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improve children's lives



National College
for School Leadership

Schools and academies

How teaching schools are already starting to make a difference

Resource

Spring 2012

Introduction

This paper gives examples of some of the ways in which teaching schools are taking advantage of the freedom and autonomy that the programme offers to develop innovative and high-quality approaches to teacher training, staff development and school improvement. We plan to publish regular updates as the programme develops.

The role of teaching schools: the big six

Teaching schools are part of the government's drive to give schools more freedom and take increasing responsibility for managing the school system. As well as offering training and support for their alliance themselves, teaching schools will identify and co-ordinate expertise from their alliance, using the best leaders and teachers to:

- play a greater role in recruiting and training new entrants to the profession
- lead peer-to-peer professional and leadership development
- identify and develop leadership potential
- provide support for other schools
- designate and broker specialist leaders of education (SLEs)
- engage in research and development

This paper looks at some of the many examples of innovation that are developing as teaching schools increasingly take the lead in teacher training, staff development and school improvement.

Taking the lead

There are some excellent emerging examples of teaching schools using their designation to support their leadership of the wider system. The following are illustrations of schools stepping up to lead development and reform, rather than waiting for top-down strategies to address the needs of schools.

Notre Dame High School, Sheffield: taking forward the national ICT agenda

Notre Dame High School in Sheffield is one of the four national lead teaching schools for ICT. The school has come forward to lead a national initiative to respond to Michael Gove's vision for new technology, as featured in his speech at the opening of the 2012 BETT show.

Notre Dame has formed an advisory board comprising the four lead teaching schools for ICT, significant industry players (including Microsoft, Apple and Intel), leading universities for training teachers to use new technology and key educational agencies including Vital, the government-backed ICT teacher continuing professional development (CPD) agency. Board meetings will be hosted at the National College, bringing together public and private sector partners with a common vision for the development of young people.

The board members will develop a strategy for the use of 21st-century technology to improve learning. They will look at what training is needed for new and existing teachers, as well as how leadership programmes could be changed to reflect the new skills needed by school leaders. The focus will be on developing teachers' confidence in using technology to improve teaching. The school hopes that its work will help ensure that learning becomes more relevant to young people and will enable the education system to "finally break free from Victorian models of what learning should look like." This is something that the four lead schools have already delivered and they are now using their teaching school status to step up to a national stage, to share this vision with others.

Working together

The following are examples of how schools are using their teaching school designation to facilitate collaborative work with other partners (both within and beyond their alliances), towards common goals.

Cabot Learning Federation (CLF): building links for large-scale impact

The Cabot Learning Federation has created a teaching school partnership group (TSPG), with representation from across its alliance. This core group has produced a needs analysis of improvement agendas across the partnership, which has informed a range of activities including the recruitment of 29 SLEs. The group has incorporated teaching school priorities into a development wheel, a planning model that is now being used extensively across the alliance.

To strengthen links between the schools and partners in the alliance, the group issues a termly TSPG newsletter and held a launch event in February, attracting over 60 attendees from schools across 4 local authorities. It has also appointed an online expert to set up a virtual teaching school as a vehicle for engaging with leaders across and beyond the alliance.

Strong partnership with other schools helps CLF to deliver CPD, leadership development and school-to-school support on a large scale. Current work includes:

- delivering the school's own middle leadership programme to schools in Somerset and Swindon
- running a teaching school newly qualified teacher (NQT) conference in January for over 70 attendees
- delivering SLE training, as one of 12 delivery schools around the country
- writing a new pilot programme for initial teacher training (ITT) with the University for the West of England
- delivering a Teachers for Tomorrow course for Year 12 students, who have planned and taught lessons in 5 different schools so far this year
- researched work on measuring the impact of CPD and using outstanding teachers to support ITT

CLF is now receiving requests from a number of schools in the Bristol area wanting to join the alliance. Executive headteacher David Carter says: "this has been the quickest model I have ever worked with, to get to the heart of what schools need and then to provide support for them."

Cambridge Area Teaching Schools Alliance (CATSA): joint capacity to support others

CATSA is led by a group of five schools in the Cambridge area, including designated teaching school Comberton Village College, which is part of the Comberton Academy Trust. The schools decided that truly joint leadership would give far greater capacity and reach than a model with one lead school.

The five lead schools are all national support schools (NSSs) (four secondary and one primary) with each of the heads being a national leader of education (NLE). The five NLEs make up the initial steering group. Each lead school has a hard partner (a sponsored academy or hard federation) and these partners are all in the alliance, together with other strategic partners including the Faculty of Education at Cambridge University, Cambridgeshire Local Authority and other local schools.

The objective is to create very significant joint capacity that can deliver powerfully on the teaching schools agenda. By bringing together the five NSSs in the area, CATSA has the ability to provide strong and effective school-to-school support and to lead school improvement across the area. The group now aims to build its capacity even further by also drawing together all the local leaders of education (LLEs) from the Cambridge area. At a middle/senior leadership level, CATSA has been able to designate 31 SLEs in the first tranche and is confident about deploying all of them from the outset, due to its reach and influence.

Yorks and the Humber Collaborative: taking collective responsibility for outcomes

This group, encompassing all the teaching school alliances across the Yorkshire and the Humber region, has developed and agreed a set of protocols to support highly focused collaboration across the whole region. The schools know this has to be meaningful, with a clear emphasis on responsibility and accountability for outcomes. As a result, it has put together an agreement that outlines protocols within four core themes:

- taking collective responsibility for the outcomes for pupils by prioritising support to the schools that need most help, developing systems to share data, and measuring and tracking impact
- building regional capacity for a school-led improvement system by developing a regional learning community to share innovative and promising practice
- securing open and transparent ways of working by committing to each school's success and taking a collective approach to responding to new initiatives and opportunities
- acting as ambassadors for teaching school alliances by taking an inclusive approach, including supporting vulnerable schools, identifying new partners and being open to new ideas

Working on the protocols has helped the schools get to know each other and to focus on what they want to achieve. The process has highlighted the operational details that the schools are keen to sort out, such as agreeing a charging and remuneration system, as well as helping to shape strategies for identifying and supporting vulnerable schools. The protocols were agreed by the cohort 1 teaching schools in the group and will be revisited as new teaching schools are engaged through future cohorts.

Initial teacher training

New ITT initiatives: teaching schools in the driving seat

Teaching schools are seizing the opportunity to take a leading role in new approaches to ITT.

School Direct aims to allow schools or groups of schools to recruit and select the trainees they want. Once the trainee has completed training and gained qualified teacher status (QTS), the school is expected to employ the trainee. The school can decide how much of the process to manage, and can negotiate a proportion of fees from the accredited provider to reflect this. Almost half of teaching schools have been allocated School Direct places to date. Of these, 10 are primary schools and 31 are secondary.

In addition, 20 teaching schools are interested in becoming accredited ITT providers themselves, attending recent Teaching Agency briefings to find out more. Five have started the accreditation process and are at various stages, including one that has already been accredited by the Teaching Agency.

Also of note are two action research projects which are supporting teaching schools to develop new, school-centred approaches to high-quality teacher training, funded by the Teaching Agency. Both projects focus on enhancing the quality of ITT. The first focuses on the leading role of outstanding teachers in ITT and aims to explore and demonstrate how teaching schools and their alliances, working with ITT providers, can enable outstanding teachers to take a leading role in enhancing the quality of teacher training. Fifteen teaching schools around the country are working on this, eight of which are also involved with School Direct. The second project is looking at how teaching schools can support school improvement against the key priority of literacy, including systematic synthetic phonics and/or behaviour, whilst enhancing the quality of ITT. Twelve alliances are involved.

Ashton-on-Mersey School, Trafford: ITT for behaviour, maths and outstanding teaching

Previously a successful training school, Ashton-on-Mersey School is committed to expanding its role in ITT. The school offers placements to over 130 trainees and is leading on a range of innovative work in this area.

Ashton is undertaking a Teaching Agency research and development project focused on behaviour management, drawing on the expertise of teachers, local and national leaders of education (LLEs and NLEs) and behaviour specialists. The project involves 22 trainees from Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) and Manchester University and offers a programme of immersion days at different schools and colleges. Evaluations from the initial events have been outstanding, with trainees praising the opportunity to work closely and directly with outstanding teachers across different phases. The project is supported by theoretical sessions delivered by alliance partners from across the north west, looking at different behaviour management techniques.

Together with five strategic partners, the school has also developed its own Journey to Outstanding programme, which gives trainee teachers the opportunity to work with outstanding teachers both in the classroom and through discussions and taught sessions. Participants are assigned to a particular teacher, who works alongside the trainees' professional and subject mentors to provide additional support during their placement, including subject-specific experience. Ashton-on-Mersey intends to expand the programme across its alliance from September. There are also plans for similar provision at different career stages, all the way up to senior leadership level.

A final example is Ashton's work with MMU's maths department to develop a school-based ITT model for maths trainees. MMU is working in partnership with four schools, including Ashton and one of its partner schools, Parris Wood, to offer multiple school placements for 48 maths trainees, who will receive support from a university tutor two days a week. Peer learning is central, with trainees working together in small groups on joint lesson planning, team teaching, classroom support, observations and feedback. Trainees are supported by a subject mentor. Although still in its infancy the model is proving a success, developing trainees who not only understand their own strengths and development needs, but can also support other teachers' professional development.

Kemnal Technology College, Bromley: a structure for ITT development

Kemnal Technology College, part of the Kemnal Academy Trust, is developing an ITT structure that will be common to all schools within its alliance. ITT will be led by regional co-ordinators and will focus strongly on the development of expert coaches, mentors and subject specialists.

Kemnal's alliance, whilst spanning a number of geographically disparate local authorities, nonetheless works as a close-knit group, looking across all of its schools to identify development opportunities. Suitable support staff from across the alliance can work towards gaining QTS and the trust also offers apprenticeships for applicants who need to continue in paid employment to finance their training.

Kemnal aims to provide more opportunities for school-based ITT within its teaching school alliance and has been awarded 14 School Direct places. It has just been accredited by the Teaching Agency as an ITT provider in its own right to offer school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT). The school initially intends the SCITT to focus on secondary shortage subjects, but plans eventually to expand to offer primary and secondary ITT and to develop cross-phase training in literacy and numeracy.

East London collaboration: teacher training in special educational needs and inclusion

Three outstanding schools are working in collaboration with the University of East London (UEL) on an innovative teacher training project around special education needs (SEN) and inclusion.

Old Ford Primary School, a teaching school in Tower Hamlets, is committed to inclusion and has a learning support unit which provides a range of nurturing activities and social scheme programmes. It works closely with its partner school Culloden Primary, which has a large unit for hearing-impaired children.

New Rush Hall School, part of the Valentines and Seven Kings teaching school alliance in Redbridge, is at the centre of the New Rush Hall group, which works with children with behavioural, emotional and/or social difficulties. It comprises a day school, behaviour support outreach team, three pupil support centres, Early Years provision and the education provision at an adolescent psychiatric unit.

Whitefield Schools and Centre in Waltham Forest is the largest special school in Europe, catering for around 300 pupils with a wide range of needs from up to 30 different local authorities. It operates as three specialist schools and a centre for professional development, which runs training and hosts an outreach service.

The three schools are working together with UEL to write primary and secondary postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) courses with an SEN focus, with the aim of supplying London special schools with NQTs. The group is also writing PGCEs with an inclusion focus, to supply NQTs to inclusive schools and those with learning support units. Both courses will recruit for September. The cross-borough project is being supported by the SEN leads at the Teaching Agency and by one of the National College's regional associates who is a former head of a special school.

CPD and leadership development

The improving and outstanding teacher programmes: highly effective school-based CPD for teachers on a national scale

A few years ago, Ravens Wood School worked with other London schools to develop a suite of successful teaching and learning programmes. The Improving Teacher Programme (ITP) and Outstanding Teacher Programme (OTP) help teachers to examine their own practice and learn tools and strategies to develop their teaching and move it to the next level. Both programmes take place within schools, affording vital opportunities for lesson observations and subsequent discussion. They are delivered by outstanding teachers, trained through an intensive, high-quality facilitation programme, which gives the courses credibility and keeps them rooted in current practice. As the headteacher of a primary school who has used a teaching school to deliver ITP said:

A year ago more than 50 per cent of teaching here was inadequate. Now, since staff have completed the ITP, 94 per cent of our teaching is at least satisfactory. This is a clear indication that ITP has had a real impact on standards of teaching and learning in our school.

Headteacher, primary school

Another teaching school head has reported that: “eight out of ten participants had improved by at least one grade in their teaching”.

Ravens Wood teaching school has been keen to maximise the impact of ITP and OTP by rolling them out on a national scale. Over the past year, the school has worked in collaboration with the National College to identify and accredit other teaching schools with the capacity and commitment to run the programmes. Around 70 per cent of cohort 1 teaching schools now have at least two trained facilitators, enabling them to deliver the programmes within and beyond their alliances.

Without national teaching school designation, delivery of these highly regarded programmes would not have spread as far or as quickly as it has. The designation process has identified schools across the country with the capacity and commitment to deliver this type of provision, so it was possible to identify staff to be trained as ITP and OTP facilitators in a very short space of time. For Ravens Wood, increasing the reach of the programmes has had the added benefit of facilitating links to other teaching schools, helping to build a strong network of delivery schools and outstanding teacher-facilitators.

Licensed delivery of National College programmes: teaching schools in at the start

The National College is currently in the process of awarding the first licenses for the delivery of its new leadership programmes, including the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH). Teaching schools have shown a keen interest in playing a major role in this work.

Research has shown that the parts of NPQH that participants find most useful are those elements delivered in schools by headteachers. The approach to licensing reflects this, with a requirement for strong school involvement. Teaching schools, along with a range of other schools and organisations, are in at the very start of this work. The College has announced the names of the successful licensees at the beginning of April 2012 and can be found on the College’s [website](#).

Teaching Leaders: working with teaching schools to support challenging schools

Teaching schools are increasingly working with the Teaching Leaders programme, which aims to address educational disadvantage by developing middle leaders through placements in challenging schools. Numerous teaching schools host Teaching Leaders participants and work with the organisation in a variety of ways.

Altrincham Grammar School for Girls (AGGS) in Trafford is actively involved with Teaching Leaders. The school has been used as a venue for Teaching Leaders events, the deputy headteacher facilitates on the Teaching Leaders core programme and the headteacher, Dana Ross-Wawrzynski, is leading an international trip to New Orleans on behalf of the organisation. Dana is on the Teaching Leaders advisory board.

Other teaching schools heavily involved with the organisation include Lampton School in Hounslow, whose executive head, Sue John, is on the Teaching Leaders board, Challney High School for Boys in Luton, and Hayesbrook School in Kent, which is hosting a joint Teach First/Teaching Leaders event for Kent schools facing challenging contexts at Swann Valley School.

Succession planning and talent management

Tudor Grange Academy, Solihull: leadership group exchanges

This outstanding academy has developed a placement scheme that is successfully supporting leadership development within its alliance. Through its leadership group exchange initiative, schools and academies in the group have nominated senior team members whom they feel would benefit from time immersed in another school context, whilst adding value from their own experience.

Each nominated leader identifies an aspect of leadership on which they would like their one-week placement to focus. This links to their own school's improvement agenda but will also support their professional development. These requests are discussed by the alliance group, which decides the best place for the placements to be hosted. As well as considering each leader's development needs, the placement decision takes into account each leader's strengths and specific expertise, helping to ensure that the host school will also gain from the experience and thus facilitating an exchange of leadership expertise between schools. Once a host is identified, the visiting senior leader is also given a specific task or piece of research to carry out in his or her own school, which will be written up as a report to the school being visited.

In a recent example, a leadership group member from a sponsored academy wanted to see and experience outstanding teaching and learning. She spent five days at a host school as a member of their leadership group, focusing specifically on teaching and learning. As well as involvement in leadership group meetings as part of the team, she took part in assemblies, paired lesson observations, interviews with a range of staff and observations of tutor time.

As one of her areas of expertise was in sixth form leadership, she carried out a mock inspection on post-16 provision in her own academy. She spent two days focusing on post-16 teaching and learning and related activities, culminating in presenting her findings to her host school's leadership group.

A more traditional exchange model, where leaders from two schools swap roles, would be complex to manage and would rely on being able to find an exact match between the needs and aims of two different leaders. Tudor Grange's model, however, ensures a genuine exchange of knowledge and expertise through the work of one nominated leader. The purpose is to provide experience of different management and leadership styles, share best practice, improve outcomes and provide an opportunity to broaden leadership experience. As well as supporting leadership development for individuals, the exchange scheme is part of Tudor Grange's succession planning strategy.

Forest Way Special School, Leicester: talent management training and audit

Forest Way's alliance consists of 22 schools, across all phases, with a common commitment to developing leadership and headship potential.

The school arranged a meeting of all 22 alliance heads and brought in a succession planning expert, recommended by its National College associate, to help it develop an approach to talent management across the group. The resulting strategy includes a bespoke training course, a comprehensive audit and a plan for providing cost-effective targeted development for those ready to make a career move.

Each of the alliance schools has nominated a CPD leader to take responsibility for co-ordinating its work on the project. Forest Way has managed to negotiate a free training package for these leaders. The bespoke course, including coaching and mentoring training, takes place on two separate days. Following day 1, each participant undertakes a self-evaluation audit of his or her school's current talent management provision, bringing the results back to the group on the second day. Concurrent with this training, a more detailed audit is being undertaken in all schools in the alliance, identifying and talking to aspirational staff.

The results of the audits will be brought together in a report, creating a clear view of leadership potential across the group. Common development needs can then be identified so that further cost-effective training can be commissioned where appropriate, as well as setting up peer-to-peer support between leaders with similar aims. By July 2012, CPD leaders will have been paired with an aspirational leader from another alliance school, who will act as their career coach. In addition, opportunities for headteacher shadowing and leadership placements will be shared between the schools, enabling individuals across the alliance to access to a wide variety of developmental experiences.

School-to-school support

King Edward VI High School for Girls, Birmingham: independent and state school links

Independent King Edward VI High School for Girls (KEHS) has long wanted to work with and support maintained schools, but had often sensed a barrier between the independent and state sectors. Receiving the teaching school designation was very encouraging and over the past six months, the school felt it was important to assess where and how it could best work with others to most effectively make a difference.

Following visits to nearby maintained schools to meet staff and observe lessons, as well as having discussions with the local authority, the school decided on a key focus: raising the attainment and progress levels of academically able pupils in the maintained sector. KEHS is now supporting a number of primary schools at Key Stage 2 (KS2) to help them develop their maths and numeracy strategies.

It is also working closely with a local secondary school to assist the development of Year 7 literacy strategies. Since becoming a teaching school, KEHS has been keen to further develop and extend its role within the local community. The school worked closely with another teaching school, Greet Primary, on joint SLE designation, and is working with King Edwards Five Ways to support an initiative designed to improve physics teaching in primary schools.

KEHS has also extended its existing master class initiative, which involves running twilight workshops for gifted and talented students from the maintained sector, together with the students' own subject teachers. Since it became a teaching school, its sixth form master classes in maths have become increasingly popular, with over 60 students attending each week. Following a needs analysis, new sessions in modern foreign languages have been established, with the aim of supporting teachers to move students from B grade to A* grade at GCSE. The master classes are complemented by school-to-school visits from KEHS subject teachers.

North West teaching schools: regional ambition to improve satisfactory schools

There are over 700 satisfactory schools in the north west, many with good capacity to improve, but reduced capacity within some local authorities to support and develop them. Although the deployment of LLEs has been highly successful in the region, on a one-to-one basis this can be costly and cannot address such a large-scale issue. Teaching schools in the region have been discussing a co-ordinated and cost-effective approach to addressing this issue.

The group started by identifying common themes in the areas for improvement for satisfactory schools, such as teaching, attainment (sometimes in a specific subject or for a specific group), the senior leadership team's monitoring and evaluation skills and the school's use of assessment and tracking. Knowing that mutual support is an important factor in securing improvement, the group then started to create a new development approach, where small groups of satisfactory schools in similar situations will work with local LLEs. A programme is being devised including an initial diagnostic, access to teaching school provision (such as the ITP or SLE support), coaching support and a series of best practice sessions led by LLEs with specific strengths. The group estimates that this can be delivered for around £5,000 per school and plans to draw on the teaching school deployment fund to support the set-up.

Specialist leaders of education

Fairlawn Primary School, Lewisham: primary maths project

School-to-school support has long been a focus for Fairlawn Primary, which has a leading role in the London Leadership Strategy and Challenge Partners networks and has brokered NLE and LLE support to numerous schools in London and beyond. The school is keen to extend this role to involve middle and senior leaders and has been active in brokering deployments for its 11 newly designated SLEs.

Fairlawn is working in partnership with its local authority, Lewisham, on an ambitious project centred on SLE support. Its primary maths project involves supporting identified local schools on the leadership of maths teaching and learning, and monitoring and assessment of progress. In many of the schools, progress in maths at KS2 has been below the floor standard for at least four out of the past five years, so the need for support is paramount. The project fits perfectly with Fairlawn's status as a lead teaching school for both maths and assessment for learning.

Through the project, maths leaders in eight identified schools are receiving targeted challenge and support from an SLE to drive up attainment, specifically with the 2013 KS2 results in mind. Each SLE will undertake 10 to 12 days' work with a partner school. Initial work has been partly funded by the National College but Fairlawn has negotiated additional financial support from the local authority, which has agreed to match the College's grant.

Fairlawn is developing a website that will feature pen portraits of each leader of its SLEs. The school plans to facilitate termly network meetings to help SLEs share experiences and support each other. In addition, as part of the London primary teaching school group, the school is keen to create network opportunities for primary SLEs across London. Fairlawn's SLEs come from schools in four different authorities, helping the teaching school to further strengthen its cross-borough links.

Outwood Grange Academy, Wakefield: SLEs developing trainee teachers

Outwood Grange's alliance has 48 SLEs, including 8 designated by Ossett Academy, Outwood's strategic outpost school. Following the National College core training for SLEs, the alliance will provide supplementary development sessions, such as training in the new Ofsted process.

One initiative that will provide additional professional development for SLEs (as well as benefiting from their expertise) is Outwood's current research and development project on the role of outstanding teachers in ITT, in partnership with Hibernia College. Using SLEs, the alliance is exploring how outstanding teachers can develop trainee teachers' maths, physics and chemistry subject knowledge, as well as their understanding of behaviour management, SEN and disabilities and KS5 teaching. Three maths SLEs and one science SLE are involved.

The alliance plans to deploy its SLEs quickly and a current focus is to develop SLE deployment processes, including a regional banding and a value-for-money costing structure. Like Fairlawn, Outwood Grange is about to launch a teaching school website, which will feature descriptions of all its SLEs and enable other schools to easily identify the support on offer.

The alliance has already received requests from schools asking for these expert practitioners to carry out bespoke staff training. Outwood is providing particular support to a local primary school with a focus on maths, for which SLEs will be part of the deployment team. In addition, a number of shorter SLE deployments have been requested, including two days on curriculum design and two days focusing on intervention and data-tracking.

Outward Grange Academy was inspected by Ofsted in February 2012. The final report included the following reference to its work as a teaching school:

Teachers very quickly improve their classroom practice and develop their leadership skills because they are given the opportunity to work in, and learn from Outwood Grange's partner schools in the Outwood 'family' and in their National Teaching School alliance.

Ofsted, 2012

Research and development

Belleville and Southfields, Wandsworth: exploring ways to improve teaching

Belleville and Southfields Alliance (BASA) is led by the job-share partnership of Belleville Primary Academy and Southfields Community College in south-west London. A key focus of the alliance is impact on classroom practice and much of its work revolves around the development and leadership of great teaching. This has led to the schools being involved in a range of research and development work.

At Southfields, second-year teachers are involved in small-scale research on teaching methods, while all teachers in their third year and beyond are involved in a programme where individuals study their own actions in order to improve performance.

Belleville's innovative research includes piloting the work of Professor Ron Ferguson on pupil questionnaires and trialling the ideas of Professor Sugata Mitra on self-organised learning environments. Most significantly perhaps, Belleville has created, facilitated and funded a professional learning community of local schools, where teachers work on pedagogy-related themes. Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 teachers from half a dozen schools are developing best-practice strategies for teaching writing, whilst headteachers are undertaking peer review of teaching practice. All the work is supported by the teaching school infrastructure.

BASA is one of 17 alliances selected for a National College research project on teaching and learning CPD. Through this work, Belleville and Southfields are looking to evaluate how their expertise in raising teacher performance might be developed and embedded more widely, testing out whether what works for BASA would work in other contexts.

The Wroxham School, Hertfordshire: creating learning without limits

The Wroxham School's alliance, Wroxham Transformative Learning Alliance, is convinced that research and development are key drivers for school improvement. This is underpinned by a strong belief that everyone is capable of improvement, given a culture of high expectation, respect and self-belief. Wroxham has established research projects that focus on high aspiration in mathematics for ages 4–19 and language for learning for ages 4–19. Middle and senior leaders are beginning to engage in action research and the school is establishing a core research and development team.

The alliance is also undertaking a key project building on the research piece Learning without Limits (Hart et al, 2004) which focused on developing approaches to teaching and learning that do not rely on determinist beliefs about ability. This is a joint project between Wroxham School and the Faculty of Education at Cambridge University. The project set out to explore the possibilities for developing a pedagogy where children can grow in an environment where they experience continuous and sustained support for the development of their learning capacity.

Wroxham's hypothesis is that an innovative, pioneering and optimistic approach to collaboration will impact directly on the quality of pedagogy because it will enable teachers at all stages of their career to explore and evaluate new approaches and ideas, enabling their learning in a supportive yet challenging environment of enquiry.

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- Enabling leaders to work together to lead improvement
- Helping to identify and develop the next generation of leaders
- Improving the quality of leadership so that every child has the best opportunity to succeed

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