



Federation News November 2016

**Incorporating the
Annual Report
2015 - 2016**

SLF Annual Report 2015 - 2016

Newsletter November 2016

Directors and Institutions, 2015-16

Mr A Lund, Appleby School
Dr P Williams, Cartmel Priory School
Mr W Bancroft Dallam School
(Vice Chair: September 2015 – August 2016)
Mr P Blackburn, John Ruskin School
Mr G Wilkinson, Kendal College
Mr P Hyman, Kirkbie Kendal School
Mrs R Houston, Kirkby Stephen Grammar School
Mr A Cunningham, The Lakes School
Mr C Clarke, Queen Elizabeth School
Mr S Wilkinson, The Queen Katherine School
Mr J Hayes, The Queen Katherine School
Mrs J Fletcher Sandgate School
(Chair: September 2015– August 2016)
Dr J Greene, Settlebeck School
Ms K Fox, University of Cumbria

Introductory remarks from Dr J Greene

SLF Chair 2015 - 16

2015 – 16 brought fresh challenges for the SLF; another new OfSTED framework; the need to bring more rigour to our school improvement programme; life after levels; new progress measures for schools and the accountability framework; the introduction of new GCSE specifications in English and maths, with other curriculum areas to follow and ongoing work in 'life after levels'.

As always we have focused on raising our schools' performance and a colleague new to the SLF (Helen Gaunt) has brought fresh experience and rigour to our school improvement procedures, whether that be through the established 'trio visits' or a more detailed review of a school's performance over two days. Helen and Steve have also undergone pupil premium training and some schools have had pupil premium reviews to ensure that disadvantaged children are able to make similar progress to that of their peers.

Subject network groups are expanding in number; colleagues appreciate the opportunity to discuss and standardise approaches and assessment in a world without levels and changing GCSE specifications. While English Baccalaureate (Ebacc) subjects, as well as Inclusion, SEND, Post 16 and Careers and Guidance, now have an established routine of meetings, other subject leads are keen to have the same opportunities to meet and discuss developments which affect their

areas. Headteachers have confirmed their commitment to these groups by providing release time so that colleagues can meet on a regular basis.

The School Centred Initial Teacher Training scheme is an important resource for the SLF as part of the teaching school commitment to training the teachers of the future. The recruitment of candidates matches, if not exceeds, national averages and secures suitable future employees for SLF schools.

The SLF continues its programme of CPD Training with the October Federation Day as well as a number of courses for SLF governors including the White Paper, accountability measures, training for new governors and the new OfSTED framework, all reflecting the increasing expectations being placed upon our governing bodies.

The challenge for all of our schools, and the Federation continues to be the nationally decreasing funding for education. Nonetheless, without exception, colleagues strive to ensure that our young people can access the best education available. Schools must now ensure that there are 'diminishing differences between students' from a range of abilities and backgrounds with a focus on disadvantaged students. Progress 8 is the latest accountability measure and our schools will sometimes have to make a choice as to how they organise their curriculum so as to allow young people access to the subjects which have been identified as the most important to demonstrate progress. One thing is for sure, the educational landscape is constantly changing and developing and without the support network of the SLF, many of our schools would find the challenges even more significant than they are dealing with them as a collective. Undoubtedly we are 'better together'.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our colleagues in schools as well as SLF officers who enable the wheels and cogs of the partnership to run smoothly and provide the core of support for our schools. As I now move on to a new role in the north-east, I know that I will miss the support and collegiality that is always a part of belonging to the SLF.

School to School support: reports Steve Houghton

We continue to refine and improve our Autumn Term peer review visits. This year we have incorporated a tour of the host school into the process to enable us to talk to teachers and students about their work. Most Autumn Term reviews last for a morning or afternoon but on request we have been able to extend our visit

to two days to allow for a more comprehensive overview of individual school performance in preparation for an imminent OFSTED inspection. By the end of the Autumn Term four schools within the partnership will have had extended two day peer review visits which in the majority of cases include conversations with representatives from the governing body.

As well as providing an overview of school performance the visits are essential in helping us to pinpoint additional areas of support required by individual schools which can then be brokered through conversations with partnership Heads. This might include follow on visits from other Heads of Department or support for a whole school priority such as Pupil Premium strategies and developing good practice in relation to marking and feedback for example.

Whilst identifying individual school improvement priorities we're also able to identify common issues affecting a number of schools. Two emerging themes this year are the need to develop further extended writing skills, particularly for boys, across all areas of the curriculum and to continue to adjust methodologies and approaches to accommodate what is looking like a very hectic schedule of summer examinations for our year 11 students. We are also mindful of the fact that the move away from modular testing and coursework to a focus on end of course examination will put a strain on the emotional health and well-being of young people. We will be focussing on sharing good practice across the partnership to help address these two themes.

We will continue to supplement our Autumn Term review meeting with a briefer spring term review of progress session with leadership teams of partnership schools. Twice termly meetings of the SLF Executive Group continues to monitor school performance across our partnership.

Strategic Groups and Subject networks – Context: reports Steve Houghton

Whilst education seems to be in a constant state of flux we are aware of the fact that we are presently in a particularly acute position which is placing pressure on both staff and students alike. A cursory look at the list below emphasises the scale of change impacting on schools

- GCSE reform including new exam board specifications, in many cases the removal of coursework to be replaced by end of course

examination, the change from A*- G grades to be replaced by a 1-9 system with a raising of the bar in terms of what might constitute a good pass and a subsequent degree of uncertainty in terms of reporting progress to young people and their parents.

- A level reform, new specifications and the decoupling of AS levels from A2.
- Complete change of the assessment process at the end the primary phase with increasing numbers of children entering secondary education below the new expected standard
- The removal of levels at Key Stage 2 and 3 and the need to develop alternative systems for tracking and target setting in the early years of secondary schooling
- New school accountability measures (Progress 8 and Attainment 8) and the need to get the balance right between personalised provision and the need to not disadvantage our schools in terms of DFE performance tables
- A growth in demand for pupil well-being and welfare services
- Uncertainties over structural changes such as Multi Academy Trusts with privatised Academy Chains hovering on our borders

..... All within the context of diminishing financial resources

In such a situation it is vital for organisations such as ourselves to facilitate opportunities for subject networks and strategic groups to meet to share ideas, strategy and workload to help each other navigate our way across this ever changing landscape. The work of our groups in responding to this challenges is outlined in the following sections.

Subject Networks: reports Steve Houghton

For the past three years we have facilitated meetings of subject networks for the E-bacc areas of Maths, English, History, Geography, Science and Modern Foreign Languages alongside meetings for co-ordinators of Special Educational Needs.

To support their work Heads have agreed to some afternoon release time in the autumn, spring and summer terms. At the request of Heads we have increased the number of subject networks to include Drama, RS, Visual Arts, Music, PE, Technology and Computing and additional release time will also be provided for Heads of Department in those curriculum areas to meet on a termly basis. All groups have focussed on developing a consistent approach to

gauging pupil progress in response to changes highlighted earlier including creating opportunities to moderate student work across all our schools. Two Primary colleagues have attended moderation events in Maths and English.

Data Group: reports Steve Houghton

The data group continues to meet on a termly basis. The group has played a lead strategic role in formulating a broad cross partnership approach to target setting and monitoring student progress across subject areas. In simple terms we have tried to develop a "flight path" of progress from the end of primary education through to GCSE asking subject networks to ensure that the work and assessments in the early secondary years build a firm foundation for future GCSE success

A meeting with Governors in the summer term was led by Phil Houghton (the data manager for QES), where we attempted to disentangle the complexities of the new accountability measures including Progress 8 and Attainment 8.

At the time of writing Jim Fuller (Dallam School and member of the data group) is in the process of submitting a bid to secure funding for a research project to look at the efficient use of data within schools to try and help alleviate excessive workload for staff. If successful we are hoping to work alongside a Teaching School in the Oxford area.

We have welcomed Andy Hyde, Headteacher from Milnthorpe Primary School, who attended one of our meetings to discuss tracking in KS2.

Curriculum Group: reports Steve Houghton

Our curriculum leaders meet on a termly basis. At our Autumn Term meeting we welcomed Louise Phillippe from Edexcel to give us an update on the Examination Board response to changes in GCSE and A level.

Alison Wilkinson (QES) was able to update the group on Studio School developments which presents an exciting opportunity to provide a broad curriculum offer to counter balance the potential narrowing of the curriculum presented by the new progress measures.

Kirkbie Kendal School has taken an opportunity to engage with the PIXL project, a school improvement initiative that has proved to be highly effective in London. Mark Harris, our curriculum SLE, will give

regular updates to the group on the progress being made with this project.

Ian Walker spoke about plans for John Ruskin School to federate with a group of neighbouring primary schools and the potential to develop further staffing and curriculum links with primary colleagues.

We continue to offer vocational curriculum provision with Kendal College for 27 year 10 and 19 year 11 students in Hair and Beauty, Motor Vehicle Maintenance and Construction.

In future meetings it is our intention to:

- a) Ask a primary school to host a meeting on their site so that we can observe curriculum provision, standards, teaching and learning in a primary context. This will help us to better prepare for the curriculum needs of pupils when they enter our schools in year 7.
- b) Explore the potential to liaise with Lancaster University to host a meeting on their site. We have good links with the science research centre but are keen to develop further links with other curriculum areas.
- c) Share ways in which we are supporting the emotional health and well-being of young people in our schools.
- d) "Exam stamina". Preparing young people for the increased focus on end of course examinations

PD Group: reports Steve Houghton

The PD group meets on a termly basis. At our first meeting we shared evaluations of our area wide training day which were overwhelmingly positive. In addition we considered the ways in which we might alleviate the last minute rush to organise the day which places a lot of pressure on network leads. The group recommends that we set on one side in mid-September a preparation day for network leads.

We also received updates from Jane on ITT, NQT and RQT developments.

For future meetings it is our intention to:

- a) Invite a primary colleague to a meeting to discuss the work they do in encouraging extended writing across the curriculum. Ian walker (JR) will outline the work he has done around this area.
- b) Through a case study approach explore strategies for dealing with particular issues relating to improving teaching and learning.

- c) Share the ways in which we record the outcomes from lesson observations.
- d) Share strategies relating as to how we try to ensure an effective response from pupils to feedback provided teachers. This point will link to the recent workforce reform document on marking
- e) Show and tell session. Something we've done that we are pleased with.

Initial teacher Education (ITE):

Reports Jane Henderson

2015- 16 was the inaugural year for the South Cumbria SCITT. All the PGCE trainees (with the exception of one who has intercalated) gained QTS and obtained teaching posts (2 within SLF schools) or TA responsibilities in schools. We continue to work closely with University of Cumbria core PGCE trainees and supporting the West Coast SCITT and are this year working with 14 SC SCITT trainees. Once again, the SC SCITT Board members – we welcome new members Sue Leech from Dallam and Ian Walker from John Ruskin School – are working hard to develop a first rate programme for our current trainees to include an emphasis on key educational themes including EAL, pupil progress and assessment in our delivery.

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. In current weeks, the SC SCITT management team have met with Dr Elizabeth Foster from NCTL to evaluate and improve the entitlement for our trainees in preparation for the Ofsted inspection which will take place in summer 2017 and autumn 2017. It remains a time of change and an important transitional period as 'we' become the educator trainers and in doing so we have introduced an accredited mentoring training award which will enable many of our staff to become mentors and coaches in line with the new Mentoring Standards introduced in July 2016.

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

The development of the SLF NQTs induction and support programme continues to improve as we continue to assess the effectiveness of the support by focusing on target setting, which may have been set by the Initial Teacher Training provider with whom the NQT trained, and targeted support action planning when necessary. The induction period is a new phase of learning and development for any one new to the

profession and this term, 11 NQTs have newly registered with us as an appropriate body. In November, we will be holding a Conference event designed to support the NQTs' school induction. Lead staff from primary and secondary schools will use a cross-phase delivery to work with our newest recruits to SLF schools in a collegiate way.

The quality of mentoring provided the SLF ITE/NQT strategy group with a key focus last year and this year we have introduced a series of regular inset events in the meeting time held each half term. This is supported by a wider alliance mentoring training programme led by David Mason. formerly of the University of Cumbria, to introduce an accredited mentoring training award which will enable many of our staff to become mentors and coaches in line with the new Mentoring Standards introduced in July 2016. The first of these twilight events was held on September 28th. The next will be held on January 18th and the third on May 11th. This has enabled us to 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 needed is available for all NQTs during their school induction. SLF mentors and NQT induction staff are aiming to ensure that SLF schools have structures in place for the benefit of all involved. It is hoped that most of our Professional Mentors will be accredited with QSM – Qualified Mentor Standards – for the next academic year to enable this to be the case.

As our NQTs take responsibility for their own professional development as RQTs, 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 some of the most effective professional development activities we can offer in the SLF.

Inclusion Advocates: Reports Miriam Bailey

The Inclusion Advocates group of the SLF has been in existence for over ten 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.

This group plays an increasingly active role in ensuring that young people can access their educational entitlement. With the demise of funding for alternative provision (there is only one alternative provision course running which is an Art course which is attended by four students) for vulnerable young people, there has sadly been a rise in those who have been permanently excluded from their schools, despite best efforts. However, once they are deemed ready for reintegration then IA's work together to find the most suitable places.

So far this academic year two young people have secured permanent places through the managed move process and fourteen 'hard to place' students have had their educational provision agreed.

There are currently six students from SLF schools on the roll of the PRU and two more have part-time placements.

Pastoral and Safe-Guarding Group: Reports Miriam Bailey

This group meets regularly after the Inclusion Advocates' meeting. The purpose of the group is to disseminate best practice and strategic planning in the SLF relating to pastoral support.

In light of the many responsibilities now placed at the door of schools regarding child protection and pastoral items which include the prevent agenda, child sexual exploitation and a vast range of safeguarding matters, this group provides an opportunity to share feedback from courses and conferences and any new and developing information that schools must be aware of and ready to action. Every opportunity is taken to invite colleagues from other agencies to share their knowledge and experience with the group.

SENCo Group: Reports Pete Weston

The SLF SENCOs group has continued to meet regularly over the last 12 months.

A common theme throughout our meetings has been SEND funding. Reductions in direct funding, EHCP funding and the impact of pressures on the wider school budget seem to hit the most needy hardest. Where possible, the SENCOs group has been able to exert some pressure and has been moderately successful in mitigating these impacts at a local level.

We were very pleased to be able to invite Diana Crewsdon of the South Cumbria Dyslexia Association to deliver some training at the SLF training day in October. Diana spoke on the subject of Dyslexia Friendly Teaching. This was very well received by the fifty or so delegates from various schools within the federation who attended. Many people commented that they wished their colleagues from school had been able to attend to hear some great advice.

This year seems to be more hectic than ever. My SENCO colleagues report that they have never been busier. I'm sure that this is a sentiment that is echoed throughout the Federation.

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 finances, ensures that October Training Day places are allocated effectively, as well as a whole host of administrative matters. We appreciate her patience and efficiency.

Our colleague, 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, plays a significant role in ensuring that the forthcoming generations of new teachers have access to the best possible training.

Helen Gaunt has brought a valued dimension to school improvement. With her wealth of Ofsted experience she has supported schools in understanding the need

for rigorous efforts to maintain and embed school improvement and accountability.

Last but not least Steve Houghton, the longest-serving member of the SLF team whose tireless efforts in school support and improvement, his ability to broker extra provision, his broad and in-depth knowledge of the SLF schools as well as his relentless good humour, make him an invaluable and pivotal associate.

Undoubtedly, the South Lakes Federation benefits from its longevity; considerable trust and co-operation has been established over more than eleven years. Its success lies in no small measure with the colleagues who not only work tirelessly in their own schools, but who are so enthusiastic about making a contribution to the SLF as a whole. We are grateful for their valuable contribution to the work of the Federation.

From September 2016 the membership of the SLF changes which brings a new set of challenges. However, there is no doubt that the core strength that exists in the organisation will ensure that it continues to thrive in the future.

