

#TrustLeaders

MAGAZINE



Academy Trusts at the Heart of their Communities

**HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NATIONAL
#TRUSTLEADERS CONFERENCE 2019**

Also featuring

- John Camp - Leader in Focus
- Chiltern Learning Trust
- Expert Voice: Kate Whirledge
- MindSpace and Wellspring Academy Trust

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Frank Norris, CEO of the Co-op Academies Trust, speaking at the National #TrustLeaders Conference in Nottingham.

Introduction



A very warm welcome to the first edition of Forum Strategy's **#TrustLeaders** magazine, which is focused on the importance of academy trusts being at the heart of their communities.

As you know, the importance of trusts working closely with, and within, their local communities was the theme of our national **#TrustLeaders** conference this year. This magazine is therefore an opportunity for us to take a more in depth look at some examples of academy trusts that have made working at the heart of their local communities a priority, and the different ways in which they are working to achieve this. We've included a summary of our conference, an article from Katie Whirledge from Papillon PR on community engagement and communications strategies for trusts, and also a research and resource digest containing links to recent relevant articles and publications.

We believe that it is key for academy trusts to be at the heart of their communities for a number of reasons. Firstly, because it has become clear that we can no longer rely on a stable or predictable political context - we've had four governments in five years, and five education secretaries in that time! As well as this, the challenges that threaten to hold back our pupils and their families - from mental health to gang violence, poor speech and language development to poverty - are becoming more complex.

The CEO role can therefore no longer just be about running an efficient organisation; it's also about providing leadership and strategy in a world that lacks it. As CEOs, you are figureheads in your communities, who can champion children and young people, and bring organisations and people together around the needs and priorities of your locality's pupils.

If we can redefine the academy trust sector as one that not only achieves great outcomes and efficiencies, but does so in a spirit of service to, and partnership with, the communities around us and around our pupils, we can set the system up for a long, sustainable future that truly makes a difference to children and young people's lives.

We hope that this magazine provides you with plenty of inspiration, ideas, and opportunities to reflect upon the importance of becoming influential leaders within your communities - seizing the opportunity to include others, and shaping a context in which all children and young people can thrive.

Rachael Gacs

Network and Resources Manager, Forum Strategy.

John Camp

LEADER IN FOCUS



John Camp is the Trust Leader of The Compass Partnership of Schools in Greenwich, London. The partnership is a federation of seven primary schools including one special school.

John is also one of the original members of Forum's South Midlands and London #TrustLeaders Network.

In the following interview, Rachael Gacs discusses with John how he has adapted to his new role as the Trust Leader of the Compass Partnership over the past two years (following a number of years as Executive Headteacher), and what he has found most rewarding and most challenging about the role so far. John also outlines his determination to make Compass an integral part of the local community in Greenwich, and the Trust's plans to work alongside parents, local businesses, and further education establishments to achieve this.

What motivated your decision to become the Trust Leader of the Compass Partnership of Schools?

It was a role which had become necessary due to the growth of Compass in recent years. For me personally, becoming Trust Leader felt like the appropriate next step. I knew I wanted to take on the role so that I could continue to make a positive impact for as many pupils as possible, and to continue to move the Trust forward successfully. It felt very right.

What have been the rewards and challenges so far?

The reward is always, of course, seeing the positive impact on pupils, whether that's seeing pupils engaging enthusiastically in our creative curriculum, being actively involved in their own learning, or watching them develop into individuals who want to make a positive difference in their local communities, and change the world for the better. Being a Trust Leader of seven schools is also very exciting, and means my days are full of variety, especially as we have such a diverse mix of schools in lots of different kinds of contexts within our Trusts. As for the challenges of the role, I think it's the responsibility that sits on your shoulders. Being a Trust Leader is a highly accountable role, and it can be hard to switch off from thinking about the key decisions that need to be made on a day to day basis.



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Why is it so important to you that Compass becomes an integral part of the local community?

The importance of being a positive and integral part of the local community is central to the Compass Trust vision. Our aim is to empower everyone within our local communities, to create a fully inclusive environment within our Trust, and to enable our pupils to grow into responsible citizens, who have a positive impact on society.

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For a Trust to be an integral part of the local community I think has huge benefits for everyone involved. For our pupils, working with, and having connections with, the local community and local companies and businesses not only gives them a sense of belonging, but also helps them to see first-hand the many different ways that they can engage positively in their local community and in society, both now and in the future.

I think it helps our pupils to begin to consider their future from an early age, and what their part in society could be, as they are exposed to real life examples of jobs, places of work, and a wide range of role models. They are then able to understand the importance of their education now, and link that to their aspirations and dreams for the future.

For our parents it is important for our Trust to be involved in the local community because then they know that they have a voice. If we get the message across that our Trust exists to serve them, their children, and their community, and that we will listen to their views and respond to them accordingly, then parents feel much more involved and empowered.

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For our local companies, businesses, and institutions, not only are they helping the next generation by getting involved in our Trust, (with all of the intrinsic moral value that brings), but they are also in a position to inspire the next generation, and to help them to consider whether they would like to work with them, or in a similar field, in the future.

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The local community are also more likely to see these local companies, businesses, and institutions in a much more favourable way if they are demonstrating that they care about the local community by engaging with their children.

What have you done so far to increase links between your Trust and the local community?

It is still early days as we only became a Trust two years ago. However, there are a few things we have put in place already to connect the Trust more with the local community. One of these things has been setting up the Compass Parent Forum, to enable parents to have a key voice in the development and improvement of our Trust and its schools. The Parent Forum is made up of a representative group of parents from across the Trust (two from each school – elected by parents), and meets up four times a year to share parental feedback, support the formation of key policies, and to develop and promote ideas and strategies for community engagement. The Forum has already helped us to understand parental views better, and we have taken action in response. For example, parents helped us to

develop our approach of ‘inclusion by design’. This means that all decisions start from the point of inclusion.

This year we opened the ‘Compass Enhanced Provision’ within Alderwood school. This provision offers the same curriculum entitlement that all pupils receive within our Trust, but is structured to support the social and emotional requirements of pupils with more complex needs that cannot, currently, be met in a mainstream classroom.

“I think, ultimately, Trusts have the potential to have a huge impact on community cohesion, more so than local authorities. That’s because Trusts have a greater imperative to collaborate, and that has a unifying power behind it.”

To help to link our pupils to the local community we have created opportunities to invite people from the local community into our schools to speak to, and interact with, our pupils.

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This has included talks from the police, our local MP, and charity groups. We have also hosted careers fairs where pupils have been able to speak to members of the local community in a variety of different job roles, such as doctors, plumbers, and vets.

Pupils also get the opportunity to visit the local universities of Goldsmiths and Greenwich, which includes a tour of the university facilities and the chance to speak to lecturers. All of this helps pupils to consider potential future opportunities and careers after school.

What are your plans to increase links between the Trust and the community going forward?

Over the next few years we are aiming to develop an even stronger link between the Trust and the local community, building upon our current practice by working with local businesses much more closely. We will be encouraging pupils to take ownership of this through The Compass Council, a council of 14 pupils from across the Trust (two from each school). The Compass Council will be inviting local business representatives to a pupil-led breakfast event, and using this opportunity to create links between the schools and local businesses. This will give pupils a chance to tap into their expertise, and learn more about the world of work, and the range of employment opportunities out there. We hope that this will enthuse our pupils, encourage deeper levels of engagement from local businesses, and ultimately help to raise our pupils' aspirations even further.

“Trusts can support the sustainability of a community by making sure that young people are not only educated very well, but also to develop a strong sense of belonging to a community, and a sense of social responsibility towards that community.”

We also have plans to increase community engagement events across the various local communities within our Trust by introducing a Trust-wide Sports Day, Trust music and dance events, and others. This will create an opportunity for parents and children within the Trust to engage with one another across a wider geographical area, hopefully breaking down some of the barriers that currently exist between our local communities. These events will bring with them the opportunity to create a greater level of community cohesion, and help the members of our local community (pupils and parents alike) to realise that the similarities between our schools and our local communities are much stronger than any perceived differences.

I think, ultimately, Trusts have the potential to have a huge impact on community cohesion, more so than local authorities. That's because Trusts have a greater imperative to collaborate, and that has a unifying power behind it.

Trusts can support the sustainability of a community by making sure that young people are not only educated very well, but also to develop a strong sense of belonging to a community, and a sense of social responsibility towards that community. I think all of that is so valuable, because the more our children feel that they are a valued part of the community, the more engaged with their learning they will be. It also helps our children to develop their understanding of others and develop self-esteem, empathy, and a sense of moral and a social responsibility, which we hope will stay with them into their adult lives.



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National #TrustLeaders Conference 2019

Academy trusts at the heart
of their communities.



Forum Strategy's second National #TrustLeaders Conference took place on Thursday 26 September, with around 150 delegates attending from all six of Forum's networks nationwide.

Forum Strategy's CEO Michael Pain gets the National #TrustLeaders conference underway

Michael called on academy trust CEOs to place themselves at the heart of building relationships with their wider communities.

The theme of this year's conference was focused on 'academy trusts at the heart of their communities'. Forum's CEO, Michael Pain, opened the conference with a call to arms for colleagues to place partnership at the core of their leadership behaviours and actions. He explained how CEO's of academy trusts have a unique opportunity to work to create a positive and lasting legacy for children and young people and their communities, within an increasingly complex and uncertain world. Michael reminded colleagues that they are working within a leadership vacuum from government in terms of any sort of vision and strategy for the education

sector, which provides a prime opportunity for trust leaders to do something profound. Trust leaders should, therefore, be looking outwards- to the passion, capacity and knowledge present within their communities- to help them to shape their own vision for the sector. Michael called on academy trust CEOs to place themselves at the heart of building relationships with their wider communities. In order to do this they must establish their trusts as community-based organisations, and enable the wider social and professional capital that will benefit both children and young people, and also the wider community. He said: "Nothing binds communities together like service to the next generation – it transcends sectors and generations. You have the opportunity to lead this as CEOs and to redefine the academy trust sector."

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Frank Norris makes an impassioned plea to colleagues

Frank called on colleagues to really invest in their communities... asking “how can we afford not to make social value at the heart of everything we do?”

Frank Norris, CEO of the Co-op Academies Trust, was next to take to the stage, with an impassioned plea to colleagues within and beyond the room to place community at the very heart of their words and deeds. He called on colleagues to really invest in their communities and their relationships within those communities, asking “how can we afford not to make social value at the heart of everything we do?” This clearly resonated with colleagues, as did his story of the founders of the Co-op – the Rochdale Pioneers – who in 1844 took action to address the inequalities within their community regarding access to safe and healthy food. Frank highlighted the fact that accountability measures completely underplay the core role of schools within their communities, instead placing a premium on academic outcomes. He called on academy trust CEOs to think about employing a community co-ordinator to help build the necessary links and relationships with organisations and individuals within the communities served by all their schools. Frank’s clear message that schools are not being given sufficient credit for the work they’re doing to improve outcomes, and the fact that the education system is trying to take on too

much responsibility for society’s wider problems, also clearly resonated with colleagues. Frank concluded by urging trust leaders to continue to “do the right thing” for their communities.

“The role of CEO is only possible if you have the right team in place and the right people around you to complement your weaknesses through their expertise” – Pip Wilkins

Pip Wilkins – CEO of the British Franchise Association (BFA) – then gave colleagues a brilliant insight into the similarities between her own sector and that of academy trusts. Pip emphasised that the core role of the BFA is to ensure that franchisors and franchisees alike set collaboration and partnership at the heart of their work, and can clearly see what good franchising practice looks like. Pip discussed with colleagues her own career, which saw her taking on a number of different roles as she progressed to become CEO three years ago. She explained that, in her opinion, the role of CEO is only possible if you have the right team in place and the right people around you to complement your weaknesses through their expertise. Pip also emphasised the need for leaders to always put their customers and staff before themselves, to listen to their needs, and to undertake genuine collaboration and partnership – as well as to be humble and ask for help when needed. She said: “Being a CEO can be a lonely job... but it doesn’t have to be.”



Pip Wilkins talks about the similarities between the BFA and academy trusts

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Above: Ros McMullen pictured with Forum Strategy CEO Michael Pain after receiving her #TrustLeaders Special Recognition Award

At the mid-point of the conference, the #TrustLeaders Special Recognition Award was presented to Ros McMullen, recently retired CEO of the Midland Academies Trust. This was a real highlight of the day, especially as the presentation of the award also featured a surprise video message from former Prime Minister, Tony Blair. Blair thanked Ros for her many years of leadership, for her unfailing commitment and dedication to the service of children and young people, both within her Trust, and across the wider system, and for the positive impact she has made to so many young people during her career. Ros was visibly moved by the event and it was a real privilege for Michael and the Forum Strategy team to be able to arrange such a special moment for such a well-respected and valued colleague and friend.



Nicola West-Jones makes her Key presentation.

Nicola West-Jones from The Key then presented the Key findings from their joint research with Forum Strategy into some key elements of academy trust leadership. Nicola presented some highlights from the research report – ‘Trust expansion: overcoming growing pains’ – which set out the findings from three focus groups, and a subsequent survey of academy trust CEOs. The main findings from the research were set out in Forum’s Research and Intelligence briefing on 27 September (2019).



John Woodward, Yvonne Smillie and Marg Randles of Busy Bees

Yvonne Smillie, discussed Busy Bees’ core vision to give every child the best start in life, and how providing quality leadership and learning for staff sits at the core of enabling this vision.

After lunch, colleagues heard from Marg Randles and John Woodward – two of the founders of the now multi-national Busy Bees nursery chain. The pair described how they were able to develop their vision for a child and community focused organisation to scale, whilst remaining faithful to their core values and mission. **Busy Bees’ Deputy Academic Officer, Yvonne Smillie**, discussed their core vision to give every child the best start in life, and how providing quality leadership and learning for staff sits at the core of enabling this vision. Yvonne explained that this focus has been supported by the launch (in April 2019) of the Busy Bees ‘Unleashing Potential’ learning programme app. Marg herself summed up the Busy Bees ethos when she said “branding isn’t just about a logo, it’s about what we stand for, our DNA”.

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The penultimate session of the conference featured a facilitated panel discussion with Emma Knights (CEO of the National Governance Association), Nick Chambers (CEO of the Education and Employers charity) and Wayne Norrie (CEO of Greenwood Academies Trust) on the subject of ‘how can academy trusts thrive through being at the heart of their communities?’ Emma presented her thoughts on the importance of establishing partnerships at different levels, and the need for trust and clarity of purpose between partnership members. Emma also emphasised the importance of place; that almost all of NGA’s members volunteer because of their commitment to their communities, and that community engagement should be at the core of the Trust-wide strategy of each academy trust. Nick highlighted the importance of schools engaging with local businesses and other organisations in order to enable pupils and students to understand and gain experience of the world of work across a wide range of sectors. Nick explained research findings which demonstrate that children who engage with the world of work are less likely to be NEET and also show an improvement in their GCSE results – potentially because they are motivated by finding practical meaning in their academic work. Wayne discussed with colleagues how Greenwood Academies Trust is holding itself accountable to both its children and the wider communities of the schools it serves. He explained how trust is vital within deprived communities and that he sees a core role of his Trust as giving the communities served by its schools the opportunity to regenerate themselves.

Saeed Atcha spoke about people, opportunity, passion and resilience as the four crucial elements which children and young people need from their schools and communities



Saeed Atcha MBE closes the conference.

Saeed Atcha MBE, and Social Mobility Commissioner, closed the conference with an impassioned message to delegates about what our children and young people need from us today. Saeed’s journey from troubled teenager to becoming the youngest ever recipient of an MBE, was an inspiring and emotional way to end a brilliant day. He spoke about people, opportunity, passion and resilience as the four crucial elements which children and young people need from their schools and communities; and said: “You all have the power and the duty to deliver the people, opportunity, passion and resilience our young people need”.

Once again, the conference was expertly facilitated by **Jane Creasy**, with colleagues guided seamlessly between and within inputs from speakers drawn from a range of different sectors. Many thanks to all colleagues that attended or contributed to the event, and helped to make it such an enjoyable and informative day.

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Highlights from the conference can be found on Forum Strategy's YouTube channel:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVUeMc2dCKNsChDmWdrtrw;>



including Michael Pain's opening keynote:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZS9zr7q9jmU&feature=youtu.be;>

with the full text available here:
<https://www.forumstrategy.org/michael-pains-opening-speech-to-the-national-trustleaders-conference-2019/>



Tony Blair pays tribute to longstanding school and trust leader, Ros McMullen at this year's National #TrustLeaders Conference
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-WMe-0J50bNk>

More videos to watch from the National #TrustLeaders Conference 2019



Highlights of the National #TrustLeaders Conference 2019
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUciMzoMKes>



Nicola West-Jones of The Key at the National #TrustLeaders Conference
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IMIs8dOEqC4>



Saeed Atcha MBE's closing remarks to the National #TrustLeaders Conference
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJlIH0mqv7Y>

The Chiltern Learning Trust

Connecting with the Local Community



Above: Chief Executive Adrian Rogers and Sufian Sadiq (head of Teaching School at CLT).

The Chiltern Learning Trust (CLT) is a Multi Academy Trust based in Luton and the surrounding local area. It was initially established in 2013, with two local secondary schools, Challney High School for Boys and Denbigh High School, with Dallow Primary joining the Trust later in the same year as a sponsored Academy.

However, over the past three years - due to the Trust's success- Chiltern has grown from three schools to eleven schools. According to Chief Executive Adrian Rogers, one of the most important factors that Chiltern has had to consider during its growth has been building positive relationships between Chiltern (and its schools), and the local communities that the Trust serves.

“Good leaders always make sure that they find effective ways to engage with their local communities.”

Adrian explains, “there has to be a significant change in strategy when you go from being a Headteacher to a Trust Leader, in terms of how you engage with the local community, and as a Trust grows, that change becomes even more significant. That’s because it is impossible, as CEO, to get to know 8200 pupils, and their parents, individually.” However, Adrian maintains that the principle of engaging positively with the community remains the same, even if the strategies to do so have to change. He tells us, “good leaders always make sure that they find effective ways to engage with their local communities. As a Trust we have made a commitment to prioritise community engagement.

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This means we do whatever it takes to ensure that we have positive and meaningful relationships with our local communities, because we recognise just how important that is.”

Making Connections

For each new school that joins Chiltern, efforts are made from the off to engage and involve the local community, both within the school and the Trust. Adrian explains, “Chiltern does have a very good reputation locally, but it is still vital that we put a strong focus on building connections and building a high level of trust from the local community when new schools become part of Chiltern. We never just take that for granted.” Adrian and his leadership team aim to build connections with local communities in a number



Sufian Sadiq (Head of Teaching School at CLT)

of ways. Adrian ensures that he, Sufian Sadiq (head of Teaching School at CLT), and other senior leaders not only regularly visit each school within the Trust, but also the feeder schools or upper schools connected to each.

Adrian also invites local councillors and MPs into the Trust to visit, and from then on also invites them in for regular catch up meetings. Several local councillors have also joined the governing bodies of local schools within the Trust. Adrian adds, “any local councillor that wants it has my mobile and full access to me. I very much encourage them to join one of our governing bodies, and come and see what we’re doing, and get involved – that way they also have the opportunity to make a difference from within!” Adrian also utilises this approach in reaching out to local community leaders, including well respected religious leaders, and leaders of community groups and organisations.

Adrian tells us, “I invite them to visit the Trust, share my mobile number with them, and invite them to join the local school’s governing body. This is fantastic as it helps to connect us to the heart of the community, find out what is important to the local community, and gives us better access to a wider range of voices and views within that community.” Examples of local community leaders who are involved in the Trust and local governing bodies within Chiltern include; the Chair of community organisation, Lantern, that works to support Muslim women in Luton; the Chair of local volunteer led partnership FACES (Faiths Against Child Sexual Exploitation); the Chair of the Luton Council of Mosques; representatives from the local community radio; and representatives from Luton Foodbank.

Being present in the community

Chiltern Learning Trust has also made a commitment to its local communities that at least one member of the senior executive team will attend local community events. Adrian explains, “we never turn down an invite to anything community based. This is really important because we have a moral purpose to support our community and to be actively involved.

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“We never turn down an invite to anything community based. This is really important because we have a moral purpose to support our community and to be actively involved.”

We always ensure that someone from our senior team is present to support local events, and we each take turns. Attending events helps to make us more accessible to the local community, because if anyone wants to talk to us, they can.” Other support for community events from the Trust includes speaking at events, sponsoring community awards, presenting awards, entering teams into charity events, or supporting events with promotion, funding, providing chairs/tables, or access to school sites. Adrian also ensures that all community related emails sent to him get a response from him.

Another policy that the senior team at Chiltern follow is to always respond to requests for participation from local papers and local radio stations. As a result, Adrian, Sufian, other senior leaders, and often governors, feature regularly on local community radio stations such as Inspire FM, discussing local or national issues. Again, this is another way that the Trust is able to become a real presence in the local community, making connections and engaging with the local community and its concerns.

Chiltern also work closely with several local organisations who try to make a positive difference to the local community in and around Luton. One example of this is Chiltern’s work with the Level Trust, a charity that works to alleviate child poverty and provide affordable school uniforms for all children. Chiltern host joint events and training courses with the Level Trust, and these events are often attended by up to 100 delegates each time. A recent joint conference with the Level Trust also saw over 180 members of staff attend a one-day course on poverty proofing the school day. Senior staff are actively encouraged to volunteer to join various community boards and charity committees in the local area.

At a school level, Headteachers are encouraged to be central figures of their local community, being both accessible and involved in local events. Adrian admits that he can no longer get to know parents and pupils in the way that a Headteacher can, but this role is still fulfilled by the Head Teacher of each individual school in the Trust.

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As Chief Executive, Adrian tells us that his role is now more about “being at the right place at the right time, attending events such as open evenings, or school awards evenings and presenting awards. It is still crucial that I am seen to be present and involved in the key events that take place at each school, whenever possible.” Social media is also utilised at Trust-wide level, which parents can engage in if they want to feel informed and up to date with the latest news, activities, and events from across the Trust.

Luton Town

Chiltern have also established strong links with Luton Town FC. Adrian and Sufian are members of the board of Luton FC, and have built up a strong relationship between the Club and the Trust. This has benefitted pupils and the Trust’s links with the local community in a number of ways. Examples include the setting up of the Primary and Secondary ‘Reading Stars’ programme, which is an FA sponsored programme. The programme uses the appeal of the Premier League and professional football clubs to inspire reluctant and less able readers, and encourage them to become more excited about and engaged in reading. The programme is particularly aimed at pupils who love and are motivated by football, and the sessions, known as Fixtures, have given pupils across Chiltern the opportunity to practise their reading skills, including comprehension and inference, using football-related resources and texts.

Chiltern are also able to access tickets for football matches for children that may never get to go to a game with their parents. As well as this, PE staff have been able to receive training from expert/professional coaches from Luton FC, and as a result, the Trust is able to offer specialist football training in all of their schools. Adrian adds “we

particularly focus on our girls’ school, which is made up predominantly of Pakistani girls of a Muslim faith background, as they are often the ‘hardest to reach’ when it comes to engaging in physical activities. Professional coaches from Luton FC come into the school and deliver coaching, and at the same time they also work with the girls on healthy lifestyle and fitness changes and choices.”



Recently, Mick Harford, the former manager and currently the chief recruitment officer at Luton FC, opened the Trust’s new school, Chiltern Academy, in recent weeks. Adrian tells us, “we felt that Mick was the best person because he is an inspirational figure in the local community. His presence helped to get more local people interested, and was an extra incentive in getting people engaged with the new school, and the Trust as a whole.”

Final thoughts

Adrian concludes, “over the past few years we have put a lot of time, effort and thought into how we can best engage with, and include, the local community in all that we do. Our strategy for community engagement has developed into something very strong and far-reaching, and I am certainly proud of what we have managed to achieve as a Trust. We are relentless in our approach, and use every opportunity possible to make links with our local community. Ultimately, our aim is to ensure that local people can see that we, as a Trust, are not only an integral part of the local community, but that we also belong to the communities we serve.”

“We are relentless in our approach, and use every opportunity possible to make links with our local community.”

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Expert Voice: Katie Whirledge

Founder & Director of the PR company Papillon Communications

Community Engagement and Communications Strategies for Multi-Academy Trusts, need to understand the reality: they are all ‘start-ups’. Where local councils have had years to build their ‘brand’ and establish lines of communication with their schools, parents, children and other stakeholders, many trusts have an uphill battle to define their message and establish themselves as pillars within the community.



Papillon
communications

“To be accepted, and more importantly trusted, your organisation needs to put down meaningful roots in its community - and the sooner the better.”

Define yourself before others define you.

Needless to say, multi-academy trusts have not been given a fair press to date. Therefore, it can feel that you are starting from a negative viewpoint within your community - and in most areas in the UK, you are. A cohesive communications strategy allows you to control the narrative around your trust and, if adhered to in a consistent manner, it will not only support your operation, but also give a better understanding to your stakeholders. To be accepted, and more importantly trusted, your organisation needs to put down meaningful roots in its community - and the sooner the better. Papillon recognises that as a communications company for regional, national and international brands in care and education, there is a right and a wrong way to do this. Through our work with Busy Bees (the UK’s largest provider of childcare) and many primary and secondary schools up and down the country, we have learned the importance of knowing and understanding the community they serve.

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With that in mind, we offer Papillon's practical guide on how to develop a trusted brand, as an employer, and as a key organisation within your community.

“Your brand, your mission and your vision should be clear and visual in all that you say and all that you do.”

Create a coherent communication strategy

This is the most important piece of advice. Operationally, on paper it can look all too easy. But the reality can be extremely difficult. Your brand, your mission and your vision should be clear and visual in all that you say and all that you do.

That may sound trite, but so often we see grand organisations that fail to get their DNA right at the heart of their operation where it matters - at the grass roots - whether that be a nursery, school or a commercial business. We're all working in education because we want to deliver better outcomes for our children, and we all have a uniqueness in the way we want to do this. Set out your desires and ambitions with certainty and include your community in your journey to achieving them.

Your communication must be aligned. Whether you're writing a parent letter, a blog or content for your website, offering a comment to the media or presenting to your peers, it's so important to remember your key messages. Use every opportunity to instil your brand values.

Define your unique selling point

Your key advantage over local authority schools is your autonomy. There are some obvious benefits, like being able to set your own curriculum. With your own curriculum, you can choose a focus, whether it be the arts, sciences,

maths or modern languages. Take this further: help reinforce your message by affiliating with a local business that specialises in your curriculum focus. Not only could this help inform your teaching, it could provide a link with your local area that shows parents you mean business - literally.

Know your stakeholders

Who are the stakeholders within your community? Make sure you have considered everyone, from the local authorities and the police to the parents and grandparents, guardians, charities, businesses, developers, the media - the list is bigger than you think and it's essential you are known for your inclusivity. Meet with those that may harbour a grudge or fear your arrival, those doubters who need convincing, and remember happy staff and delighted parents are your best ambassadors, and your children are your finest examples of your brand and its values.

Use your school as a community hub

Your school day might end at 3:30pm, but there's a lot you can do outside of these hours to bring the local community together. Schools have a wealth of facilities that can enrich your community, if you can spare a little time to organise some activities. You might have dedicated food technology kitchens, swimming pools or other sports facilities that other schools or community groups could use. Reach out to your local branch of brownies, cubs, drama or knitting clubs. Make links with care homes and special needs groups. Put on a panto, an art exhibition, a summer fair for all; and accept help, if appropriate, when it's offered. Not only is this a great way to improve the recognition and reputation of your school, your staff and your children, it's the best way of giving prospective parents and other influencers a preview of what you offer.

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“Collaborate on everything from sports days to productions. Holding some larger events which involve every multi-academy trust will facilitate press coverage, as well as bringing parents and children from other schools together.”

Collaborate with other multi-academy trust members

Some multi-academy trusts have a big advantage over local councils in being much closer, physically and organisationally, to the schools they administer.

A multi-academy trust's head office might be hosted by one of their schools, or the trust's members might be in a small region, not spread across an entire county. This gives you the opportunity to collaborate on everything from sports days to productions. Holding some larger events which involve every multi-academy trust will facilitate press coverage, as well as bringing parents and children from other schools together.

For those that have a wider geographical footprint it is imperative that you seek to find ways to unite your schools, even if it's nigh on impossible to bring the schools together physically. Some of our Trusts have teacher and trustee away days, national award dinners and various masterclasses or conferences to share best practice, unite and motivate their teams, and celebrate their successes - all of which support and strengthen their brand.

Support local charities and causes

We understand that money is limited in schools, and that's not going to change any time soon. Nevertheless, supporting local charities is a great way for students and staff to give back to the local community. It doesn't have to be about raising money either – rewarding pupils who volunteer their time to take part in community action can make a real difference. By encouraging community action - something as simple as getting pupils to clean up the area around their

school or their local park – you will encourage in pupils a sense of pride in their surroundings. You'll also increase the standing of your school in the community, and you will stand a good chance of getting some local press coverage.

Media engagement

Despite what you may think, journalists are not just waiting for you to make a mistake and humiliate you in the press. Many local reporters are delighted to work with schools, especially if they can include good news stories and happy images of children succeeding in life.

Gaining positive column inches in your local paper and online will delight parents and grandparents, give your school the recognition it deserves, and help to boost your SEO. National thought leadership articles allow you to set out your stall amongst your peers. It will help build your reputation in the sector and undoubtedly attract like-minded teachers as well as prospective schools or multi-academy trusts that are looking to merge.

“Gaining positive column inches in your local paper and online will delight parents and grandparents, give your school the recognition it deserves, and help to boost your SEO.”

Please ensure every school in your Trust has a robust media and GDPR policy and a crisis communications plan in place. This is part of your safeguarding and it is there to protect your children and your brand. Parents must sign a permission slip before their child appears in any image or video.

We will be touching on this topic in our February meeting and are really looking forward to meeting you, but please do get in touch beforehand if you would like any advice or support with your trust or your schools on a regional or national level.
kt@papillonpr.co.uk ☎ 01543 898195 or 07973 800234

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MindSpace & Wellspring Academy Trust

Working together across the community to support the mental health of pupils across Barnsley.

With mental health problems now affecting the lives up to 1 in 3 children and young people in some areas of the UK, it is an issue that we can all agree needs urgently addressing with effective action and intervention.



The Good Childhood Report (2018) contained some truly shocking figures, including that 1 in 4 teenage girls are depressed, and around 22% have engaged in self-harm. Also, we now know that more than half of all mental illness starts before the age of 14, and 75% by age 18, making early intervention for children and young people even more crucial.

The response to this crisis has finally begun in earnest, with the government's announcement of a £300 million mental health funding plan for schools published in 2018. However, for all too many young people, the support they so desperately need in dealing with their mental health is still not available or forthcoming. There is still clearly a long way to go in truly tackling this mental health crisis, and in the meantime, it is our children and young people who continue to suffer.

The emergence of the 'MindSpace' programme in Barnsley stands out as a remarkable exemplar of what can be achieved when multiple agencies pro-actively come together to generate solutions.



Michelle Sault

However, there is also much hope. The emergence of the 'MindSpace' programme in Barnsley stands out as a remarkable exemplar of what can be achieved when multiple agencies pro-actively come together to generate solutions.

The MindSpace programme is a mental health initiative which has been made available to all 10 secondary schools in Barnsley through the Wellspring Trust. The programme, developed and led by Michelle Sault, has so far embedded professional mental health practitioners into every secondary school in Barnsley, in an ambitious approach to tackle the problem of poor mental health amongst children.

Creating MindSpace

Michelle explains the motivation behind the formation of MindSpace; "in my role as the assistant principle of 10 pupil referral units, I knew that they were at saturation point.

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It seemed to me this was because many pupils were being excluded from school when what they really needed was better mental health support.

I knew that with the right support, they would in fact be able to stay within mainstream education, avoiding the upheaval of moving to a different setting, and potentially losing their peer group as a result. I was also keenly aware of the shocking statistic that even in mainstream classrooms, often up to 1 in 3 pupils has a diagnosable mental health problem, so I knew that this problem was by no means limited to the pupils I served in pupil referral units.”

“Traditional mental health services in the area were really struggling to cope with the rising demand for mental health intervention for young people, and as a result there was insufficient capacity, resulting in very long waiting lists. In some areas, waiting lists were between 18 months and 2 years, even for serious cases

such as when a child had lost a parent. I knew this situation couldn’t continue, so I decided to develop a plan that would provide the children in our area with the help and support that so many of them so desperately needed.”

“I presented the concept of MindSpace with determination and tenacity, and delivered the strong message that this approach was desperately needed, and would make an immense difference to the wellbeing of our young people.”

Due to Michelle’s role within pupil referral units, she already had good relationships with local headteachers and contacts within the local schools. She tells us, “I knew the need was there, and I knew what needed to be done to make things better. It was because I believed so passionately in the idea that I didn’t hesitate to get in touch with as many relevant contacts as possible. I presented the concept of MindSpace with determination and tenacity, and delivered the strong message that this approach was desperately needed, and would make an immense difference to the wellbeing of our

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young people.

All in all, it took around 6 months for the message to be truly taken on board, and to receive the funding necessary to start to get MindSpace off the ground.”

Michelle succeeded in obtaining funding for the MindSpace scheme through the Barnsley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) through its Futures in Mind funding. Michelle explains, “we hope to see other Clinical Commissioning Groups across the UK do the same soon. This is a simple and effective programme, and we owe to our children to safeguard their mental health as much as possible.”

Putting Mindspace into action

Wellspring Academy Trust (a multi-academy trust which is renowned for its work in the mental health and special educational needs sectors) began piloting the MindSpace programme in a small number of schools during the 2016/17 academic year. In these schools, children and parents were able to self-refer themselves for counselling, and group mental health and wellbeing sessions also took place in classrooms, addressing topics such as depression and self-harm. In addition, teachers received mental health first aid training to help them spot early signs of depression and poor mental health.

“It was a unique and unprecedented step to introduce a scheme which would see mental health services, the NHS, schools and local authorities all working together to support the mental wellbeing of our young people.”

“The pilot supported more than 200 young people, including 63 parents, and the feedback that we received was overwhelmingly positive”, says Michelle, “with users describing the services with terms such as ‘transformational’ and a

‘lifesaver.’” Word quickly spread in the local area regarding the programme’s success, and Michelle also continued to make the programme as visible as possible, regularly attending headteachers meetings and presenting the positive outcomes that MindSpace was already producing for young people and their families.

“Due to the evident success of the MindSpace programme within WellSpring Academy Trust, the Trust took the initiative to introduce MindSpace into all 10 of the secondary schools across Barnsley, including schools run by Barnsley council and other Academy Trusts. This was a real breakthrough moment, as we knew that we were finally in a position to make a difference to all secondary school aged pupils throughout the Barnsley area. It was also a unique and unprecedented step to introduce a scheme which would see mental health services, the NHS, schools and local authorities all working together to support the mental wellbeing of our young people.”

Challenges

Michelle admits that some challenges did present themselves during the process of establishing MindSpace, and that the journey has not always been a straightforward one. “In the early days we did find that there was sometimes a ‘clash of cultures’ between the health care services and education services, so it did take a little while to get everything running smoothly.

This was especially the case when hiring staff. We soon learned that those with previous experience of working with children and young people generally turned out to be the best candidates in the long run, especially if they had also worked in a school setting before.

“Getting the right team in place has been so important, but it has also taken time.”

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Getting the right team in place has been so important, but it has also taken time.” Time and money also had to be invested in training for teachers and other school staff, especially in terms of spotting the signs of mental health problems, and learning how to refer pupils to the MindSpace service. “Fortunately, we have been able to work very closely with the Sheffield-based charity Chilypep, who deliver Youth Mental Health First Aid training within schools, in order to provide this training”, Michelle explains.

“Filling in referral forms presented another challenge for teachers, as they are substantial documents, which need to be completed with great care and attention to detail”, says Michelle. “As a result, fairly extensive training was required for staff within schools about how to fill them in. The referral forms entailed a large commitment on their part, but thankfully staff on the whole did embrace this training, as they understood its importance, and also the positive impact that making the referrals would ultimately have for pupils experiencing difficulties.”



“There is no doubt in my mind that we are providing all of the secondary schools in Barnsley with an exceptionally high-quality service in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of pupils, which is having a tangible impact”

Outcomes

After over 3 years of very hard work spent establishing MindSpace, Michelle feels that things have really fallen into place with the delivery of the programme.

“There is no doubt in my mind that we are providing all of the secondary schools in Barnsley with an exceptionally high-quality service in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of pupils, which is having a tangible impact”, says Michelle. “The practitioners (mental health nurses and trained counsellors), in each school, see at least 4 pupils per day, and the service has developed an excellent reputation throughout the Barnsley area. We have supported hundreds of young people through the scheme so far, and we have also trained over 1800 teachers in how to identify pupils who need support.”

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Michelle puts down a great deal of MindSpace’s success to establishing good relationships early on with the headteachers of local schools. “I made sure from the very beginning that my relationship with the headteachers in Barnsley was always one of total honesty and transparency. Any problems, or even potential problems, were quickly shared, and I made sure to keep everyone informed during each stage of the process of establishing MindSpace. I also had to make my expectations of the schools, and what was needed from them to make MindSpace work successfully, absolutely clear. Communication was definitely key.”

Advice

For anyone looking to create something similar to ‘MindSpace’ (whether in the area of mental health, or with another key focus), Michelle has the following advice; “you must be absolutely clear about your ‘why?’ You will need to believe in the service that you are creating passionately, and you need to know exactly what need it will be fulfilling. You also need to know exactly who the service will be aimed at, and exactly how it will be helping them. Once your vision is clear, you need to make contact with the right people, put yourself in front of the right people, and network with the people who hold influence in your area. Explain your vision with passion and determination, and keep persevering until you get the breakthrough you need.”

The future

Of course, Michelle wants MindSpace to continue making a positive impact for pupils in secondary schools across Barnsley. However, she also has ambitions to expand the service in the future- in order to extend its benefits to even more children- with the service being offered in more locations, and also to a wider age range. She tells us, “poor mental health in childhood invariably means poor mental health for life. This then puts individuals at higher risk of dropping out of education, of unemployment, of criminal activity and of social isolation. On the other hand, it is a proven fact that children gain the most benefit from mental health intervention the younger they are. Therefore, I would really like MindSpace to work with EYFS providers and primary schools in the future, as I think that’s where we could have the most substantial impact on children’s lives. The earlier we can start working with children, and their parents, the better”. Michelle would also like MindSpace to be able to support young people after the age of 16 too; “ideally, I would like MindSpace to work with children and young people from the ages of 0 – 25, so that our services can support them with their mental health and wellbeing at every stage of their development during early life. This approach would provide children and young people with the best possible chance of having good mental health throughout their lives.”

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North East: #TrustLeaders Network 2020

The North East #TrustLeaders Network returns in 2020 for its third consecutive year, having developed a strong reputation amongst trust CEOs, trustees and others for its cross-sector thinking, peer to peer learning, and cutting-edge materials and resources.



What's involved?

The #TrustLeaders Network brings together leading thinkers, experts, and a wide range of practitioners across sectors, to ensure your high-quality, ongoing professional development as a Trust Leader.

This year's network will provide you with an extensive range of development and networking opportunities, as well as the chance to stay ahead of and inform policy development through our regular roundtable events.

The North East #TrustLeaders network is one of six regional #TrustLeaders networks led by Forum Strategy nationwide. The network is led by Michael Pain, CEO of Forum Strategy, and the author of the book 'Being the CEO'.

This year's network will focus on:

- **Strategies for organisational sustainability;** maximising resources and investing for the future.
- **Improvement at scale;** building the vision, capacity & systems across an organisation.
- **The role of CEOs in leading sustainable and impactful digital transformation;** securing value, organisational efficiency and preparing pupils for the future.

Former contributors to Forum's #TrustLeaders networks have included NHS Improvement, the NGA, and the British Franchise Association, as well as CEOs and thought leaders from across a wide range of sectors.

Session 1: 23rd January 2020, Middlesbrough (am)

Session 2: 3rd March 2020, Hartlepool (am)

Session 3: 18th June 2020, Newcastle (am)

Session 4: 24th September 2020, Nottingham*

Places are very limited. The deadline for booking is: 9th January 2020.

* (Forum Strategy's Annual CEO Conference)

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Research & Resources Digest

Community and partnerships



10 stages of successful strategic alliances

In this recent article from INSEAD (business school), the authors discuss the growth of strategic partnerships, both in business and other sectors, and the fact that between 60 and 70 per cent of alliances fail or at least face some difficulties. The article suggests that corporate partnerships in many respects resemble marriages, and puts forward the following top tips for successful strategic alliances (source: INSEAD):

Further details can be found: <https://knowledge.insead.edu/blog/insead-blog/the-ten-stages-of-successful-strategic-alliances-11086>

Careers education in England

The Careers and Enterprise Company's recently published 'State of the Nation' report represents the most comprehensive assessment of careers education in England. State of the Nation 2019 describes careers provision in England's secondary schools and colleges at the end of the academic year 2018/19. The report really emphasises the importance of schools and local employers working in close partnership to support high quality careers education; and sets out the following key findings (source: The Careers and Enterprise Company):

- More than 150 businesses and 2,000 people from the business community are now part of a network run by the Careers & Enterprise Company, working with schools and colleges to help young people build their employability skills, become better prepared for the world of work and improve their life chances.
- At least 2 million young people are now receiving an encounter with an employer every year.
- The number of schools and colleges running regular encounters with employers has surged by 70 per cent, from less than a third two years ago (31%) to more than half this year (52%).
- Progress can be seen across the country. Schools and colleges serving disadvantaged communities are among the highest performers.

Further details can be found: <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/news/state-nation-2019>

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Trust expansion

The Key's latest research report 'Trust expansion: overcoming growing pains' – undertaken in partnership with Forum Strategy – provides a unique insight into academy trust leaders – their strategic priorities, personal drivers and concerns about growth. Working in partnership with Forum Strategy, The Key convened three focus groups of trust leaders in Liverpool, London and Nottingham in May 2019. The common themes from these focus groups enabled the creation of a survey which was completed by 155 respondents – all of whom identified as being in leadership roles in trusts. Among the many interesting findings from undertaking this research was that only 9 per cent of Trusts in the survey indicated that they would be prioritising “improving community engagement” in the near future; and neither did this priority feature in Trust leaders' personal drivers.



Further details can be found: <https://resources.thekeysupport.com/trust-report-2019>

Review of evidence on parental engagement

The new review of evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) shows how parental engagement can have a positive effect on a child's academic attainment – regardless of age or socio-economic status. The review – 'How Can Schools Support Parents' Engagement in their Children's Learning? Evidence from Research and Practice' – sets out the following main findings (source: EEF):

- Parent involvement plays a key role in children's academic attainment. The balance of evidence suggesting that it holds regardless of socio-economic status and across grade levels, although some studies suggest that it may be stronger in the early years while others suggest that it is stronger for older children (because they can articulate what they are doing / need).
- The association is strongest if parental involvement is defined as parental expectations for their children's academic achievement.
- In the early years, the evidence supports the importance of parents' reading to / with their children (and associated interactions) and support for learning (creating a supportive home learning environment).
- For school-aged children the evidence supports the importance of home-school partnership and parental interest in children's academic activities.
- Schools in England use a wide range of activities to support parents' engagement in their children's learning. Many are passive (e.g. providing parents with information or materials) but some are active (e.g. parent training programmes, early literacy intervention).
- Schools generally rely on traditional methods for interacting with parents, such as parent evenings and newsletters, but some use online technology both to communicate with families and also to provide access to learning opportunities and materials for children and parents.
- Most schools provide families with a lot of information about community activities but few actively integrate with community organisations to recruit to or provide these activities.

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- The majority of schools identify parent engagement as a priority area and one that is the responsibility of all staff, although very few have written policies or procedures to guide staff.
- The foundation for parental engagement is school staff building trusting and supportive relationships with parents; with one strategy consisting of linking with the community (e.g. work with local organisations and groups – charities, employers, health and social care).

Further information can be found: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/review-of-evidence-on-parental-engagement/>

School governance in 2019

The National Governance Association (NGA) has recently published its 'School Governance in 2019' report, which sets out the findings from this year's survey of 5,923 governors, trustees and academy committee members. The main findings from the report, which relate to the relationship between academy trusts and their communities (through their Board of Trustees), are summarised below (source: NGA):

- Respondents reported spending a significant amount of time on governance, with 29% spending over 30 days per year completing their duties. Nearly a quarter of governing board chairs reported that the time they dedicate to governance was somewhat or completely unmanageable and only 22% of employed respondents said the time commitment was completely manageable.
- Governing boards continue to lack diversity – particularly in terms of ethnicity and age. 93% of respondents identified as white compared to 74% of pupils in England and only 10% of respondents reported being under the age of 40.
- Respondents reported an average of 1.26 vacancies per governing board or academy committee. Based on a conservative estimate of the number of governing boards and academy committees in England, an estimated 18,000 additional school governance volunteers are needed to sustain school governance under current board sizes.
- Only 57% of academy committee members felt that their voice was being listened to by MAT trustees and leaders, and less than half said that they would be happy to share their schools' resources with the wider organisation. Furthermore, there are clear inconsistencies in what MAT trustees and academy committee members claim to have delegated responsibility for, suggesting more work is needed around schemes of delegation.
- Respondents were slightly less likely to have engaged in stakeholder engagement (of any form) than in previous years - including staff, pupil and parent/carers surveys as well as engaging the school and wider community face-to-face, despite the importance of stakeholder engagement to good governance.

Further details can be found: <https://www.nga.org.uk/News/NGA-News/July-2019-October-2019/Unifying-concerns-of-school-governors-and-trustees.aspx>

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Moving MATs forward: the power of governance

The National Governance Association (NGA) report – ‘Moving MATs forward: the power of governance’ – explores eleven issues with the governance and oversight of multi-academy trusts, which impact a board’s ability to carry out its core functions. The main findings from the report, of most relevance to placing academy trusts at the heart of their communities, are summarised below (source: NGA):

- Some trusts have outlined that they struggle to recruit individuals who reflect the local community as well as to get a diverse range of views on the board of trustees.
- Academy trusts are increasingly developing a nuanced approach which strikes a balance between allowing schools to retain some sense of unique character while being clear about what is required for schools to be part of their organisation.
- Many trusts have developed a well-articulated set of non-negotiables, and are clear and upfront with new schools about what it will mean to be part of their trust, including what will change.
- Many trusts have acknowledged the importance of tempering expectations of volunteers and staff and being realistic about the levels of influence and responsibility for each layer of governance.
- Difficulties with stakeholder and community engagement are not unique to academy trusts. However, they can be compounded by both the size of some trusts and their geographic spread.
- With no formal link to local authorities, academy trusts do not have local authority appointed trustees and, in almost all cases, there is no requirement to have community representatives on the board.
- While the emphasis from central government has rightly been on skills in terms of attracting trustees and those at a local level, this has often been at the expense of finding people with meaningful links to the communities they serve.
- NGA is absolutely clear that those volunteering to govern schools, once on a board, are not representatives of any particular group. However, where trustees or those at a local level are elected, this helps to ensure that a diverse range of perspectives, including those of parents, are brought to the table.
- Whereas some academy trusts struggle to engage with their community, others are putting community at the heart of what they do. In many cases, boards are keen to get ‘buy-in’ from the wider school community. This includes working closely with parents, the local authority and employers and consulting with these groups to gain their input into the creation of a trust vision.
- Even where schools are widely dispersed geographically, some larger academy trusts have put community engagement at their heart of their local governance tier – ensuring that parents and other community representatives have a voice on these councils.

Further details can be found: <https://www.nga.org.uk/News/NGA-News/April-2019-June-2019/Schools-system-has-not-evolved-to-meet-the-challen.aspx>

Education Inspection Framework

Ofsted’s new Education Inspection Framework (EIF), which has been in use since 1 September 2019, highlights that the leadership and management of the school (being inspected) will be expected, among other things, to “engage effectively with others in the community”.

Further information can be found: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework>



Our commitments to clients include:

- Supporting organisational improvement wherever possible;
- Staying informed on the key & emerging issues;
- Producing high quality research & communications;
- Ensuring our integrity & maintaining client confidentiality at all times;
- Being responsive & professional in all that we do.

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