emphasis on the need to do something now: we stressed that some Grammar Schools have made all of the possible efficiency savings and are at the point where their very viability is at risk. We presented papers which backed up two proposals:

- 85% of the Schools Block Budget to be allocated as AWPU
- Closing the Gap Funding to replace Pupil Premium and all other strands of disadvantage funding.

The first of these could be implemented immediately whilst the second would take longer.

A guaranteed minimum figure for AWPU would go a long way to address the immediate crisis faced by some schools. It is likely that, if adopted, minimum and maximum percentages would also be attached to the other factors Local Authorities and their Schools Fora are permitted to use. Currently AWPU is as low as 61% in some LAs with the highest being 87%. Other factors vary wildly with no apparent logic: low prior attainment ranges from 0 to 12% and deprivation 1% to 20%.

Such an approach in the short term would reduce the scale of double and triple funding of disadvantage but not remove it. The proposal for Closing the Gap Funding is drawn from the fact that this is the underlying aim of Pupil Premium and the various other disadvantage funding streams.

We have argued that greater clarity and targeting of such funding can be achieved with better outcomes whilst reducing the overall proportion of funding allocated. A number of levels of funding would be required determined by the category and extent of disadvantage. This would be a national formula and pupils eligible in more than one category would receive the allocation of the highest eligible category.

Early in the Autumn Term decisions will be made in all Local Authorities on the 2016-17 Schools Block Funding Formula. At this stage we must work on the assumption that none of the changes discussed above will be implemented for 2016-17. If you are not on your Schools Forum contact and ideally meet with your representatives: there should be both Headteacher and Governor members for academies and maintained schools.

If AWPU is below 80% challenge this: all pupils have a basic entitlement and with the current financial pressures anything lower means mainstream students without any other characteristics will not receive this.

Another issue to check is whether or not the Schools Block is being top sliced to fund the High Needs Block as is happening in many LAs. Where this does happen the typical attitude of LA offices is to do this by reducing AWPU and protecting the other formula factors. Argue strongly that if it must happen, the approach should be the opposite: protect the basic AWPU entitlement for all and reduce the other factors to fund the top slice.

You may of course also want to challenge the extent, or even principle, of top slicing the Schools Block to fund a High Needs short fall. LA Officers will argue that their hands are tied, typically quoting direction from SEN tribunals to fund very expensive placements. Whilst this does occur there are many other expenditure lines in the High Needs Budget. Care is needed here but the case can be made that, just as any other Budget, the High Needs provision needs to be delivered within its budget: at a time of significant financial austerity difficult decisions have to be made in all areas. Yes High Need pupils have rights and entitlements but so do mainstream pupils: it cannot be right to deny some pupils the basic entitlement of a good education.

The focus of this article has been Pre16 funding. We continue to press the case to address the alarming reduction in Post 16 funding. The core problem here is that Post 16 funding has not been protected from the Government wide austerity cuts. The issue affects all 11-18 schools and sixth form colleges, although we generally suffer more than the average 11-18 school due to the relatively large size of our sixth forms and high proportion of students taking large programmes.

Ministers and Senior Officials are well aware of the issue and the nonsense of Post 16 pupils attracting lower funding than Pre16. The problem is how to address it without further reducing the Pre16 funding: there is little change of the Treasury increasing Education Funding overall.

Where Next? The Admissions Code

When the Code on Admissions was changed last year it was clear that it was an interim measure. The last two codes have done much to streamline admissions and in the main have produced positive outcomes. There are, however, aspects of the Code that remain in need of attention. There is a strong case for reviewing the Code so as to iron out some of its current anomalies. This article considers only those matters that are directly relevant to grammar schools. Although we do not know whether there are definite plans for a new code, this article argues that GSHA should press for a new code and outlines some of the ways that the current code might be improved.

Last year the Annual Report of OSA made reference to the increase in objections about the admission arrangements of academies. The inference was that the increase was the consequence of poor practice. Of course, there will be times when practice could be better but that should not disguise the fact that the Code itself may be a major factor in the increase in objections. Some of these objections reflect attempts by individuals and groups to force a change in policies and are not grounded in the legitimate concerns of those making applications.

GSHA has consistently argued that the Code fails to provide any clarity about the concept of fairness. In consequence this leads to OSA referrals that in essence are grounded in the fact that the appellant dislikes the policy. We have seen many appeals, cloaked around fairness, about the form of test that a school uses, even when tests are provided by GL or CEM, both of whom have a national reputation in designing diagnostic testing. As with any combination of tests it is true that there will be a few people that will do better on one test than another. This does not mean that either test is unfair. Any scrutiny based on the principle of **reasonableness** would be likely to draw the same conclusion. The national driving test offers an analogy. Similar levels of competency are needed across the country but tests taken in inner London would not produce absolutely identical experiences and outcomes to those taken in a rural environment, yet the test is fair.

Likewise OSA is often asked to consider objections about oversubscription criteria because the objector feels that it advantages one group over another. Clearly a school that determines entry of qualified candidates in terms of nearness to school will result in more local children gaining a place and chance of allocation will reduce with distance. The reverse is likely to be true for schools that adopt rank order. Fairness in each context could be a subjective judgement but the test of reasonableness would recognise the validity of each policy.



'Annual conference 2015'

Many grammar schools have included an FSM or Pupil Premium criteria and some have set a lower qualifying score for such children. At least one school is awaiting a determination on whether this is fair. If the Code explicitly endorsed the practice, it would reduce objections and give assurance to those who are considering ways of widening access.

To introduce into the Code the concepts of **'procedural fairness'** as tested by **reasonableness** would ensure that objections would have to be linked to evidence that the school had failed to follow the Code or that it had failed to follow its published policy. It would also ensure that adjudicators made more objective, and therefore more consistent, judgements than is currently the case. The best policies have procedural clarity and some schools are criticised for having overly complex policies. In some cases, however, the complexity reflects attempts at covering all bases in response to determinations where two broadly similar cases produce quite different determinations.

The trend for more schools to face challenges around sixth form admissions has continued over the summer. A school cannot deny a student the right to enter Year 13. It is, however, quite reasonable to have a policy about examination entry and not to enter a student that, for whatever reason, has not established an adequate foundation in the year. Funding regulations means that the student can repeat Year 12 if they are doing different subjects.

For some time now GSHA has argued that there is no rational justification as to why only school based sixth forms should be subject to the code. Practices that are banned and highlighted as poor practice in the code are freely adopted in other areas of the maintained post 16 sector, whilst increasingly the minutia of school based provision is scrutinised. It is reasonable that the code should seek to protect those students that are already members of the school and this could readily be achieved by stating that schools must set an entry standard for progress to Year 12 which is the same for both students already in the school and for those applying to join the school. All year 11 students that meet this standard must be allowed to enter Year 12.

The Code as it stands cannot work for Sixth Form admissions to schools where provision is entirely based on academic qualifications, all of which require a specified level of entry to be set. Current OSA judgements seem to expect that schools should make decisions/offers after results day which can be less than 7 working days before the academic year starts.

Until results of both internal and external students are known it is difficult to know how many places are available and impossible to know how many places there might be available to external applicants on popular courses.

GSHA has consistently advocated that consistency should be one of the principles of post 16 admissions so that either all maintained providers are subject to the code or that all maintained post 16 should sit outside the code. An alternative would be for the Code to provide broad universal principles that all providers should adhere to in setting policy. The OSA fulfils an important function but any new code needs to define those objections that should be directed to OSA and those that should be dealt with elsewhere. Too many objections have nothing to do with securing reasonable, effective and efficient admissions in the designated year but come from those lobbying for policy change.

The current regulation places a two year moratorium on considering the same objection twice in relation to an individual authority but it does not prevent the same case being transferred by an objector to a different group of schools even though the objector is unlikely to have a child applying to those schools. This is an abuse of the system and undermines the time that should be given to objections raised behalf of children that are directly involved in making applications. Any new code should be more robust in requiring that determinations should be restricted to determining if an admission authority has acted reasonably in terms of the code and any relevant legislation.

Bishop Vesey's Grammar School - Our BLH Journey

The learning habits that we aspire to build at Bishop Vesey's Grammar School were first developed by cognitive scientist Guy Claxton under the label of Building Learning Power in the late 1980's and early 1990's. He proposed a list of 17 learning capacities. The concept of learning habits is that the aim is to become an instinctive user of these capacities to the extent that learning becomes naturally developed with a clear awareness of different approaches to solving problems.



As an Assistant Headteacher with over 26 years teaching experience my initial reaction to BLH as a method to improve learning was extremely cautious and sceptical. I then read Guy Claxton's Book, 'Building Learning Power' and did some research on other schools where this had been introduced. I was lucky enough to work with Deputy Headteacher, Mr Russell Bowen on our journey to introduce BLH at BVGS.

We started our journey just after the Easter of 2014. Firstly we developed a basic 5 year development plan. We procured the services of Mr Graham Powell in a consultancy role to help develop our own expertise in BLH. We also enlisted 14 members of staff who were interested in becoming our 'BLH Champions'. This gave us a team of willing helpers which we could ask to help lead the rest of the teaching staff. We assigned BLH Champions so that all departments had a BLH 'specialist'.

We organised developmental meetings with the 'Champions' and set up our first BLH Review for the beginning of June 2014. Following initial training from Graham Powell we set out to observe a range of lessons at BVGS to obtain some 'baseline data' which would show the extent that staff and students were already engaging with the learning habits, however unwittingly. In all we managed to collect data from 48 BLH lesson observations! Data was collected on BLH Observation Target Sheets which essentially is a hand shaded rose diagram plot of the 17 learning habits.

The official launch of BLH was on the first day of the year, Monday 1st September 2014. We enlisted Graham Powell to lead 1 ½ hours of BLH training for the whole teaching staff. During this session Graham Powell gave us the BLH review report as an independent advisor. This led to key support and training recommendations being taken on board. We were to mainly target using BLH with years 7, 8 and 12 initially. The importance of using Dual Focus Learning Objectives with these year groups had already become obvious to us. Dual focus because not only would they detail content, but also identify the learning habits to be used in the lesson.

It was clear that we needed more sustained staff development in order to extend our capabilities. We took all the BLH Champions off timetable for a day and engaged Graham Powell to help deepen our grasp of the Learning Habits and how we could recognise them more clearly. Another twilight session was used to outline how the VLE could be used alongside BLH. Then on our second Training Day Graham Powell worked for 1 hour with all staff aimed at improving our understanding of the learning habits. We also started to share our BLH Experiences as a staff under the auspice of 'My best BLH lesson'. We took time to plan for delivering BLH in lessons in school departments and considered how we would observe lessons using the BLH Observation Target Sheets.

Our next move was to build 'BLH lesson observation' into the Performance Management programme. The SEF at BVGS has traditionally been informed by SLT drop-ins and three formal graded lesson observations throughout the year. We decided to use the middle of those observations, conducted around February time, to conduct a purely developmental BLH observation using the BLH Observation Target Sheets. Staff were paired up randomly from across all departments and were required to have a prior coaching conversation led by the teacher and to follow the observation up with another coaching conversation led by the observer. The pairings then reciprocated this arrangement. Our BLH journey was picking up some momentum and showed signs that it had the potential to engender a more open classroom culture where staff felt more comfortable about visiting lessons and sharing practice free of the 'spectre' of being judged.

By now it was vital that we started to engage further stakeholders, the parents. To this end we organised a BLH workshop just before the Easter break and all parents were invited. We were pleased to get about 140 attendees from about three weeks' notice. It was great to get a chance to share our 'new' BLH developments with parents and to see how positively it was all received.

Staff had really taken to BLH with many extending their dual focus lesson objectives to all year groups and although this required some further explanation of the habits to more teaching groups, it seemed to be the productive thing to do. Most departments were building the learning habits in to schemes of work, not an onerous task; just a matter of amending existing lesson plans to incorporate the learning habits most likely to dovetail in to that part of the scheme of work. Students too had shown great capacity to absorb the different learning habits and to begin to draw upon them independently. Now was time to really push on with the BVGS BLH programme. We engaged the BLH Champions to lead departmental evaluation of 4 key learning habits identified as most frequently used in that subject. This was the start of deepening the use of the learning habits.

'Our Building Learning Habits journey'

Commitment was such that the updating of the SDP was now to have a full section on BLH. In May 2015 we conducted another BLH review under the guidance of Graham Powell and with the help of our team of BLH Champions. In all, 72 lessons were observed this time using the BLH Observation Target Sheets with staff getting more used to having an open door approach.

We had certainly made good progress. Many teachers were now using the learning habits in their lessons. Where students were given an opportunity to reflect on the effectiveness of their learning they were doing so with maturity and great skill. BLH used effectively was leading to higher levels of engagement and understanding. Students were given more opportunity to take risks, plan their own learning, and reflect on their success. The impact was substantial in Year 7 and Year 8 lessons. It was vital for both new staff and students to be furnished with induction that was to introduce them to BLH. This was organised for the new year 7, year 12 and for all new staff. BVGS has been running a 'Student as Learning Partners' or SALP scheme for a couple of years and we decided to engage 35 Key Stage 3 boys who had volunteered to 'train' as BLH SALP observers. At present we are in the process of visiting lessons with these students to complete shared BLH observations with a view to moderation. It is very pleasing to see just how keen and focussed students can be when given such responsibilities.

We have made our mistakes and we are sensitive to overloading the staff with BLH at every turn; however, if we are to become a school where learning instinctively draws upon a natural grasp of BLH we must press on. BLH at BVGS is going to present us with many further challenges, but the value of helping to develop more focussed independent learners cannot be overstated.

Steve Baugh



Report back from the first meeting on Tuesday 23rd June in London

At the recent GSHA Conference, you could not help but be impressed by the presentation given by Dr Sue Stothard, Head of Assessment with CEM. Entitled, 'Improving access; a report on the CEM study of admissions in Birmingham and Warwickshire', Dr Stothard provided a fascinating insight into the issues, all underpinned by equally compelling research. The quality and value of such research with its links to 11 plus testing whetted our appetite for the possibilities that a partnership with GL Assessment might bring.

Just a week after the conference ended, we had the first meeting which brought together a group of GL Users with representatives from GL Assessment. We had a good geographic spread of GL users (Kent, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, North Yorkshire and South Wiltshire); only a few colleagues could not make the meeting. The composition of the team from GL Assessment, Sarah Haythornthwaite (the Sales and Marketing Director), Dr Ian Helm (Head of Customised Testing), Greg Watson (Chief Executive) and Sheetal Visana (Customer Support executive), demonstrated their interest and commitment to working with GSHA on this new and exciting venture.

Once the introductions were complete, Barry Sindall gave a short introduction which paved the way for Heather Payne to provide the background and context to the formation of the group. Two ambitions for the group were shared: to have a cohesive community of GL Users within an overarching common assessment framework which has the flexibility to accommodate individual needs and for the GL User Community to be able to deliver a service which is reliable, fair, accessible and open to scrutiny.

Three areas were identified for discussion:

1. What do grammar schools need / want 11 plus testing to deliver?
2. What scope is there for greater commonality of testing amongst GL Users?
3. To what extent can 11 plus test outcomes be used for other purposes such as baseline data and benchmarking?

One of the interesting outcomes of the meeting was gaining an appreciation of the range of different approaches to 11 plus testing that exist across the country with variation within counties and even between schools within the same local area. Having a representative from a County Council who administers the 11 plus brought an interesting perspective whilst other representatives were able to comment as members of consortiums, others as individual schools dealing directly with GL and some as being subject to a county-wide system. It made for an interesting and enlightening discussion. GL Assessment is in a unique position of having the overview in terms of which tests are used, by whom and in which combinations. There is a wide range of different tests and combination of tests in use. 11 plus tests are taken in different settings; some pupils sit the test in their primary school, others take their test in a secondary school on a Saturday. Schools have different qualification marks; different schools face different pressures and have arrived at different solutions as a result. Some schools described a need for greater differentiation at the top end whilst others have had to battle to retain familiarisation tests. Coaching is an issue but in some areas the coaching culture is much more prevalent and 'test tourists' more common.

There was agreement about the need for a system of testing that is accurate and fair and that was seen to be fair. GL Assessment already offers the CAT suite of tests and felt that it could deliver on those requirements. The ability to draw reliable inferences requires a large data set and again there is potential for that aspect to be developed. The research idea was of interest to GL Assessment although conducting longitudinal studies has not been a feature of how they have worked in the past. Although many of the schools represented could supply anecdotal evidence of students who have entered sixth form with a string of A* GCSE grades yet who did not pass the 11 plus, the opportunity to create a body of hard, reliable data was worth pursuing. The potential to use the data from 11 plus testing to explore relationships within a broader context, such as distance from school and outcomes, generated much discussion and interest around the table. GL Assessment seemed very keen to develop research partnerships with universities and the group were able to suggest possible partners.

Towards the end of the meeting there was time to talk about different approaches to familiarisation and the potential of 'enrichment activities' to remove barriers to participation in testing. The use of some sort of GL UPN had support especially if it deterred the 'test tourist' whilst facilitating some element of data sharing. The concept of having a 'pick 'n mix' approach with GL users selecting from a suite of approved GL tests was worth considering further. The meeting ended on a very positive note with everyone keen to meet again and to continue with the discussion and sharing of ideas.

The group agreed to meet in the week before October half term when the next set of tests will have been taken and the new Admissions Code will have been published. At the meeting, GL Assessment offered to present something on the potential for greater commonality of testing and to provide some anonymised data on the numbers using the different types of 11 plus tests (VR, NVR, English, Maths etc) in use across the country.

GSHA representatives at the meeting were:

Jackie Challin (Lancaster Girls' Grammar School), Chris McMackin (Lead for Admissions, NYCC), Dr Amanda Smith (South Wilts Grammar School), Robert Masters (The Judd School, Kent), Ripon Grammar School, Heather Payne (QEGS, Horncastle, Lincolnshire) and Barry Sindall (Chief Executive, GSHA).



BRIEF OUTLINE

Against a background of missives from Ofsted about the new panacea of 20 minute lessons observations to judge staff - which very soon changed to no lesson judgements at all - at JHGS we decided, as many other grammar schools will have done, to once more ignore the “guidance” and do our own thing.

During the academic year 2013 – 2014 teachers at John Hampden Grammar school felt that there was a need to review lesson observations so that the quality of teaching, learning and achievement over time could be evaluated more accurately to help ensure that students continue to make progress in their learning. In addition it was felt that there was a need to both recognise and record the impact on achievement made by activities outside the classroom. A Lesson Observation Review (LOR) working party led by a member of SLT, and consisting of seven HODs and the Head of 6th Form, was created to evaluate and review current practice.

VISION

During the summer term of 2014, the LOR working party looked at different ways of evaluating the quality of teaching and learning, achievement, and behaviour and safety over time, using Ofsted criteria to reach judgements on practice. These judgements were based on ‘outstanding’, ‘good’, ‘requires improvement’ and ‘inadequate’ in each of the areas. It was felt necessary to have a system that moved away from twenty minutes or one hour lesson observations and to make judgements based on *evidence over time* that teachers felt they had *ownership of* and ideally that could link to appraisal. There would be two judgements a year for teachers who were good or outstanding and three for those who had ‘requires improvement’ or ‘inadequate’ in any of the three areas. These decisions would be made at the end of both the autumn and summer terms, with intermediate judgements at the end of the spring term where practice was not at least good at the end of the autumn term.

The working party believed that a classroom practice portfolio could be developed that enabled teachers to provide evidence that met the criteria in each of the three areas over time. – it would not just comprise classroom observations but these would be part of it. At the start of the year teachers would populate the document with data showing trends over the past two years to have a more complete picture and which could be measured against (in terms of progress made) at the end of the year. Teachers could invite colleagues into their lessons, where they wished a head of department, or a member of the Senior Leadership Team, for example, to record good or outstanding practice. Equally student feedback, results of surveys, test data etc., could all be noted on the simple pro forma to demonstrate areas of success or targets for improvement. Evidence to support this and discussion points for future enhancements would thus be recorded.

IMPLEMENTATION

The LOR working party agreed on providing all teachers with a classroom practice portfolio and teaching and learning grade descriptors using Ofsted criteria.

The vision became reality by first of all presenting to Heads of Department who agreed that this would be a good way forward and it was trialled with NQTS in the second half of the summer term 2014. It was felt that the document needed to be completed as evidence became available rather than completing it retrospectively. The idea was then launched to the whole staff during the first staff INSET day in September 2014 and all staff moved to the Classroom Practice Portfolio for the academic year 2014 - 2015. Decisions were no longer made on individual lesson observations, in synchronisation with the changes in Ofsted. A review of the process was carried out twice during the year by middle leaders and the LOR working party.

IMPACT

Advantages

1. Teachers felt that it was a better way of reaching judgements on teaching and learning, achievement, and behaviour and safety, incorporating more evidence than before.
2. Discussion points recorded in the portfolio provided the opportunity for standards to rise further.
3. Opportunities for good practice to be shared.
4. Provided evidence for people applying for the upper pay scale.

Disadvantages

1. Unless evidence was SMART and addressed the criteria this could be very time consuming.
2. There could be duplication of effort with appraisal if not managed effectively.
3. Unless people dedicated small amounts of time regularly to completing the Classroom Practice Portfolio it became less effective.

CONCLUSION

1. The criteria for the achievement section needs to be clear for all staff, particularly where historical data is not available.
2. Teachers who are new to the school are unable to use achievement trends within the school so professional judgements need to be applied by the line manager.
3. Departmental time is needed for teachers to share ideas and to complete their classroom practice portfolio.
4. Providing cover for teachers to observe each other is necessary.
5. It is necessary to fine-tune the classroom practice portfolio and it is currently being further reviewed by the LOR working party so that further achievement can be made by our students.

An example of the CPP is available on the GSHA website.

Nick Hutchinson - Senior Assistant Headteacher



'Annual conference 2015'

Grammar School
Heads' Association

Only a majority of member schools enter students in the WJEC examinations. GSHA has representation on the user groups of all examination boards including WJEC. At a time of great change schools will be looking closely at what various boards can offer and hence the reason to include information on the restructured WJEC board and the summer meeting of the users group.

On the 4th June the WJEC England Advisory Group held its termly meeting in Birmingham. The main topic for discussion was of course curriculum reform and the implications for all stakeholders. Gareth Pierce, WJEC Chief Executive, is obviously keen to ensure school and colleges are fully supported in meeting the needs of centres in this period of significant change. To this end, WJEC is running a full programme of training events across England. Full details are available at:

www.eduqas.co.uk/training/

This “expo” events, for example, are free and will be led by one of WJEC’s three regional representatives. The focus will be to give a general overview of the new GCE and GCSE specifications for first teaching in 2016; to give an update on qualification reform, and to introduce WJEC’s range of free on-line resources. Mike Ebbsworth, WJEC Assistant Director, demonstrated the range of WJEC digital resources available on-line which subject teachers will no doubt find very helpful in preparing their students for the demands of the new qualifications. In addition to the GCSE and A Level changes, Sarah Harris, WJEC Assistant Director for vocation provision, also explained that WJEC has completed the redevelopment of all existing Level 3 QCF qualifications in-line with DfE criteria for Applied General Qualifications and that a number of specifications, including that for the Extended Project Qualification, are now available for first teaching this year. She also drew particular attention to a new Level 3 Certificate in Social Analytics; a research based qualification developed in collaboration with Cardiff University.

I have to say that the English teachers at Colyton Grammar School have always been impressed by the courses and service provided by WJEC and this year we will also be moving our EPQ cohort over to them from AQA. Schools are likely to be reviewing examination provision and it is appropriate that in doing so that the offer of all boards are considered. Under the new Eduqas brand there is a clear determination to expand their presence in England; given their teacher focused approach. To this end, Hugh Lester, WJEC Partnership Executive, is keen to hear members’ views on the programme offered and suggestions for ways it might be further improved in future. He can be contacted at: Hugh.Lester@wjec.co.uk

If you have any comments that you would like voiced at the next
WJEC England Advisory Group meeting,
scheduled for December, please let me know at:
agregson@colytingrammar.devon.sch.uk

A. Gregson



Bright Futures

Bright Futures is a well established programme aimed at under graduate students. In recent times the organisation has introduced 'My Kind of Future' which is aimed at school students. The programme is free to GSHA schools

My Kind of Future

It's never too early for your students to start thinking about their future.

MyKindaFuture connect students with businesses through meaningful face-to-face engagement and distinct online challenges, which inspire students and help them understand different career routes, sectors and disciplines.

The pressure on schools to provide high quality careers advice is growing. Students face an array of options on leaving school from university, to college, apprenticeships and school leaver programmes. Add to that an increasing and highly competitive graduate job market, and employer concerns that young people aren't learning the right skills they need to do well in the workplace, and it's evident that young people need support to make the right choice for them.

Schools face the challenge of providing accurate and impartial career advice and often lack the resources and relationships with high-profile employers. This is where Bright Futures School Societies come in. Building on our success in Higher Education, our careers model enables schools and their students to:

- ◆ **network with employers**
- ◆ **provide students with leadership opportunities (by becoming committee members)**
- ◆ **provide up-to-date information on options**
- ◆ **grow an awareness of the skills needed to become employable**

MyKindaFuture work with over 4,500 schools and have societies in over 50 University campuses. Trusted by students and educators alike, with over 32 years' experience working with young people and their influencers.

It is never too early for your students to start thinking about their future. Talk to us about starting a society and how the society can help your school and students.

Check out www.mykindafuture.com where students can connect with businesses all whilst creating their very own shareable CV.

www.mykindafuture.com

team@mykindafuture.com

0207 620 4463





House of Commons Reception

The House of Commons reception on 13th October provides a real opportunity to informally communicate a grammar school perspective on a wide range of issues. Funding is probably foremost in the minds of most heads and in the last year considerable progress has been made in ensuring that there is a better understanding of why grammar schools and some comprehensives are particularly hard hit. A good turnout of Heads and Chairs of Governors will help in maintaining a momentum towards action being taken.

The first twelve months of the new administration could well see rapid policy development around admissions and future plans to reform the administration of examination so a reception at this point is an opportunity to influence thinking and should not to be missed.

Pre Reception Seminar.

RAF Club 1.30 - 4.45pm

For those that have to travel some distance to attend the reception an afternoon seminar offers a fuller use of the day.

The programme is wide ranging and includes:

- Using the National Pupil Database- Sue Stothard, CEM, Durham
- Policy Development on School Funding- Tom Goldman Director of Policy Unit EFA
- Bright Futures. A preparation programme for University and Employment Simon Riechard
- Briefing and Updates on GSHA Issues- Barry Sindall and James Skinner.

The venue means that there is an attendance cap for the seminar.

A small number of places remain available.



Lansdowne Club Membership

The Lansdowne Club has recently reviewed its membership structure and will no longer be offering honorary membership to heads of GSHA schools. Instead, heads will have complementary membership which is reviewed on an annual basis. The change will better enable the Lansdowne to transfer membership when there is a change of headship. The benefits of the members remain unchanged and schools will still be expected to make school leavers aware of the opportunity for student membership of the Lansdowne.



'Annual conference 2015'

... *Dates for the Diary* ...

- 25th September. GSHA Steering Committee - King Edward V1 Five Ways, Birmingham
- 13th October House of Commons Reception (see page 14)
- 15/16 June GSHA Annual Conference. RAF Club London.



Executive Committee



Chairman:

Stephen Nokes - John Hampden Grammar School

Vice Chairman:

Russel Ellicott - Pates Grammar School

Charlotte Marten - Rugby High School

Treasurer:

Yvonne Wilkinson - King Edward VI Five Ways School, Birmingham

Chief Executive:

Barry Sindall

James Skinner (CEO Designate)

Regional Representatives:

Kent	Matthew Bartlett, Robert Masters, Paul Danielson, John Weeds
Medway	Simon Decker
Buckinghamshire	Stephen Nokes, Phillip Wayne, Mark Fenton
London	James Skinner, Jonathan Wilden
Lincolnshire	Heather Payne
South West	Stuart Smallwood
Gloucestershire	Russell Ellicott
Birmingham	Dominic Robson
Reading/Slough	Jon Constable
Lancs/Yorks/Cumbria	Martin Pearman, Graham Hamilton
Essex	Michael Skelly, Nicole Chapman
Midlands	Alison Bruton, Tim Swain
Trafford	Tim Gartside
Merseyside	Elaine Cogan
Warwickshire	Bennet Carr, Charlotte Marten

