



Federation News November 2015

**Incorporating the
Annual Report
2014 - 2015**

SLF Annual Report 2014-15

Newsletter November 2015

Directors and Institutions, 2014-15

Mr A Lund, Appleby School
Dr P Williams, Cartmel Priory School
Mr W Bancroft Dallam School
Ms M Bailey, John Ruskin School
Mr G Wilkinson, Kendal College
Mr P Hyman, Kirkbie Kendal School
(Chair: September 2014– August 2015)
Mrs R Houston, Kirkby Stephen Grammar School
(from November 2014)
Mr A Cunningham, The Lakes School
(from January 2014)
Mr C Clarke, Queen Elizabeth School
Mr S Wilkinson, The Queen Katherine School
Mrs J Fletcher Sandgate School
Dr J Greene, Settlebeck School
(Vice Chair: September 2014 – August 2015)
Ms K Fox, University of Cumbria

Introductory remarks from Mr P Hyman: SLF Chair 2014-15

The SLF have been exceptionally fortunate to have Enid Fraser as executive officer for eight years. She retired in September 2015 and we all wish her a long and happy retirement. She has been a wonderful champion for the federation and all the young people that we serve. She facilitated school improvement with great enthusiasm, diplomacy and dedication. We will miss her.

2014-15 was an important year to establish a unified approach to 'life after levels'. In times of such an opportunity, which is touched with a considerable degree of uncertainty, the strength in finding a joint approach to assessment is realised. Echoing one part of the Scottish Referendum debate the SLF are a union that is definitely 'better together'

We have focussed on supporting the raising of school performance. In particular this year the governors of our institutions signed-up to a rigorous process of accountability and supported self-evaluation. It was our first year of 'trio visits' in which three headteachers support and robustly challenge the school- evaluation of their peers.

These are not cosy chats – they involve scrutiny of the RAISE data and current information with quality assurance provided through Steve Houghton or Enid Fraser. The trio discussions are similar to an Ofsted inspection with the advantage that the SLF officer present is assimilating the information into the support package that will address any weakness and celebrate strengths. The deployment of support between schools has been evaluated for its impact and this year has been 100% positive.

We reaffirmed our commitment to supporting subject networks through provision of time release for each group leader, and with each school prioritising the release of staff to attend the network meetings. The excellent work of the groups includes sharing good ideas, tackling national and local subject issues and arranging professional development for staff.

This year the School Centred Initial Teacher Training scheme has been developed and added to the SLF teaching school commitment to training the teachers of the future. CPD Training events included our Federation Day as well as an increasing number of courses for SLF governors reflecting the increasing expectations being placed upon our governing bodies.

Common Federation themes for 2015 onwards will include the effective use of the pupil premium to increase the progress of our disadvantaged students who underachieve compared to their peers, the provision of highly valued training for staff and governors, and new curriculum and assessment arrangements. All of this will be framed in a context of nationally decreasing education-funding which will be a challenge to us all.

We are charged with a great responsibility as leaders in educating our young people and I would like to thank the SLF officers, governors of our schools and staff for their work in helping to achieve the best education for the students in our care.

Federation Staff changes from 1 September 2015

Enid Fraser finally, after a year of threatening to do so, finally retired this summer. Her role has been taken on by Miriam Bailey. Miriam is also leading the SLF inclusion work and chairs the Inclusion Advocates and the Student Engagement and Pastoral Support Group.

We are pleased to welcome Helen Gaunt to the South Lakes Federation and Teaching School in a consultancy capacity. Helen is a former Headteacher and lead OFSTED inspector and will be working with us for the equivalent of three days per week to provide additional capacity in relation to school improvement and associated professional development and training.

Steve Houghton has also reduced his working week to four days.

The Federation is very grateful to Jane Henderson and Mick Gallop for their support last year during a period of transition. Jane continues to support the Initial Teacher Training and Newly Qualified Teachers

School to School support / peer reviews: Reports Steve Houghton

Our annual trio reviews were completed by the 6th November the outcomes of which will be shared with governors through the usual school channels. In the case of three schools (Kirkby Stephen GS, The Queen Katherine School and Dallam) and at the request of Headteachers, a more comprehensive two day review took place including lesson observations, discussions with senior, Middle Leaders and students. In all three extended reviews members of the peer review team interviewed a cross section of the governing body as part of the process. In addition to Headteachers we were pleased to include two deputy heads in the review process and both have described their involvement as an invaluable professional development opportunity.

We are currently engaged in a series of follow up activities to support our schools in addressing some of the improvement priorities identified in the reviews. Where appropriate this includes brokering deployment from subject specialists

across our partnership. As an added refinement to procedures SLF colleagues will be re-visiting schools in the spring term to gauge progress against issues identified in autumn.

Helen Gaunt writes:

My journey this term, as well as to some of the most beautiful parts of Cumbria, has been along a steep learning curve in discovery of the ways of working and the many and wide ranging partnerships that exist within and beyond the South Lakes Federation.

I have had the pleasure of visiting schools and academies and meeting dozens of dedicated staff, hundreds of welcoming students and groups of committed governors. Alongside these visits, I have attended a range of different cross-school network groups and meetings, for example LASL (just one of the acronyms I have had to interpret this term), as well as taking part in training events and school-to-school peer reviews.

As a relative newcomer to the Federation, I have been inspired by the genuine openness and willingness of colleagues to share information and expertise across the full range of schools, not just within the Federation but more widely across schools in Cumbria, Lancashire and beyond.

During my career in education, I have been fortunate to gain a wealth of experience through my work with many individuals and partnerships of schools and academies, in numerous areas, and through my work with a variety of education authorities. Although the principles of improving schools and developing accountability through peer review and school-to-school support is increasingly common (and is encapsulated within ASCL's document, *Leading the Way: Blueprint for a Self-Improving System*) different bodies are at very different stages of development. From some quarters (by which I mean certain authorities and individual school leaders) there appears to be a resistance to taking all of the steps that are needed to fully commit and a seeming lack of openness and trust. Where I have witnessed this, the mutual benefits that can so readily be gleaned from such collaborative endeavours are not being achieved.

ASCL's document states, 'The focus shifts from central direction (or 'mandating adequacy') to 'unleashing greatness' in schools themselves –

working collaboratively to improve the quality both of teachers entering the profession and existing teachers, cultivating peer learning within schools and between them, encouraging innovation to discover future leading practices and ultimately ownership of outcomes and the quality of education by the profession’.

From my relatively short involvement in the South Lakes Federation, and with LASL, it is my view that the peer review system, the sharing of talent across schools and the collaborative commitment to ensuring high quality provision for all young people is certainly having a positive impact in so many ways. I also believe that these partnerships are good examples of what ASCL is talking about in its document about a self-improving system.

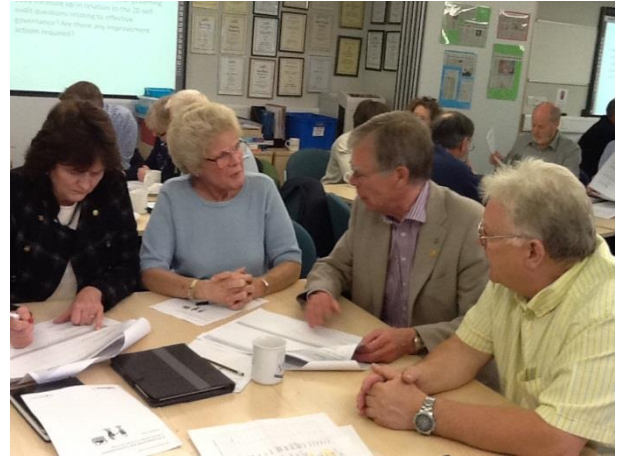
I feel privileged to be working among such talented professionals who are intent on doing ‘the right things’ for young people and ‘developing the whole person’, not simply focusing on academic outcomes or Ofsted judgements. However, we still have to work within a system with external accountability measures and, while some might say they don’t just want to jump through Ofsted hoops, surely we all believe in our moral duty to strive to help all young people, whatever their background, individual circumstance or ability, to be the best they can be. Peer reviews and school to school support are helping us focus on so doing and I believe, from a current position of relative strength, we are set in 2016 to raise the bar even further.

Governor Training: Reports Steve Houghton

30 Governors attended a training session in September, led by Helen, on the new OFSTED framework with particular reference to the role of governors in the process and the types of question they are likely to be asked. From governor evaluations we know that our training has been well received and at the moment are fielding a series of requests for further training from governing bodies across the partnership. We have opened discussions with the Local Authority as to whether their governor service team would be open to the possibility of jointly leading training sessions alongside ourselves so that we can contextualise training in a more bespoke way to better meet the needs of our partnership of

schools. We have received a positive response including the development of a condensed programme for new governors (2.5- 3 hours) as opposed to the current one day model.

Photos from a recent Governor training event:



Teaching School re-designation: Reports Steve Houghton

Colleagues may recall that we were designated as cohort 1 teaching school four years ago through the gateway application of Queen Elizabeth School. As a cohort 1 teaching school (only 100 teaching schools were originally designated and for some time we were the only Teaching School in the county) our work has been closely scrutinised across the strands of school to school support, CPD, research and development and Initial Teacher Training. This has included six full day evaluation visits from Sir John Dunford. In his visits John has also taken time to meet with some governor representatives to gauge their views on the work of our partnership. After four years we were subject to a rigorous evaluation process and are happy to report that we have been re-designated as a Teaching School and have secured core funding of £40,000 to support our work for at least another year.

Initial teacher Training (ITT): Reports Jane Henderson

Although we are still working with the University of Cumbria core PGCE trainees and supporting the West Coast SCITT, 2015-16 saw the launch of the South Cumbria SCITT. Housed at the Centre for Leadership and Learning at QKS, the SC SCITT Board members have worked hard to develop a first rate programme for its cohort of 12 PGCE trainees (5 of whom are School Direct trainees within the SLF, based at Dallam School for their second placement). Staff from across the alliances and SLF partners are delivering the programme and placement support has been at the heart of the SLF Schools' involvement. Links with the Blackburn and Darwen Schools and Conference style deliveries using our SLEs and RQTs have enabled us to lead on all educational themes including differentiation, SEN/D, EAL and work scrutiny. It remains a time of change and an important transitional period as 'we' become the educator trainers but the vision to coordinate outstanding teacher training across the south of Cumbria is actually becoming a reality for us.

Provision for Newly Qualified and Recently Qualified Teachers (NQT/RQT): Reports Jane Henderson

In September 2014, Ofsted updated their framework to include a focus on how schools challenge, monitor, support and assess their NQTs. This provided the SLF with an opportunity to review our induction process. Ofsted inspectors can now meet with NQTs and assess the effectiveness of the support put in place, including targets, which may have been set by the Initial Teacher Training provider with whom the NQT trained. The induction period marks a new phase of learning and development for any one new to the profession and this term, 14 NQTs have newly registered with us as an appropriate body. In November, we begin the first of a series of conference days designed to support their school induction. On these occasions, lead staff from primary and secondary schools use a cross-phase delivery to work with the newest recruits to SLF schools in a collegiate way.

The quality of mentoring is also being monitored and, on October 23rd, we delivered a mentor training for 12 staff from placement schools (and a further 9 staff have attended twilights) to enable us to review our provision and set the benchmark for all mentors to obtain certification for this training. We are agreed that a formal structure is vital in ensuring that the support drives the improvement of the NQT during the school induction. SLF mentors and NQT induction staff are aiming to ensure that schools have structures in place to get the best of our NQTs for the benefit of all involved.

Similarly, the end of the induction period means taking increased responsibility for the teacher's professional development, often as an introduction to the school's performance management arrangements. For the RQT, a bespoke professional development programme will be agreed which will enable RQTs to work across SLF schools to get a flavour of how each school's ethos supports and enhances the professional opportunities on offer. Some of our RQTs are now passing on what they have learned as either training deliverers, new school-based ITT tutors or induction tutors - some of the most effective professional development activities we can offer in the SLF.

CPD / Subject Networks: Reports Steve Houghton

We are again running termly meetings of our subject networks in the E-bacc subjects of MFL, Science, English, Maths, Geography and History. There is a central focus on life after levels with a drive to establish a system which tracks back from GCSE criteria into KS 3 to establish the necessary foundations for future success. We have again funded each network to the equivalent of nine days supply cover. Primarily this money is used to fund release time for our network leads to plan for meetings and support the delivery of priorities emerging from these meetings.

On the 23rd October our annual training day combined some school based sessions with an opportunity to address area wide issues. Approximately 400 colleagues from across the partnership attended a range of workshops including:

SEN - the code of practice in practice. Emotional development and well-being. Social stories and visual interventions

Maths -Evaluating learning over time. Lower ability and the new GCSE. Numeracy across the school. What makes an effective intervention in Maths?

English - Assessment after levels. An opportunity for colleagues from across the partnership to moderate work using new criteria

Science - Practical sessions hosted at Lancaster University. The challenges of the new GCSE specs (progress and attainment, preparing for linear courses, strengthening practical work, meetings with exam board reps)

MFL - Developing a collective approach to life without levels

History - Developing a collective approach to life after levels. History Academics from Durham, Liverpool and Lancaster Universities meeting with sixth form students and staff to look at topics including- The cold War, Post war Britain, the French and Russian Revolutions (a comparative study)

Geography - Engagement and feedback in the geography classroom

Performing Arts - Target setting and feedback in the performing arts

Visual arts - Assessment after levels. The use of critical and contextual studies

Computer Science - Going beyond simple algorithms

RE - Introduction to in depth Islam.

PE - Preparing for GCSE and A level PE

The majority of the sessions were led by lead teachers and SLEs from within the partnership.

Inclusion Advocates: Reports Miriam Bailey

The inclusion advocates group of the SLF has been in existence for over nine years. The group is comprised mainly of deputy and assistant head teachers, school based education welfare staff, representatives from Cumbria LA and our local Pupil Referral Unit in Barrow. Inclusion advocates meet at least once a half term, usually monthly.

The main purpose of the group is to:

1. Agree school places for 'hard to place' pupils such as the permanently excluded or those who have been out of education for some time.
2. Consider applications from schools for a student placement at the Pupil Referral Unit, (PRU), in Barrow.
3. Consider strategies for managing those at risk of exclusion.
4. Agree managed moves of students at risk of permanent exclusion between the Federation schools.
5. Disseminate best practice in inclusion.

Three young people who have been through the managed move process now have permanent places at the receiving schools, having made a successful transition.

Two 'hard to place' students have had their educational provision agreed. There are currently four students from SLF schools on the roll of the PRU and four more have part-time placements.

There is now only one alternative provision course running which is an Art course which is attended by four students. In the past there have been several other, highly regarded courses such as Mountain Bike Maintenance and Woodland Management. Unfortunately the current financial context means that these can no longer run.

Student Engagement and Pastoral Support (SEPS) Group: Reports Miriam Bailey

This group now meets half termly, usually following the Inclusion Advocates' meeting. The purpose of the group is to disseminate best practice and strategic planning in the SLF relating to pastoral support.

Agenda items include topics such as 'Prevent Duty' which is on the government's priority list to address radicalisation and British Values; the changes proposed by the LA to the Fair Access Protocol; an audit of training needs for classroom strategies for young people who have autistic traits; 'supervision' of pastoral staff, particularly those who deal with safeguarding matters.

SENCo Group: Reports Pete Weston

There was a time when, if you had a problem or needed advice, you could pick up the phone and speak to someone from the local authority; sadly those days seem to have passed. Fortunately the Federation offers a framework where colleagues can come together to share ideas and seek support and guidance.

I help to coordinate the South Lakes Federation SENCo group. We meet approximately three times a year to share ideas and resources, seek advice and generally support each other. It is always a struggle to get time out of our respective secondary schools to meet, but it is worth the effort. In the absence of the support network which the County once provided, my SENCo colleagues and I find our meetings invaluable. It is great to be able chat to friends and colleagues who share the same challenges.

Over the last eighteen months there have been plenty of challenges. New legislation and the

resultant 'Code of Practice' (Special Educational Needs and or Disability) have given us all plenty to think about. Being able to work through some of these issues with colleagues has been invaluable.

The combined buying power of the SLF has allowed us purchase resources and training at a far more competitive cost than would have been possible acting alone. The recent SLF training day was great success. It enabled Learning Support staff from across the federation to meet and learn together.

If you fancy finding out more about the work of the SENCo, please feel free to come along and join us at our next meeting (Thursday 4th Feb). Just make sure you remember to bring some cake!

Concluding remarks from Miriam Bailey:

I hope you have enjoyed reading this annual report and newsletter and that it has given you an informed view of the work of the federation. Please contact us if you need more details or have contributions to make to the next newsletter.

The central team continues its aim of offering an excellent service. I know I speak for everyone in recording thanks to Sarah Platt who keeps a close eye on our spending and patiently tries to make us all more efficient; Jane Henderson, who works with such interest and dedication on so many different fronts including training and development, ITT and NQT and RQT induction and support. Last but not least the expanded school improvement team: Helen Gaunt and Steve Houghton, who support schools and network groups so effectively to fulfil their remit.

It is always good to work with new colleagues who are so busy every day in their own schools but who always bring something new to us. We are grateful for their valuable contribution to the work of the Federation.

