



Lead School Implementation

Units & Designation Review Information Bulletin

Welcome to the Autumn 2009 edition of the Lead School Implementation Information Bulletin. The pilot of the Lead School model in the Phase One areas of Ashford, Shepway, Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley started in April 2009. The purpose of these Information Bulletins is to provide you with regular updates on progress and in particular the first hand experience of professionals and schools in the pilot areas

During the last few months, the project team has been meeting with a wide range of professionals in the Phase One areas listening to views and responding to questions and concerns. As a result, we are aware of some of the very real challenges professionals and schools are experiencing in implementing this new policy. There is a sample of the kind of feedback we are getting in this issue

In addition to lots of first hand accounts from front line staff, we have also included a focus on Disability Equality Schemes and the importance of improving inclusive practice in all mainstream schools if the Lead School policy is to succeed.

Autumn 2009

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From Specialist Unit to Lead School – Linden Grove - primary Lead School for Speech, Language and Communication in Ashford

At Linden Grove we are committed to continually assessing, evaluating and developing our effectiveness in meeting all pupils' needs. All pupils with statements for Speech Language and Communication Needs are based in mainstream classrooms and have been since September 2009. Their needs are met with support from a variety of staff including Speech Therapists, Specialist Teachers, Class Teachers and Teaching Assistants.

Currently we have 20 pupils with statements for Speech Language and Communication Needs. They are spread across Foundation, Key Stage One and Key Stage Two. They require differing amounts of specialist one to one and small group support. Differentiated and specialist support takes place within the mainstream classroom as far as is possible, however sometimes support is required to be carried out in a quiet, distraction free environment and we have three dedicated classrooms for this purpose.

Developing the inclusion of pupils with SLCN is in its early stages; our first area of focus is effective, positive communication between professionals, pupils and parents. This communication relates primarily to assessment, planning, differentiation and resources. Staff supporting pupils with SLCN have weekly "in house" staff meetings to ensure each of these areas remain a focus. Speech Therapists and Specialist Teachers are beginning to meet with Class Teachers to plan learning. Regular formal and informal meetings with parents and staff as well as home –school liaison books aid communication. As part of our whole school development plan we are engaging pupils in their own assessment and linking this to planning.

As a lead school we have regular Task Group Meetings where a variety of professionals discuss strategies leading to long and short term plans which develop the school's capacity and effectiveness. Recent meetings have focussed on: professional liaison, the school environment,

differentiation, ICT, communication with parents, training and funding.

Out-reach and In-reach support for other schools is beginning to happen. This support is initially accessed through a Partnership Learning Review Meeting. Since September two schools have formally requested help and two schools have informally requested help. I have recently developed a feedback questionnaire for schools to complete after outreach/in reach, to gauge our effectiveness.

As we are still building our own capacity and expertise, what we can offer continues to develop. We are limited by resources such as time, funding and personnel. We are also mindful of our own school's large and "needy" SEN profile (currently 160 pupils on the SEN/AEN Register) and our requirement to meet our own school improvement targets.

Developing a Lead School for Speech Language and Communication Needs is an ongoing challenge which requires commitment from all stakeholders to create the best level of support for our school and others which we endeavour to help.

Sheonaid Clark

Lead Teacher

Linden Grove – Lead School for SLCN
Ashford

Disability Equality Scheme - A Legal requirement for all mainstream schools

Local Authority officers working to support the implementation of the Lead School policy have spent a lot of time during the last few months meeting Headteachers and SENCOs in all schools in the pilot areas. You can see our presentation on the unit review website (www.kent.gov.uk/unitanddesignationreview)

A key message and discussion point during these sessions has been the legal requirement on all schools to become more inclusive and to make the necessary changes and adaptations to accommodation or curriculum to include children with special educational needs. These proposed changes and development should be then reflected in the school's Disability Equality Scheme (DES). We are emphasising that the Lead School policy will not be successful unless all schools are meeting the legal requirements set out in the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and are working to improve their capacity to provide an education to children with special educational needs in their community. Lead Schools and specialist staff in the Local Children's Services Partnership team can provide advice, support and guidance to schools on meeting specific needs or planning a support package for an individual child. Changes to the way the curriculum is delivered or exploring the possibility of establishing small groups or a quiet

space for children who need some withdrawal time from a busy classroom are just some of examples of things schools need to be considering.

Kent County Council's Compliance Team is currently undertaking an audit to check that all schools have their DES in place. Schools can access more information on their legal responsibilities by reading the guidance for schools on the SEN Code of Practice produced by the Local Authority and available at http://www.kenttrustweb.org.uk/children/aenr_news.cfm.

In addition, there is a whole range of training and support available to schools. For more information you can make contact with your local Inclusion and Achievement advisor. Contact details are available on http://www.kenttrustweb.org.uk/ask8/ask8_inclusion.cfm

The Local Authority are in the process of developing a Single Equality Scheme details of which will be available shortly through the Schools E-Bulletin

AEN Leader at Langafel Lead School for Autism – North West Kent - Interview

Following feedback on the Information Bulletin we are including in each issue a profile on those involved in the Lead School Implementation project. We will include in this parents, children and professionals. This week we have been talking to Pamela Bell, AEN leader at Langafel Primary School which is Lead School for Autism in North West Kent (one of the pilot areas)

What is your role?

I am AEN Leader for Langafel CE Primary School and Teacher-in-Charge of the Autism Provision which is part of the school. Langafel is lead school for autism for primary.

Which areas of the county does your Lead School serve?

Langafel is situated in Longfield in North-West Kent. As Lead school we cover four partnerships: Dartford East, Dartford West, Gravesham and Swanley.

What impact has the Lead School project had on your role and your school?

Although Langafel has had an autism provision for about 12 years we have never had formal involvement in outreach services. There have always been enquiries, and professionals from other counties have viewed the provision, but these services were conducted through reputation, recommendation and word of mouth. Previous to Lead school I taught in the provision for 2 days per week and my 3 remaining days of the week were used for administrative purposes, observations, meeting parents etc.

Over the last few years I have been involved in planning and collaboration meetings with other professionals to develop the structure of services that can be offered. A major aim is to ensure that these services are used efficiently to support staff and pupils in local schools. I am no longer teaching in the classroom which means that 2 days per week can be dedicated to Lead School responsibilities. This time has been used to work with various professionals to deliver an ASD outreach service and to deliver training.

The pupils on the role of the autism provision have always had some inclusion time in the mainstream school. This has meant that the staff in the mainstream school have an awareness of the needs of pupils with ASD and of appropriate strategies. This knowledge and awareness has been reinforced through whole school Level 1 ASD training.

Can you tell us a bit about the range of specialist support available for children with Autism in your area?

The North-West area of Kent has a relatively large number of establishments and people with knowledge and experience in educating young people on the Autism Spectrum. As well as ourselves at Primary level there is the Spectrum Centre which forms part of Longfield Academy, Milestone School which is a special school and Rowhill School, another special school. All of these are geographically very close in Longfield or within a mile of Longfield. Further afield the Smile Centre which is part of Ifield Special School providing outreach and training. There are also specialist teachers and a speech and language therapist who provide support. Professionals from these establishments work together closely to provide an outreach service.

Do you think that the Lead School policy will improve outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs?

I am fully behind the values and philosophy of the concept of Lead School. I believe that all pupils have a right to equal provision and that in our area we provide a very good service. As with all things, improvements can be made and as time progresses more resources will become available and therefore further develop the service. However I feel that there will always be children where full inclusion in mainstream education is not an option and so the system will require some flexibility, The transition to the new process will not happen quickly so it is important to take this into account when the review of the changes take place. Overall I am optimistic and if everyone works positively then we can provide a system that benefits all children.

Lead School Implementation Pilot – Early Feedback and Frequently Asked Questions

What are we evaluating? – A reminder

The purpose of the pilot is to evaluate the main elements of the lead school model set out below. The full documents in each case are available on the Unit Review website –

www.kent.gov.uk/unitanddesignationreview

1. The model of delivery – set out in the policy statement
2. New funding arrangements – a new funding formula for Lead Schools and changes to contingency funding for all schools in Phase One
3. Quality of Lead School provision – as described in the Lead School Standards and the Criteria/Expectations of a Lead School for each need type

.4. How the policy works for children, parents and schools

What feedback are we getting so far?

Very different feedback in each locality

The feedback we are getting in North West Kent is different to the feedback in the other pilot areas of Ashford and Shepway. This is due to the fact that historically the spread of specialist unit provision across the county has been very inequitable. North West Kent compared to other parts of Kent has a lot of specialist unit places. Therefore the move to Lead Schools has had a bigger impact on parents and schools in this area. We are ensuring that the different experiences and concerns are reflected in the evaluation of the pilot

Concern that the model might need to be adapted for different need types

We are getting feedback on Lead Schools which is very specific to certain need types with suggestions on how the model of delivery could be adapted to suit children with particular needs. We will make sure that the evaluation includes a report on the outcome for each of the six need types covered by the policy – Autism, Speech, Language & Communication, Specific Learning Difficulties, Hearing and Visual Impairment and Physical Disabilities.

All schools need to be prepared to include children with special educational needs

Lead schools are keen to ensure that parents and schools in their locality do not assume that all children with Special Educational Needs will go to the Lead School. The policy assumes that children will attend their local mainstream school and where required receive support from the Lead School or other outreach service in the locality. This means that all mainstream schools need to be prepared to include children with special educational needs.

Concerns about pace of progress and the timetable

A common concern raised by schools and professionals is that implementation of the changes will take time. Stakeholders are therefore emphasising that when evaluating the pilot this fact must be taken into account.

Here are a few of the Frequently Asked Questions. We will post a full set of Questions and Answers next term on the website and publish them in our Spring issue of the Information Bulletin.

SENCO - How do we access lead school provision?

There are Lead School criteria for each need type. When a school has a concern about an individual child it is important to read these criteria to identify initially whether their needs meet the threshold for accessing specialist support from the Lead School or from another specialist service in the LCSP. Appendix c of the Lead School policy statement sets out clearly the steps that schools need to take to access Lead School provision. The policy statement and the criteria are both available on the Unit Review website

Parent – What is a Lead School?

A lead school is a mainstream school which has responsibility for providing a specialist service for a particular need type to all the other mainstream schools in one or more than one Local Children's Services Partnership (LCSP) areas. It specialises and has expertise in one of the following need types: Autism, speech, language and communication difficulties, specific learning difficulties, physical and medical difficulties, visual impairment and hearing impairment. Some lead schools specialise in more than one need type.

The main function of a lead school is to lead the process of developing expertise and confidence in schools within its assigned geographical area of responsibility. By developing the capacity of schools it will enable them to support and include children and young people with very severe and complex needs within their local community.

Lead School – What happens if the evaluation outcome is not positive

Implementing the policy in two areas of the county initially was a decision taken by KCC Cabinet members in response to the outcome of the first round of consultation during 2007. It was felt that the operational detail of the policy needed to be worked through and tested prior to countywide implementation. This is what is now happening in

the Phase One areas. Feedback on all aspects of the policy is being gathered on an ongoing basis. Whilst we cannot pre-empt the outcome of the evaluation, we would hope that the operational arrangements to implement the policy will be adapted and improved as a result of the pilot. If the outcome is negative on all aspects, it will then be a decision for Kent County Council Cabinet members as to the best course of action.

Effective Partnerships – Health and Education professionals working together at Pent Valley to deliver the Lead School model for children with SEN in Shepway

Pent Valley Technology College has lead status for Physical Disabilities, Visual impairment and Specific Learning Difficulties. For the purposes of the school community, which is now beginning to include a large number of students with EAL needs, and in recognition of the fact that KCC is intending to work alongside the school in trialling interventions, English as an Additional Language has been included as a Lead status, for planning purposes. We have appointed personnel to lead, manage and plan the four areas. Most staff have been appointed from within, although for VI, where it is increasingly difficult to appoint qualified staff, Pent Valley is working with Morehall Primary, the lead primary school to share the expertise of Sally Young, the lead teacher and deputy head.

Over the last year the **Strands of Support** have been developed using the initial letters of the school - **PVTC**. Each area has planned for Parents' Support (**P**) in various ways: signposting other agencies, coffee mornings, extended school meetings etc. The Virtual Support (**V**) is on the school website with links to information or useful sites. Email addresses have been made available for all lead personnel for parents, teachers and other agencies to access easily. Pent Valley has hosted various training courses over the last year for the Teachers' Support (**T**) in all areas. Courses have been offered throughout the local partnerships e.g. Sounds write courses (SpLD), IPEAL course (EAL), a VI awareness course, a posture training course with an accompanying booklet (PD) and a course for the teaching of PE to students with Physical

Disabilities which was offered Kent wide. The letter **C** stands for Children, obviously. In order to best support all children, in the school, the teaching assistants are being up-skilled as Pent Valley is sending more non teaching staff on courses both externally and in-house. Training has been delivered to all teaching staff through the school's inset sessions. The extra provisions offered to certain students are being amalgamated into an alternative programme of study e.g. horse riding, golf, cycling, gardening to allow for access to many more students in the school, to improve efficient use of resources and to ensure that students spend time with their peers.

The Occupational Therapist, Samar Abokhalar has been given a base in the school to facilitate her work in the local community. This is part of the plan for multi-agency working, with the school developing ever closer links with Shepway social services and the local primary care trust (EKPCCT).

The Physiotherapist, Maggie Guir has been working closely with the PE department, students with physical disabilities and their TAs to ensure best inclusive practice in the PE learning environment. Ms Guir has liaised with PV staff, spending time with TAs to ensure that the students they support are using the correct mobility equipment which allows them access to the curriculum in the best way possible, giving the students the greatest degree of freedom of movement whilst maximising their potential.

Pent Valley has been approached directly for outreach advice concerning the inclusion of students with physical disabilities in PE lessons, for support in teaching visually impaired students and for support with students with specific learning difficulties by local schools and from further afield in Kent.

Jane Allcock
Pent Valley Technology College
Shepway

How can I comment on the review?

Phase One areas:

We want to know what stakeholders in the pilot areas (Ashford, Shepway, Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley) think. If you live or work in one of these areas please complete one of our surveys. You can complete them online at the Unit Review website www.kent.gov.uk/unitanddesignationreview or you can email or call us and we'll send you a copy.

Countywide / You can comment by emailing:

UnitsDesignReview@kent.gov.uk

Please note: this is a generic email address that is checked daily for messages.

Or by contacting:

Marlene Morrissey—01622 694190
County AEN Manager (Resources)

Supporting schools and local partnerships are:

Suzanne Wilkins

Specialist Teaching Service Manager with lead responsibility for Physical and Sensory Impairment

Andrea White

Specialist Teaching Service Manager with lead responsibility for Communication & Interaction and Cognition & Learning

Parents may also wish to contact:

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