



National College for
Teaching & Leadership

Leadership of great pedagogy in teaching school alliances: final report

Teaching schools R&D network national
themes project 2012-14

Research Report

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Contents

List of figures	4
List of tables	4
Section 1: Executive summary	5
Section 2: Introduction and acknowledgements	9
Section 3: Methodology, tools and impact	10
Method	10
Tools	11
Examples of pedagogical impact	13
Section 4: Leadership learning	19
a) Leadership of cross-school pedagogy projects	20
Key message 1 - select appropriate projects	20
Key message 2 – engage schools (and their headteachers)	22
Key message 3 – scope and plan	24
Key message 4 – exercise flexibility	26
Key message 5 – empower middle leaders	28
b) Leadership within schools of pedagogy projects (related to cross-school pedagogy projects and programmes)	31
Key message 6 – ensure headteacher sponsorship	31
Key message 7 – designate senior leader champions	32
Key message 8 – focus on development	34
c) Leadership of great pedagogy at alliance level	36
Key message 9 – work to clear strategic priorities	36
Key message 10 – draw on skills differently	37
Key message 11 – align activity	41

Key message 12 – build trust and it will deepen and extend impact	42
Key message 13 – manage risks	44
Challenges	45
Section 5: Conclusions and questions	48
Conclusions	48
Strategic leadership questions	49
References	51
Appendix 1: Research summary	52
Appendix 2: alliances in section 4	57
Appendix 3: Example case studies	60
Appendix 4: Intervention toolkit	61

List of figures

Figure 1: Regional enquiry cluster method	11
Figure 2: Eight modest claims from the research evidence, 2012	12
Figure 3: Leadership of great pedagogy at three levels	19
Figure 4: Portswood case study – feedback from a variety of voices	35
Figure 5: Drawing on leadership skills differently to lead an institution and a partnership	40
Figure 6: Leadership challenges and actions	47
Figure 7: Firm findings	49

List of tables

Table 1: Examples of interventions and activities used by TSAs	14
Table 2: Alliance project focus	52

Section 1: Executive summary

This research and development (R&D) project has been one of three national projects for teaching school alliances (TSAs) and has focused on the leadership of great pedagogy, exploring the question '*How can leaders lead successful teaching school alliances which enable the development of consistently great pedagogy?*'

Section 3 of this report describes the methodology and tools that were used. The aim of the project has been to:

- support teaching schools to engage in R&D activities;
- provide opportunities for training, sharing expertise and wider dissemination of 'what works'; and
- facilitate a forum for networking between teaching school leaders and teachers so that they can learn from each other.

Thirty two TSAs were involved and were organised into eight regional enquiry clusters. The clusters met face-to-face every term, with half-termly check-in phone calls, facilitated by a member of the research team. Alliances identified a focus for their projects and devised research questions. They chose one or a small number of interventions or areas for action to test with the group of schools involved over a learning cycle. At the end of each cycle, the regional enquiry cluster met to discuss what happened and what they learned. Alliances captured the evidence of progress on their projects and the impact, and used a simple log to capture and update their reflections on their leadership learning. The cluster discussions then provided an opportunity for peer challenge and review.

Alliances had access to a number of tools:

- an 'intervention toolkit' developed by the research team (appendix 4);
- a log to reflect on and capture on-going learning about their activities, and also their leadership reflections;
- Professor David Hargreaves's maturity matrix for a TSA (Hargreaves, 2011, 2012); and
- *Leadership of great pedagogy in teaching school alliances: evidence from the literature* (Gu et al, 2012) developed by the research team from research literature.

Section 3 concludes with examples of the pedagogical impact of the projects undertaken by TSAs.

Section 4 of this report summarises the leadership learning from all the projects in the form of 13 key messages relating to three aspects:

- a) **Leadership of cross-school pedagogy projects:** what have we learned about the leadership of projects to develop pedagogy working across a group of schools?
- b) **Leadership within a school:** what have we learned about the leadership of projects to develop pedagogy working within a school?
- c) **Leadership of great pedagogy at alliance level:** what have we learned about the leadership of TSAs to help develop great pedagogy?

These 13 key messages represent our learning about the leadership of TSAs in developing great pedagogy: the leadership practices that TSAs have found that work. These key messages are explained using examples from the case study projects. The 13 key messages are as follows.

1. Select appropriate projects

Leaders need to identify projects that have a clear sense of mission and purpose. Projects need to be mainstream to improving teaching and learning and not seen as an optional add-on. The project might also build on successful previous projects or joint working.

2. Engage schools (and their headteachers)

Leaders need to be able to communicate the purpose of the project and secure support from headteachers in other schools. Leaders need to show how a wide range of schools are involved in leading and delivering the project or programme to avoid the charge that it is all about one school wanting to 'empire-build'.

3. Scope and plan

Leaders need to ensure that the development of a project is well-scoped (ie realistic and not over-ambitious) and that implementation is thought through. This will involve ensuring that the project is well designed, including looking at existing evidence on what works. If a project is to identify impact over time it needs to establish the starting point and put in place the processes for collecting data necessary to show progress and impact.

4. Exercise flexibility

Leaders need to be responsive to the particular context and needs of schools and open to flexing the nature of the project to suit those needs. They also need to respond to the learning that is captured during the life of the project. New schools may want to join the project or programme, and some schools may fall by the wayside. There might be personnel changes in the schools involved which might result in schools becoming more intensively involved or backing away.

5. Empower middle leaders

Leadership of the programme across schools will take off when middle leaders (and student leaders) are empowered. Several of our case study projects actively worked to distribute leadership to middle leaders in different schools, and several did this during the life of the projects. Building personal relationships is key to getting effective joint work going, though sometimes the relationships come out of doing something together.

6. Ensure headteacher sponsorship

Ensuring that heads within the schools own, support and champion a programme or project is important if it is really to take root and be effective. The project needs to be promoted by the head as supporting and underpinning other work or development activity around the key priorities, rather than it being seen as additional activity.

7. Designate senior leader champions

The importance of a senior leader (or ambitious middle leader) to drive the project forward and make it happen. An SLT-level (senior leadership team) champion can often be crucial in terms of co-ordination of the project, maintaining direction, progress chasing, and keeping people on board through regular and effective communications.

8. Focus on development

The benefits of leaders prioritising development over judgements when working on projects that involve classroom observations and teacher-to-teacher development activity on their pedagogical skills.

9. Work to clear strategic priorities

Leaders need a clear strategy and set of priorities to act as framework for commissioning and developing their projects. The project needs to be seen to fit with the TSA-wide priorities and aims.

10. Draw on skills differently

TSA leaders need to utilise skills and behaviours differently to develop great pedagogy across an alliance compared with a single organisation (ie school or federation). A different kind of system leadership is needed – while still being able to monitor progress, assess the impact of projects, and ‘not let things drift’. A number of the teaching schools reflected how the leadership of an alliance can only be brought about by negotiation, persuasion and invitation.

11. Align activity

Leaders need to align different strands of activity to ensure they are more than the sum of the individual parts. Leaders need to look at how they can align planned continuous

professional development (CPD) courses with a more school-based enquiry or classroom coaching-based focus.

12. Build trust and it will deepen and extend impact

Leaders should expect cross-school projects to help build social capital between schools and break down barriers between schools within a multi-academy trust or alliance. This was seen as fundamental by many of the teaching school leaders.

13. Manage risks

Alliance leaders may find that broader developments - the lead school in an alliance losing its 'outstanding' designation, re-organisation of staffing within an academy trust, or some schools within the alliance forming a multi-academy trust (MAT) - may destabilise or slow programmes / projects between schools.

Section 4 concludes by summarising a series of leadership challenges that were faced by the TSAs in undertaking their projects.

Section 5 summarises the learning from the project, updates on recent research literature, and poses five strategic questions about the future role of TSAs in leading R&D activity:

1. How can the Teaching School Council and TSAs articulate and lead a clear strategic vision for the role that TSAs will play in R&D over the next five years?
2. How can the role of TSAs in leading R&D complement TSAs role in developing and leading a school-led system?
3. How can government and TSAs create the necessary time and capacity to enable practitioners involved in or co-ordinating R&D activity to both carry out the work and have the time to reflect on their learning?
4. How can the leaders of TSAs use the opportunity of R&D activity to engage the currently un-engaged schools?
5. How can the leaders of TSAs make the most effective use of a variety of partners in developing this role?

Appendix 1 summarises the research focus for all the TSAs involved in the project. Appendix 2 lists the 13 key messages together with the TSAs which have been mentioned in the text as examples. A number of example case studies from alliances involved in the project have also been published alongside this report.

Section 2: Introduction and acknowledgements

This research and development (R&D) project has been one of three national projects for teaching school alliances (TSAs) covering three complementary themes that were agreed by the teaching schools R&D network in 2011. Theme 3 has focused on the leadership of great pedagogy, exploring the question *'How can leaders lead successful teaching school alliances which enable the development of consistently great pedagogy?'* (Themes 1 and 2 explored professional development and pedagogy and alliances were supported by University College London Institute of Education and Sheffield Hallam University).

The project was commissioned and has been supported by the National College for Teaching & Leadership (NCTL). The research team co-ordinating the project has comprised Isos Partnership (Simon Rea, Leigh Sandals and Natalie Parish), Robert Hill, and Professor Qing Gu (University of Nottingham).

TSAs were invited to apply to join the theme 3 project, the timing dependent on their TSA cohort: cohort 1 in February 2012, cohort 2 in June 2012, and cohort 3 in June 2013. 32 alliances from the three cohorts have been involved in the project. The alliances were invited to attend a 'kick-start' workshop at the NCTL to commence the project (cohort 1 in April 2012, cohort 2 in October 2012, and cohort 3 in September 2013). Full details about the TSAs and their projects are included in appendix 1.

The aim of the project has been to:

- support teaching schools to engage in R&D activities;
- provide opportunities for training, sharing expertise and wider dissemination of 'what works'; and
- facilitate a forum for networking between teaching school leaders and teachers so that they can learn from each other.

The research team greatly appreciates the involvement of all the TSAs in this project, in particular for the time they have made available, their enthusiasm for their own projects, and for sharing the learning from their work.

Section 3: Methodology, tools and impact

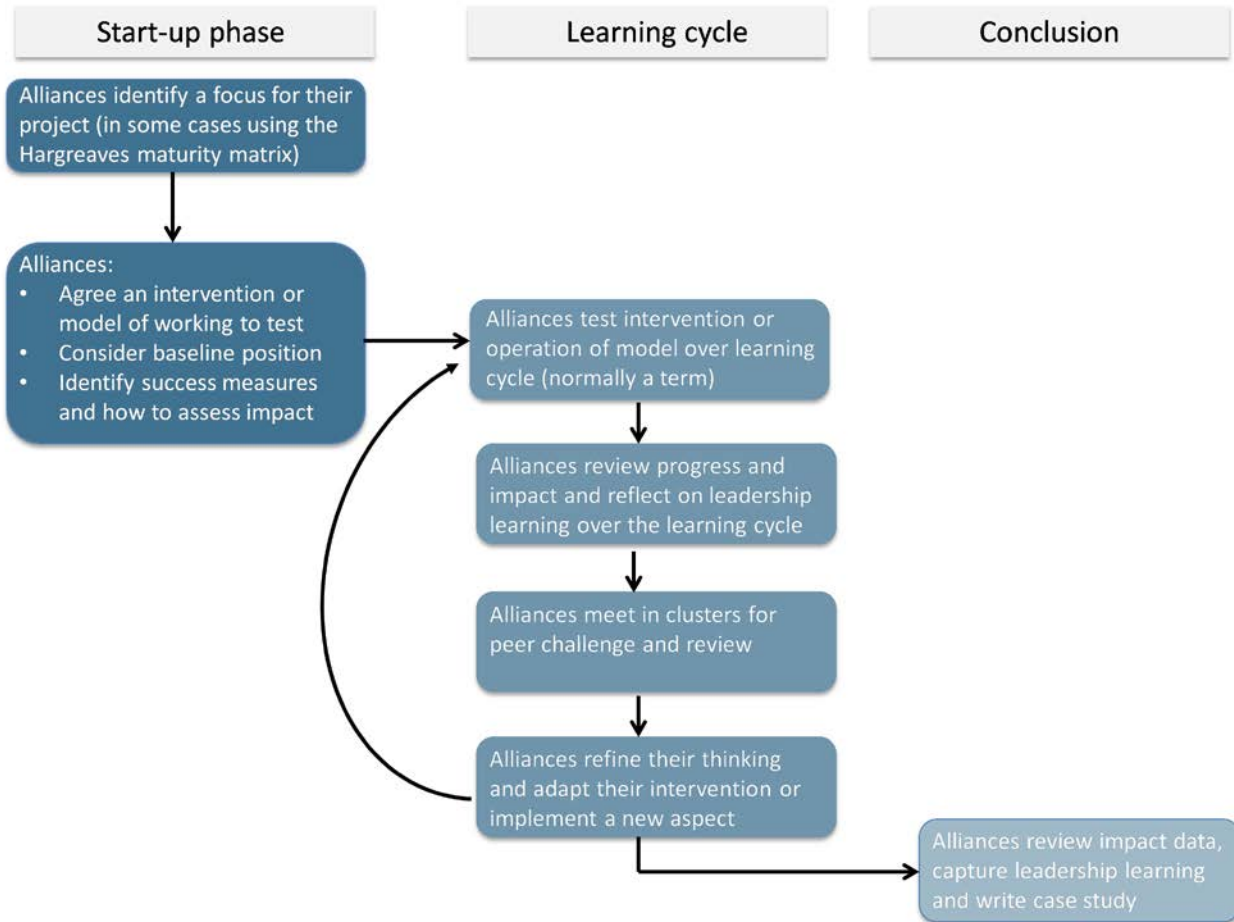
Method

The 32 TSAs working on theme 3 have been organised into eight regional enquiry clusters. These clusters are cross-phase and involve between three and five primary, secondary and special teaching schools. They have been organised regionally to facilitate relationships between the alliances and reduce travel times. The clusters met face-to-face every term, with half-termly check-in phone calls, facilitated by a member of the research team.

The process that each TSA has followed with the support of the research team has been:

- a) Alliances identified a focus for their projects and devised research questions.
- b) Alliances chose one or a small number of interventions or areas for action to test with the group of schools involved. They have considered what progress they want the intervention to help them make, considering the baseline and what they considered success might look like. At the same time, alliances thought about how to judge the impact of their work.
- c) Alliances then developed and tested the intervention, or an aspect of it, over a learning cycle.
- d) At the end of each cycle, the regional enquiry cluster met to discuss what happened and what they learned. In preparing for the cluster discussions, alliances captured the evidence of progress on their projects and the impact, considering what went well, what was not effective and where there were problems. At the same time, they used a simple log to capture and update their reflections on their leadership learning.
- e) The cluster discussions then provided an opportunity for peer challenge and review.
- f) Alliances refined their thinking and identified the focus of activity for the next cycle (either developing the same intervention or switching to another).
- g) Alliances have also been sharing findings and problems with each other during the course of the learning cycles.

Figure 1: Regional enquiry cluster method



In addition to this termly cycle with the clusters, schools have used the opportunities of national events organised by the NCTL to share learning between the clusters and to present the learning from their own projects.

Tools

TSA's have had access to a number of tools to support their activity during the projects.

The research team developed an 'intervention toolkit' (appendix 4) that gathered together examples of school improvement activities and interventions to improve pedagogy working across groups of schools. The interventions were based on known practice by school partnerships, federations and chains. Alliances were able to utilise this toolkit when selecting the interventions for their particular projects.

During the project, alliances used a simple evidence log to reflect on and capture on-going learning about their activities, and also their leadership reflections in leading the development of pedagogy across their projects and alliances. This is included in the *Research & Development National Themes Interim Report: Spring 2014*. (Taylor et al, 2014).

Alliances had access to Professor David Hargreaves's maturity matrix for a TSA (Hargreaves, 2011, 2012) at the start of their projects. A number of the alliances involved found it useful to self-evaluate themselves against aspects of the maturity matrix, define a focus and explain their activities according to elements of the model, or define the success of their projects.

In 2012, the research team developed from the research literature eight modest claims about leadership for learning in effective inter-school partnerships (Gu et al, 2012). As this literature summary stated:

This is a summary of the key findings of a review of selected literature organised around what we refer to as 'modest claims' about successful leadership for learning and development in inter-school networks and partnerships. The claims are modest because these formally designated partnerships are relatively new and, therefore, research has as yet been unable to assess their influence and impact upon the quality of educational provision.

Gu, Hill, Parish, Rea and Sandals, 2012

TSAAs had access to this research summary to support their activity during their projects. The summary served to help develop and support their reflections about the leadership of their alliances, and helped the school leaders consider the stages of development of their alliances. The eight modest claims were as follows:

Figure 2: Eight modest claims from the research evidence, 2012

Claim 1: Context matters

The ways in which the structure and governance of the partnership are designed demonstrates responsiveness to the contexts in which schools work and is fit for purpose.

Claim 2: Leadership structure and governance arrangements matter

The form of governance should reflect the purpose, scope and intensity of the partnership's activities.

Although there is no prescription for effective partnerships, all should have strong and clear strategic, operational and professional arrangements as well as dedicated, tiered leadership support for managing the development of the partnership (Hill, 2008).

Claim 3: Relationships and trust matter

Social relations among schools and individuals play a fundamental role in developing and deepening a collaborative culture which facilitates knowledge and practice transfer both within and across schools.

The strength of trust is the most important influence on collective capacity for collaboration. Accumulated evidence suggests that strong social ties lead to collaborative leadership, collective school capacity, school improvement and greater knowledge transfer within and across school boundaries (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Mourshed, Chijioki, & Barber, 2010).

Claim 4: Shared vision and values matter

They serve as a necessary precondition for creating, building and deepening communities of practice for learning, development and achievement.

Claim 5: Communication matters

Effective communication is vital in every aspect of how a school-to-school partnership works.

Claim 6: Distributing leadership matters

Distributed system leadership builds upon an organisational commitment to raise the achievement of other schools and is a necessary condition for mature inter-school collaboration and healthy competition.

Claim 7: System leaders' personal characteristics and professional competences matter

Successful system leaders possess core competences and share similar behaviour patterns in promoting collaborative working within the partnership.

Claim 8: Identifying broad phases of development matters

These development phases enable leaders to prioritise combinations of strategies which create the optimum conditions for effective learning and development within and across these phases.

Gu, Hill, Parish, Rea and Sandals, 2012

Examples of pedagogical impact

In section 4 of this report, we focus on the leadership learning arising from the projects undertaken by TSAs. It is important to set that learning in the context of the impact of the projects in developing great pedagogy. TSAs have been able to demonstrate the impact of their activities using a variety of evidence. The following table summarises examples of the interventions and activities that were used by some TSAs during their projects, together with the pedagogical impact and learning that was observed. The examples have been grouped according to six common areas of focus.

Table 1: Examples of interventions and activities used by TSAs

Area of focus	Description of interventions	Examples of impact and learning
<p>Coaching and mentoring</p>	<p>Two projects focused on this area.</p> <p>In one case the alliance took a coaching methodology that it had developed, based on providing feedback in real-time (ie during as well as at the end of lessons), and trained a network of coaches across the alliance to use the approach. The project tested how far such an approach could act as a major lever for school improvement.</p> <p>The second project focused on facilitating good and outstanding teachers – whose CPD needs can often be overlooked – to be able to observe each other’s practice and provide feedback and coaching. During the first year the coaching pairs operated within a school but in year 2 teachers were paired across schools.</p>	<p>The real-time coaching project made a significant impact on the quality of classroom teaching as well as contributing strongly to overall school improvement – as evidenced in reports from headteachers, Ofsted and the local authority (LA). Teachers were affirmed in their strengths and were shown precisely the areas where they could improve – and how they could do it.</p> <p>The peer-to-peer coaching project was valued highly by the participants. The peer observation in particular helped participants to reflect on and improve their practice. The cross-school observations in year 2 helped to break down barriers to joint work between secondary and primary colleagues.</p>
<p>Lesson study</p>	<p>Three projects focused on this area.</p> <p>In one project the lead school (not the teaching school) co-ordinated a project across three schools (one lower, one middle, one upper school) with two triads of teachers in each school working together. The triads planned lessons, observed each other, and reviewed the</p>	<p>Using pupil progress data and pupil interview feedback, most groups could provide evidence of pupil progress, improved learning skills, and greater pupil confidence or fluency with subject language. Pupils eligible for the pupil</p>

Area of focus	Description of interventions	Examples of impact and learning
	impact on targeted pupils.	premium (a focus of the project) also made strong progress. Teachers noted that their questioning skills had improved and there was greater confidence in their subject knowledge. In the upper school, triad work was seen to have a profound effect on pedagogy and understanding of effective lesson structure.
	In another project, the alliance invited primary and secondary schools to become involved in two cycles of lesson study. Schools identified trios of teachers to plan together, observe practice and review the outcomes for specific children.	A wide range of topics were explored. Schools were able to point to greater teacher confidence. Several schools could evidence greater progress for children. Heads in participating schools commented on the way in which the lesson study approach had contributed to an improved culture of professional learning and reflective practice.
Classroom-based CPD and JPD	<p>Seven projects focused on this approach.</p> <p>In one case, eight pairs of primary teachers from different schools took part in a course on ‘mathematical fluency and reasoning through problem solving’. The course ran over three full and three half days and included time for observation, trialling tasks and paired teaching – as well as training and discussion. The course was followed up by two SLEs who spent time observing and coaching the pairs in their own classrooms, running an INSET for each participating</p>	<p>In the first project the number of teachers saying they felt ‘confident’ or ‘very confident’ about teaching mathematical problem solving rose from just 1 teacher to 16 teachers (100 per cent of all the participants). This was backed up by headteachers of the participating schools – some of whom were also able to evidence quantifiable improvements in mathematical attainment.</p>

Area of focus	Description of interventions	Examples of impact and learning
	school and supporting the mathematics co-ordinator.	
	In another case, the teaching school established cross-phase and cross-curricular trios of teachers in alliance schools for CPD, planning, and to share classroom practice. Nine cross-alliance trios were in operation from seven different secondary schools with two primary cross-alliance trios. New trios are led by SLEs.	Qualitative feedback from teachers suggested staff involved in the trios felt more confident about their teaching , had a greater interest in pedagogy and research, and that social capital had increased between teachers in different schools .
Developing ITT or NQT+1 provision	<p>Four alliances chose this area as the basis for their work.</p> <p>One alliance focused on identifying the most effective elements of the different approaches to initial teacher training (ITT) within alliance schools, and then using data from student interviews, a questionnaire and focus group discussion with newly qualified teachers (NQTs) co-constructed a programme with core elements for all alliance schools – while still enabling schools to adapt the programme to their individual context.</p>	<p>Redesigning the ITT programme proved beneficial at many levels. For example, feedback from trainees and students was positive. Their understanding of key concepts such as assessment for learning (AfL), engagement, behaviour management and questioning were strengthened through the use of a teacher toolkit. Mentors are now being trained more consistently and all alliance schools are now using a ‘comment only’ rather than a ‘graded’ approach to providing feedback. The project also encouraged professional development leaders to reflect on how training happens in their school.</p>
	Another alliance concentrated on differentiation in the classroom but did this primarily through teachers in	The outputs of the differentiation project included a pro forma for observing differentiation and a

Area of focus	Description of interventions	Examples of impact and learning
	three schools working with each other through a managed learning environment.	coaching booklet on how to improve differentiation in the classroom. Both outputs had been refined in the light of being tested in the three schools. Middle leaders felt more confident in identifying ‘good’ and ‘outstanding’ differentiated lessons and in coaching teachers on this. The project also demonstrated impact in terms of more students feeling challenged in their work while at the same time there was a reduction in the proportion that found the work too difficult.
	Another alliance chose to focus on the knowledge and skills of their school-based ITT mentors. The mentors were surveyed about their CPD needs, and then the alliance organised a bespoke professional development programme to address the needs that had been identified.	ITT mentors were surveyed before and after the CPD programme. All felt their mentoring skills had developed and they expressed greater confidence in their abilities to support their students after the development programme.
Student leadership	One MAT alliance based its project around this theme, involving four of the academies in its Trust as a test-bed. The project used teacher and student surveys, interviews and learning logs to identify what makes a good lesson and how to engage students more fully. This was backed up with the developing and training student leadership teams and holding a student leadership conference.	Qualitative and quantitative feedback indicated that the project had helped to improve the motivation and confidence of the students involved and helped teachers better understand the impact of their teaching. Improvement in the quality of teaching , as assessed in lesson observations, was also evidenced – although the Trust is wary of crediting this to any single intervention.

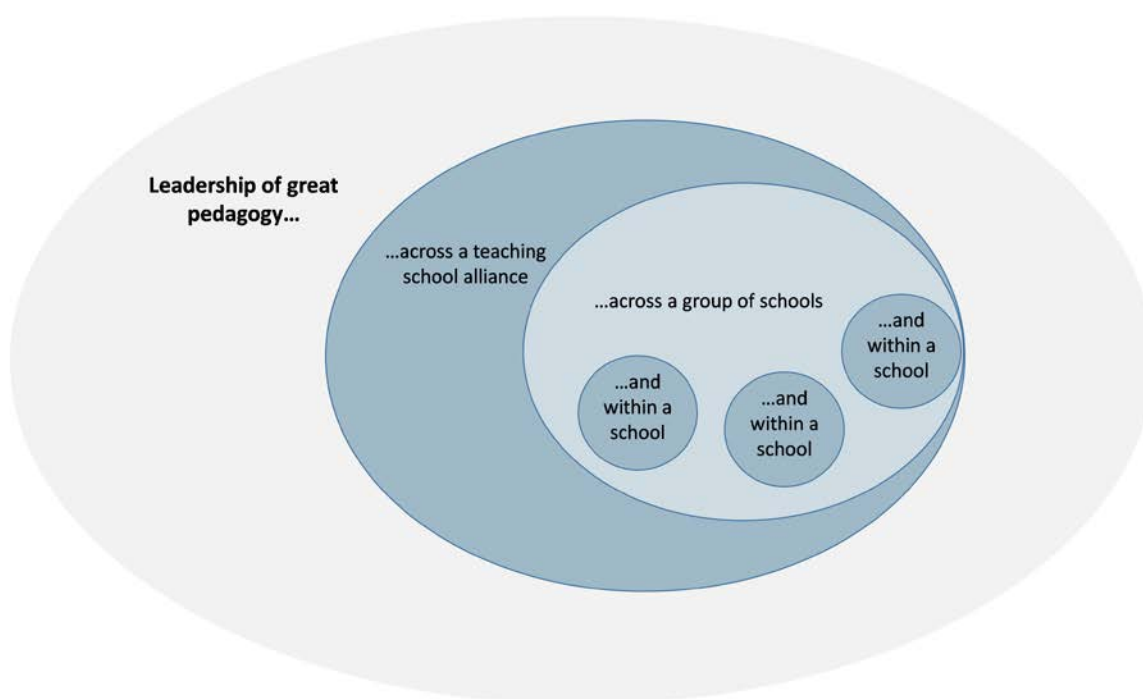
Area of focus	Description of interventions	Examples of impact and learning
<p>Improving transition and support for literacy</p>	<p>Three alliances developed projects on this theme.</p> <p>Within one alliance one school identified 30 year 7 students who were just above the level at which they would receive additional support but who were not competent or confident readers. Each of these students set aside 10 minutes reading time on four days each week to read with a specially trained year 9 or 10 mentor.</p> <p>Another school in the same alliance wanted to develop the reading skills of those pupils with high numeracy cognitive ability tests (CATs) and low verbal CATs who do well in maths but struggle in English. The intervention selected and developed enabled the pupils to demonstrate their reading skills through formats that they would use in mathematics, for example graphs and charts.</p>	<p>The daily reading project produced astounding results. Pupils' reading normally progresses in line with their age, ie one month's progress for every one month worked. However, the results for the project showed the students achieving an average increase in reading age of 27 months (24 months for pupil premium students) over a seven months period – nearly four months increase in reading age for every month of work.</p> <p>In this project the target year 7 group showed an average increase of two sub-levels in their reading levels, compared to no progress for the parallel cohort the previous year.</p>

Section 4: Leadership learning

The theme for this project has been *'how can leaders lead successful teaching school alliances which enable the development of consistently great pedagogy?'* The research team has reviewed the evidence and the case study projects to analyse the learning about the leadership of great pedagogy. We have built on our eight modest claims in terms of what the research literature told us about how schools work in partnership. Using the evidence from the learning logs, the findings set out in the case studies, and the reflections of school leaders during the regional cluster meetings, the team has developed a set of 13 key messages. We have explored the leadership learning in these 13 key messages in relation to three aspects:

- a. **Leadership of cross-school pedagogy projects:** what have we learned about the leadership of projects to develop pedagogy working across a group of schools
- b. **Leadership within a school:** what have we learned about the leadership of projects to develop pedagogy working within a school
- c. **Leadership of great pedagogy at alliance level:** what have we learned about the leadership of TSAs to help develop great pedagogy

Figure 3: Leadership of great pedagogy at three levels



These 13 key messages represent our learning about the leadership of TSAs in developing great pedagogy: the leadership practices that TSAs have found that work. This section explains these key messages using examples from the case study projects.

In **appendix 1**, the research areas for all the TSAs in this project have been summarised.

In **appendix 2**, there is a list of the 13 key messages and which TSAs have been mentioned as examples here.

A number of example case studies from alliances involved in the project have also been published alongside this report.

a) Leadership of cross-school pedagogy projects

In this section we review the key messages in relation to leadership of projects across a group of schools. Most of our case study projects worked with a group of schools varying in size from three to more than ten schools. All the project groups of schools were subsets of the wider TSA.

Key message 1 - select appropriate projects

Our first key message reflects the importance of selecting the right project. **Leaders need to identify projects that have a clear sense of mission and purpose.** Our case study schools reflected that they were most likely to make progress, engage other schools, and generate momentum if the project was closely linked to the improvement agenda of the TSA and / or the individual schools involved. It was also the case that when the leaders of the projects had a clear mandate from the alliance to focus on the issue – through an agreed plan or set of priorities - that also generated strong levels of engagement.

Eleanor Palmer Primary School (Camden Primary Partnership) decided their project should be on developing the quality of teaching in mathematics – ‘developing mathematical fluency and reasoning through problem solving’. The headteacher explained their reasoning for focusing on this issue:

Our local authority still maintains a very small core of advisory staff and this remains the ‘go to’ place for curriculum support. However, this has also led to a culture of dependency, a fragmented model (many schools miss out simply due to a lack of capacity) and a reliance on those who, arguably, are out of touch with current practice. We wanted to:

- build a model of classroom-based CPD and coaching that would then build social capital between teachers;
- find a model to focus emphatically on great pedagogy and find a way to embed it in other classrooms and to empower teachers;
- help our specialist leaders of education (SLEs) develop a profile to support their future deployment in schools.

Camden Primary Partnership case study

The project at **Fortismere School**, part of the **New River Teaching Alliance** in Haringey had two overarching aims: one looking at improving the dissemination of pedagogy across an alliance and the second looking at improving pedagogy at a school level. For the first aim, the objective was to develop ways of sharing resources and staff between schools in an efficient way, focused on using technology. For the second, the strategic partners met and agreed on differentiation as a common area that required focus.

The initial meeting led by the theme 3 lead set out the aims and objectives of the project but critically did not guide how the project would take place. The decision on how the project would manifest itself was a collective decision and reflected the needs of all the schools. This ensures support from all nominated lead persons as the goals and benefit of the project was clear and shared.

New River Teaching Alliance case study

Our case studies suggest that the projects need to be mainstreamed (ie aligned to the priorities in schools' development plans) if they are to have a lasting impact on improving teaching and learning rather than being seen as an optional add-on. The project might also build on successful previous projects or joint working, particularly if this engages the interest of key staff who have been involved before.

Witton Church Walk Primary School, part of the **Cheshire Leadership and Teaching Alliance** recognised that their project, in its first stage to understand what different schools understood to be 'good' or better teaching, built on schools' priorities to benchmark their views about the quality of teaching in their own schools.

Blackfriars TSA in Staffordshire wanted to engage with initial teacher education (ITE) to ensure that the needs of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) becomes a clear focus in general ITE programmes, building on the identification of great pedagogy practiced within Blackfriars and other special schools and making other staff aware of how this practice could be brought into mainstream settings.

At **Central Bedfordshire Teaching School Partnership (TSP)**, a preliminary phase of activity helped to determine that the enquiry phase needed to engage schools in each phase and be:

structured around a project that links the CPD sessions to challenging teacher thinking and practice in their normal classrooms in 'real time'. The research project must be linked to measuring impact on real students in lessons as the vehicle to focus teacher thinking and practice.

Central Bedfordshire TSP case study

Pencalenick School (Cornwall TSA) used a pilot project to help select the focus of their project. The pilot demonstrated the value for teachers in being involved with an experienced educational psychologist on a one-to-one basis to build professional

confidence and strategies for evaluation, reflection and improvement in practice around communication and behaviour management. The project built on this pilot and broadened its application across schools in the alliance.

Several teaching schools reflected how it was worth spending time getting this stage right and making sure the project was well grounded in school and alliance priorities, even if that meant that it took a little longer to get the project off the ground.

The project led by **George Abbot TSA** in Surrey took time to get going – not least because the TSA had not long been formed when the project started. The alliance needed to clarify its priorities and the project team had to clarify which schools wanted to be involved and how they were going to work together. Despite the delay in starting the project, leaders reflected at the end that:

ensuring that such time is invested at the start of a collaborative project such as this is essential in ensuring its long-term success and that staff are committed to it. Whilst this may have meant that this project had a slow start, it did ensure that relationships were robust enough and project direction clear enough to allow for the work to sustain over two years and also allow for changes to the membership and composition of the group.

George Abbot TSA case study

Key message 2 – engage schools (and their headteachers)

Our second message emphasises the importance of effective engagement with the other schools in the project. **Leaders need to be able to communicate the purpose of the project and secure support from headteachers in other schools.** This may require persistence and strong inter-personal skills, and effective communication methods will be vital especially as heads may be looking for different things from the project. The engagement also needs sustaining. Sometimes distributing funding at the start of the work can bring schools on board; for example, providing resources to cover teachers involved in the project can demonstrate commitment and shared ownership.

At **The Woodroffe School (Jurassic Coast TSA)** in Dorset, grants were provided to release staff and enable travel:

Colleagues became quickly engaged and simply ‘got on’ with the work. A significant factor here was the ability of the groups to choose their own projects. The projects were also facilitated by a £500 grant which made the provision of cover and travel much easier. The grant obviously made the projects more palatable to the leadership groups and they were therefore more willing to give teachers release time. This was particularly important in primary schools where CPD budgets are often very small indeed.

Jurassic Coast TSA case study

Fairfields TSA in Northampton focused their project on developing the skills of their school-based ITT mentors across the alliance. The School Direct programme was a key strand of activity for this alliance and they used a customised approach to help engage other schools. They undertook a survey, via a questionnaire, of the skills and development needs of the mentors. The results of the survey were then used to develop a bespoke CPD programme for the mentors focused on the most common development needs. The mentors therefore personally benefited from their responses to the survey and the project through a skills-based development programme.

At **The Wroxham Transformative Learning Alliance** in Hertfordshire their lesson study project was established in the context of an 'invitational approach' to the TSA bringing together like-minded schools and school leaders. The engagement from schools was supported by several of the heads already working together as part of a facilitated learning forum, as explained by the teaching school:

Through the introduction of half-termly learning forums, facilitated by a consultant headteacher, we created a regular safe space for colleagues to discuss research findings and their relevance to school practice. Invitations to attend the half termly sessions are issued regularly. This invitational approach has ensured open access to the groups. Typical attendance is in the region of 10–15 colleagues at each meeting. The teaching school funds the group meetings in full and has also provided a library of published research.

The Wroxham Transformative Learning Alliance material for NCTL event –
November 2014

The **Central Bedfordshire TSP** project on lesson study used a variety of methods to engage the schools. Schools were invited to join the project through a letter setting out the background. SLT project links were agreed in each of the schools that subsequently became involved. A partnership agreement was used to explain the role of the project link and the role of the school, and a timeline set out the project plan. The engagement with the schools was face-to-face with visits from the project co-ordinator. 'Quick wins' can often promote confidence: in this context for example, providing simple tools to use for the lesson study project; or if teachers can see immediate or rapid improvement in their practice.

The case studies demonstrated that leaders need to show how a wide range of schools are involved in leading and delivering the project or programme to avoid the charge that it is all about one school wanting to 'empire-build'. Ensuring that teachers from the lead school visit and spend time in other schools may help to defuse an 'us-and-them' syndrome and develop trust and engagement.

Portswood TSA in Southampton had developed a highly effective model of in-class coaching which, by working with the LA, was proving to be a key strategy in helping to improve the performance of several struggling schools. However, as a TSA they were

very conscious of the need for the coaching model to be owned and developed across the alliance, so a key aim of their project was to take its initial work and expand its impact by creating a critical mass of schools and leaders with the necessary coaching skills:

The coaching leaders have built on this platform and avoided a sense that 'this is all about Portswood' by, for example, building a network of lead practitioner coaches drawn from schools across the alliance and involving other schools in the selection of the lead practitioners.

Portswood TSA case study

At **George Abbot TSA**, the teacher-to-teacher coaching project facilitated engagement in a different way. It not only provided schools, senior leaders and teachers within the schools opportunities to develop strong working relationships, but also was instrumental in breaking down barriers between George Abbot School as the teaching school and local primary schools. George Abbot School, with 2,000 pupils and around 200 staff, is sometimes seen by primary schools as dominating the local education landscape. However, by working with primary staff, visiting their schools and being prepared to listen and learn from them, the culture and the nature of relationships between schools within the alliance has started to change. This is facilitating further joint working. At a simple level, there is a wider understanding of colleagues' willingness to engage in wider educational research and collaboration. At a deeper level the project has helped to provide the infrastructure of relationships, trust and techniques to support the development of a MAT in which George Abbot School is a leading player.

Key message 3 – scope and plan

Our third message is about the importance of the organisation of the project when working across a group of schools. **Leaders need to ensure that the development of a project is well-scoped (ie realistic and not over-ambitious) and that implementation is thought-through.** This will involve ensuring that the project is well designed, including looking at existing evidence on what works. Difficult issues such as schools or senior leaders not participating fully or failing to deliver what they promised need to be confronted sooner rather than later. The project might also need to establish appropriate quality assurance processes.

As part of the base-lining process, several alliances reviewed some of the available research evidence. **Everton Nursery School and Family Centre (North Liverpool TSP)** used the research to help develop their new designation for a family support SLE. **Pilgrim Learning TSA** in Bedfordshire wrote a research summary about developing trust and social capital and shared with their schools before using questionnaire responses to base-line levels of trust across the group. At the **George Spencer TSA** in Nottingham enquiry groups' key questions were informed by John Hattie's *Visible Learning* (2011). In order to effectively monitor and evaluate the quality, consistency and impact of the inquiries, they introduced Guskey's (2000) five-level CPD model and the Education

Endowment Foundation (EEF) toolkit¹ to assess and measure to what extent and how their enquiries might have made a difference to the learning outcomes of their students.

At **Thornden School (Leadership, Education and Research Network (LEARN) TSA)** in Hampshire, the project was introduced at a meeting of heads and leads from the schools in the alliance; the projects were led by middle leaders and meetings were held at the lead school and chaired by a senior leader from the lead school. To track progress a leadership log was used to record decisions and reflect on leadership actions. At **Portswood TSA**, the schools involved received training at the start of the project and a programme of support designed to embed a coaching culture. **Camden Primary Partnership** also provided training along with opportunities to observe high quality classroom practice at the start of the project – and linked this to sharing academic knowledge about pedagogy. **George Abbot TSA** took a slightly different approach and deliberately planned its training input to take place after the participants had engaged in an initial round of peer-to-peer observation. At the **Oxfordshire TSA**, the focus was chosen by the lead alliance school responsible for research and resonated strongly with schools across the alliance. The support of a local higher educational institute (HEI) was invaluable in providing coaching for the leadership of the project, offering experience and targeting relevant literature to review, and offering models and exemplars of approaches which needed to be shared in the early stages of setting up the project.

If a project is to identify impact over time, then it needs to do two things. First, establish the starting point – ie capture the baseline performance before any interventions or activity are under way. It may be necessary to capture this at different levels, for example pupil views, staff understanding or capability, or pupils' attainment. Second, it will need to put in place the processes for collecting data necessary to show progress and impact. These steps will also help with setting appropriate milestones and success measures.

Various methods were used by the case study schools to collect their data. **Central Bedfordshire TSP** analysed the progress made by specific pupils, and used feedback questionnaires of participating teachers and SLT links. With the coaching project at **Portswood TSA**, schools came on board at different times, some had been working with Portswood Primary School before it was designated as a teaching school. But they were able to collect data and assess impact through questionnaires, feedback interviews and Ofsted and LA reports on the impact of the coaching.

Camden Primary Partnership used an on-line survey before and after the project accessed through a QR code to track the changed views of participating staff. **New River Teaching Alliance** also used questionnaires before and after the project to judge progress, and sought feedback from both participating teachers and students. The project developed a standardised lesson observation pro-forma for looking at

¹ <http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit/>

differentiation. The **Kemnal Academies Trust TSA (TKAT)** also used questionnaires, and supplemented that evidence with interviews with students and a self-assessment template for participating teachers about the quality of their lessons.

Throughout the life of a project, leaders need to find effective ways of communicating with the schools involved, and potentially moderating these methods to suit the needs of the other leaders. **George Abbot TSA** used a system of a school lead for each school to support other staff at the school that were participating in the project. The school leads, co-ordinated and supported by an independent consultant, in turn formed a project steering group that managed, reviewed and adapted the programme as it progressed.

In some projects new technology was a key element in facilitating the organisation of the cross-school work. At **New River Teaching Alliance**, for example, the nominated leads for each of the schools brainstormed what communication methods might help to share pedagogical ideas between schools other than face-to-face meetings. Video conferencing facilities and chat rooms were explored. Eventually a page on the lead school's managed learning environment (MLE) was developed dedicated to the project with the ability to upload files and have on-line discussions.

Key message 4 – exercise flexibility

Our fourth key message is about the need to **exercise flexibility**. Leaders need to be responsive to the particular context and needs of schools and open to flexing the nature of the project to suit those needs. This was an issue highlighted in our first modest claim from the research evidence (Gu et al, 2012). They also need to respond to the learning that is captured during the life of the project. The project leaders and co-ordinators need to ensure there is scope for middle leaders to help construct and steer the project as it develops.

For **Glenthorne High School (Sutton Secondary TSA)**, their project to support teachers at NQT+1 (newly qualified teacher) was adapted in three ways over the first year: middle leaders took on the leadership of the project in the participating schools from the assistant heads; the sequence of taught CPD and learning walks was changed; and the data collection through self-efficacy questionnaires was strengthened.

At **Beal High School (North East London TSA (NELTA))** a project to develop work on ITT had planned to use a self-auditing tool to gauge confidence in teaching and learning skills "...but we had to abandon this when trainees rated themselves as 'green' for almost all aspects which did not agree with what mentors and students said about them. As a result we used a 360 degree auditing tool where open and honest conversations were facilitated between trainees and mentors. Trainee focus groups show a greater ability to self-reflect" (NELTA co-ordinator).

For **Ninestiles TSA** in Birmingham, the lead school recognised an important skill is the ability to respond sensitively and effectively to the schools involved. The project co-

ordinator recognised the need to be flexible to the changing contexts of schools, and identify and support their distinct needs at different points. One example was revising the planned professional development programme in light of an Ofsted inspection, and deploying additional SLE support in English and literacy in response.

At **George Abbot TSA** the project followed the same cycle of peer-to-peer coaching support and lesson planning / observation in its second year as it has used during its first. During year two, however, the peer-to-peer support moved from being just within school to being cross-school. Six secondary colleagues and six primary colleagues became peer partners and undertook cross-phase peer coaching. This was a particularly powerful development of the project. The schools involved were also closer to each other in geographical terms than in the first year and this helped with facilitating visits to partner schools.

New schools may want to join the project or programme, and some schools may fall by the wayside. In some cases it may be right that schools leave the project (where they are unwilling or unable to provide committed replacement project leaders) rather than having them as a drag anchor on the progress of the rest. However, reviewing membership of, or participation in, the project also provides an opportunity to bring in new schools. Crucially, there might be personnel changes in the schools involved which might result in schools becoming more intensively involved or backing away. We will return to the message about the need for succession planning later on. Being able to adapt the project in the light of experience and lessons learned from an initial pilot run (including things that did not work) is an important lesson from the case studies.

The **Academies Enterprise Trust Teaching School Alliance (AET TSA)** project focussed on pupil leadership in the classroom and evolved in scope and focus throughout the project lifespan. Initially, the scope was too broad and on reflection it took too long to realise this. Some academies dropped out of the project along the way with those that were left were deeply committed to the project with 'time and passion' to make progress. With hindsight the project should have started with this core group and then facilitated the committed people to lead and develop the work across the alliance.

At **Portswood TSA**, the coaching programme has needed to adopt a flexible approach as new schools have been brought into the project. The coaching support has been

...differentiated and tailored to match the needs of each school. By maintaining regular contact with heads the coaching leaders are able to vary the frequency or intensity of the visits, target particular year groups and address the personal development needs of particular members of staff. They are also able to adjust the focus of the programme to provide support for a school that wants to restructure its leadership team to support a coaching culture or appoint someone to lead the school's coaching team.

Portswood TSA case study

One of the challenges identified by several of the case study projects was getting the balance right between too much and too little flexibility. Too little flexibility and the project risked becoming overly rigid and not enabling scope to adapt. Too much flexibility in different schools might mean that the activity was inconsistent with the original project or too different in different places to be able to compare learning; one school called this risk a 'lethal mutation' of their original project. We return to this point in the 'challenges' section at the end of our report.

Key message 5 – empower middle leaders

Our fifth key message is that **leadership of the programme across schools will take off when middle leaders (and student leaders) are empowered**. Several of our case study projects actively worked to distribute leadership to middle leaders in different schools, and several did this during the life of the projects. We highlighted this point in our sixth modest claim from the research literature (Gu et al, 2012) . One important aspect of this distribution is ensuring there are appropriate opportunities for the middle leaders involved to network, support each other, and share learning.

At **Sutton Secondary TSA**, the ownership of the project passed to middle leaders as result of reflection and a change of direction from the project lead who described his thinking:

Initially by directing and leading the project personally and planning too much myself there was too little buy in and understanding. As soon as I passed the planning design and review to the middle leaders delivering the sessions the project moved forward much more quickly and the shared ownership at middle leader level in schools created additional understanding of the objectives throughout schools. Essentially, directed work from senior leaders does not always work.

Sutton Secondary TSA case study

At **George Spencer TSA**, a group of middle (and senior) leaders was developed to become enquiry champions who led, facilitated and coordinated school enquiry groups. The enquiry groups were based around pedagogical issues such as questioning, collaborative learning, or reciprocal peer teaching. Using resources from this school-based enquiry project and expertise from their HEI partners, the school organised a number of training workshops for the enquiry champions to build their competence in using research and conducting and evaluating enquiries. These enquiry champions met termly to discuss their key agendas and share best practice – which as a result promoted and enabled cross-faculty collaborations.

Involving a range of middle leaders from different schools inevitably means that their activity needs to be co-ordinated. Some projects found it helpful to use an independent facilitator for this role. In some cases, such as at **NELTA** and **TKAT**, external support was focused on the technical design of the programme. In others, such as **George**

Abbot TSA, the schools felt that they gained from the project being led by a member of staff who was not limited by teaching timetables and wider school commitments.

Hartsholme Academy (Eos TSA) in Lincolnshire used external facilitation to help build a collaborative system to develop self-sustaining networks across a geographically widespread alliance. The role of the external facilitator was to help establish trust and broker relationships. The facilitator worked with a group of 10 alliance leaders of schools who were personally committed to building the networks. The leaders represented three secondary schools and five primary schools together with the alliance director and executive directors: 'Over a three month period, the group met regularly including one residential session with dinner, rotating around different schools and geographical locations each time' (Eos TSA case study).

One of the challenges in relying on middle leaders across a group of schools is that there might be a lack of knowledge at the outset about the individuals concerned, their motivations and incentives for being involved in the project, and their ways of working. The lack of the usual and formal methods of distributing leadership through a school-based hierarchy is an added complexity. Leaders know colleagues in their own schools well, and will be used to working with the grain of their strengths and weaknesses. With projects across a group of schools there is not necessarily this knowledge – at least to start with. Building personal relationships is key to getting effective joint work going, though sometimes the relationships come out of doing something together. The joint activity helps to build momentum and trust.

Empowering through school leads was for many projects not only sensible and practical but it also aided the development of these middle leaders. For example, one school lead in the **George Abbot TSA** described how participating in the project had:

Improved my skills as a leader and made me reflect more on my leadership and teaching.

George Abbot TSA case study

Several of the middle leaders involved in the project have gone on to apply for new positions or have been assigned new roles in their schools and they attributed this, in part, to the confidence they had gained from being involved in the project. The projects can also provide middle leaders with experience outside of their core areas of expertise. The **Fairfields TSA** project was led by a talented middle leader who subsequently was promoted. The project provided valuable experience of co-ordinating the ITT strand for a TSA and working with school-based mentors.

A similar story emerges from the project led by the **Camden Primary Partnership**. The role of the SLEs was established and recognised across the alliance. In addition the two lead SLEs described how following involvement in the project they had gained the confidence to go on and lead further joint practice development (JPD) projects and host a

'Teach Meet Primary', involving teachers from a range of other schools in Camden and beyond.

NELTA's experience provided further endorsement. They described how relatively inexperienced middle leaders were trusted to develop an initial teacher training programme and carry out the piece of JPD research – a role that previously would have been undertaken by senior leaders. The result was that:

This has allowed us to develop skills and experience that we would not have otherwise developed.

NELTA case study

TKAT Alliance wanted to show how learning could be improved through effective student leadership and student voice. The project included the establishment of an alliance-wide student parliament and an alliance-wide student leadership programme. Student voice, in the form of student questionnaires and reflective logs, were used to help identify what outstanding teaching looked like. The alliance, which is also a MAT, is hoping that by training students to be involved in their own pedagogy, their insights and reflections will inform teaching and learning conferences and INSET days within alliance schools. The aim is to bring about a fundamental change of culture towards involving students in improving teaching and learning.

Middle leaders can have access to learning and new opportunities as a result of such projects. At **Portswood TSA**, the success of the coaching programme has created opportunities for lead practitioners to act as coaches when supporting other schools, and '...schools are increasingly creating specific roles for coaching often at assistant head level' (Portswood TSA case study).

Celebrating the engagement of middle leaders and other staff can have a powerful galvanizing effect. Middle-leaders and teachers drove the learning trio approach at the **Jurassic Coast TSA** from the 'bottom-up' and the most obvious indication of the success of the research has been the trio presentation evenings where staff present their research to peers:

The first one in July 2013 was something of a revelation: the presentations were detailed, insightful and, above all, enthusiastic. The discussion of pedagogy was complex and challenging, and it was clear that the participants had evidently enjoyed participating in the programme and gained a huge amount from it. Subsequent evaluations were equally positive, and the fact that more colleagues volunteered to take part in the second year was in itself a sign of success.

Jurassic Coast TSA case study

b) Leadership within schools of pedagogy projects (related to cross-school pedagogy projects and programmes)

A number of the messages we have already covered about leadership across a group of schools also apply to leading successful activity within an individual school. We will not repeat these points here. In this section, we review three further messages in relation to the leadership of projects within a school.

Key message 6 – ensure headteacher sponsorship

Our sixth key message is about the **importance of ensuring that heads within the school own, support and champion a programme or project** if it is really to take root and be effective. This key message links to our first message about the importance of the selection of the project. Within a school, it will mean being clear about how the project fits with and reinforces the priorities from the school development plan. The project needs to be promoted by the head as supporting and underpinning other work or development activity around the key priorities, rather than it being seen as additional activity. It will also mean heads looking for opportunities to champion the importance of the activity across the school.

At **Brooklands Farm Primary School**, part of the **Milton Keynes TSA**, R&D activity is given a high profile by the headteacher. Staff are clear that the school prioritises such activity, and this conscious strategy of raising its profile has been implemented through a number of methods:

- staff are made aware of the financial cost to the school of providing cover for their lessons so they can be out of class to observe other teaching and learning;
- the head actively promotes the culture and talks about its importance; and
- staff know that the headteacher expects everyone to be involved in whole school development activity and there are regular opportunities at staff meetings for staff to feed back to colleagues about their activity.

The costs of providing cover for staff to enable them to come out of their regular lessons to meet colleagues, observe other teaching, and work with different pupils was the most common financial cost of these projects. Heads are making financial choices all the time about how to apportion scarce resources. In allotting funds to these projects, leaders signal the importance for their school.

Some school leaders also recognised they needed to work harder with some staff than others to ensure they saw the benefit and purpose of the projects. As one school leader remarked, “you’re sometimes battling the sense that R&D is less important”. However for other teaching schools the message has been straightforward: “R&D is the bedrock that underpins the work; it’s a philosophy as much as an element of the Big 6”.

In the **Camden Primary Partnership** the headteacher of Eleanor Palmer Primary School took a lead role in the development and implementation of the school-based enquiry project. She jointly led the activity supported by two newly appointed SLEs at her own school as well as across the teaching school alliance. At **St Thomas More Catholic TSA** in Bedford the executive headteacher has led work across their alliance on R&D. This has included the publication of an alliance research document (*‘Learning and Leadership Journal, practitioner-based research and development’*) gathering the research papers from a number of the TSA’s research projects led by staff including topics such as the impact of low-level disruption, securing outstanding progress in maths, and leading in the collaborative context².

Another part of the head’s role is ensuring accountability for the outputs and outcomes from the project and also ensuring there is a designated leader for it. In one of the schools involved in the project led by **George Abbot TSA**, the original project lead was appointed acting head mid-way through the project, but she made sure another leader was designated to take on her former role. This sent clear signals that the project was important to the school and did not just depend on her.

A key aspect of headship is being accountable for all the different activities – particularly those relating to teaching and learning. So it is important that heads ask for and receive data on the impact of all pedagogy-related projects. **Camden Primary Partnership** used its end-of-year alliance survey to collect and feed back input from the heads of the schools involved in the project. **Portswood TSA** ensures that heads receive a note within 24 hours on every in-class coaching session provided by the alliance. In other alliances heads received information on the progress of projects via reports at strategic partners’ meetings.

Key message 7 – designate senior leader champions

While our sixth key message highlights the importance of ensuring headteacher sponsorship, our seventh key message emphasises the need **for a senior leader (or ambitious middle leader) to drive the project forward and make it happen**. An SLT-level champion can often be crucial in terms of co-ordination of the project, maintaining direction, progress chasing, and keeping people on board through regular and effective communications. They can also ensure that project leads have the time and resources they need at key points in the year.

Many of the projects were directly led and co-ordinated by senior leaders rather than headteachers. At **North Liverpool TSP, New River Teaching Alliance, Fairfields TSA, George Spencer TSA, Holmes Chapel Comprehensive School (Chimney House Alliance)** and **Pilgrim Learning TSA**, for example, the senior lead for the project was

² [St Thomas More TSA website](#)

from the teaching school and often worked with other senior leads in other schools. At other TSAs the co-ordinating leads for the projects were senior leaders not at the teaching school but from other schools within the alliance: for example, the **Cheshire Leadership and Teaching Alliance** lead worked at Witton Church Walk Primary School, and the **Central Bedfordshire TSP** lead worked at Etonbury Academy.

New River Teaching Alliance reflected on the importance of a senior lead for their project in each school:

The importance of having a nominated lead person in each of the schools who can support colleagues in implementing the instructions was found to be unparalleled. This was the single most important factor to the success of the project. Prior to the launch of the project the theme 3 lead met with two representatives from the strategic partners' schools. Both these individuals were from the SLT and therefore could make decisions for their school.

New River Teaching Alliance case study

At **Sutton Secondary TSA**, although the drive for the project came from middle leaders, the school reflected on the need for SLT co-ordinating capacity '...who also need to take control of certain things: data; timelines; releasing colleagues; and planning timings more effectively in terms of school year. Senior Leaders also need to take responsibility for certain things e.g. data and planning time for colleagues to complete work (observations) at crunch times...' (Sutton Secondary TSA case study).

At **Central Bedfordshire TSP**, the co-ordinator of their project reflected on the importance of having a senior link in each school to work with:

I recognised the need to have a SLT link in each school to drive the project as I would not be available to make sure that the teachers involved adhered to the schedule for maximum impact within their schools and for my project deadline. So, there was a named member of SLT at each school who was not necessarily involved in the actual lesson study work, who became the link with myself.

Central Bedfordshire TSP case study

The importance of the SLT link for this project was then borne out by the impact in each school – the co-ordinator reflecting again:

The triads in schools where the SLT link was a triad member seemed to gain most from the project. Perhaps this was because they ensured that cover was available whatever emergency took place on the day of the lesson delivery, perhaps because they kept the triads to the timeframe that I had discussed with them as SLT link. Perhaps these schools were successful because the SLT could see the value of the project as they were actually involved in it.

At **George Spencer TSA** the drive for the enquiry project was primarily from the vice principal, who is also head of the teaching school. She believes in evidence-based teaching and was committed to building and embedding a rich culture of enquiry and using it as a vehicle for improvements in teaching and learning. Teaching and learning communities, led by enquiry champions, were created to encourage and promote a staff-led, learning-focussed, collaborative CPD culture and system. She was also actively seeking additional funding opportunities and collaborations with HEIs to steer R&D towards a strong, collective appetite for JPD.

Key message 8 – focus on development

Our eighth key message is about the benefits of **leaders prioritising development over judgements** when working on projects that involve classroom observations and teacher-to-teacher development activity on their pedagogical skills. For several of our case study projects, a key learning point was that senior and middle leaders recognised the importance of using a non-judgemental approach to working with teachers within and across schools working together.

At **NELTA**, for example, the project introduced the idea of ‘comment-only’ lesson observation feedback. Although the project worked with ITT mentors, many of the mentors were also NQT mentors and they were already moving to comment-only feedback to mirror the changes in the new Ofsted inspection framework. They reflected that ‘...this part of our project really encouraged reflection on a common understanding of what a good or outstanding lesson is and the impact that feedback has on trainees’ (NELTA case study).

Similarly at **George Abbot TSA**, right at the start of the project one of the principles in designing the peer-to-peer coaching model was an agreement to “keep any Ofsted focus in the background”.

For a number of projects, it was important that the development activity was not linked to any form of appraisal. For other projects, such as at **Central Bedfordshire TSP**, it was the use of a project such as lesson study and the focus on pupils’ learning that reinforced the development nature of the project. Feedback from the senior leaders reflected that:

...teachers felt that they engaged more in lesson study than in formal observations where teachers are just worried and then listening for the grade in their feedback session. Lesson study, unlike formal observations with a summative grade was seen as unobtrusive, because you plan together and focus on pupil learning. Also, you choose a focus that is specific to you, rather than being told what the focus is according to whole school needs.

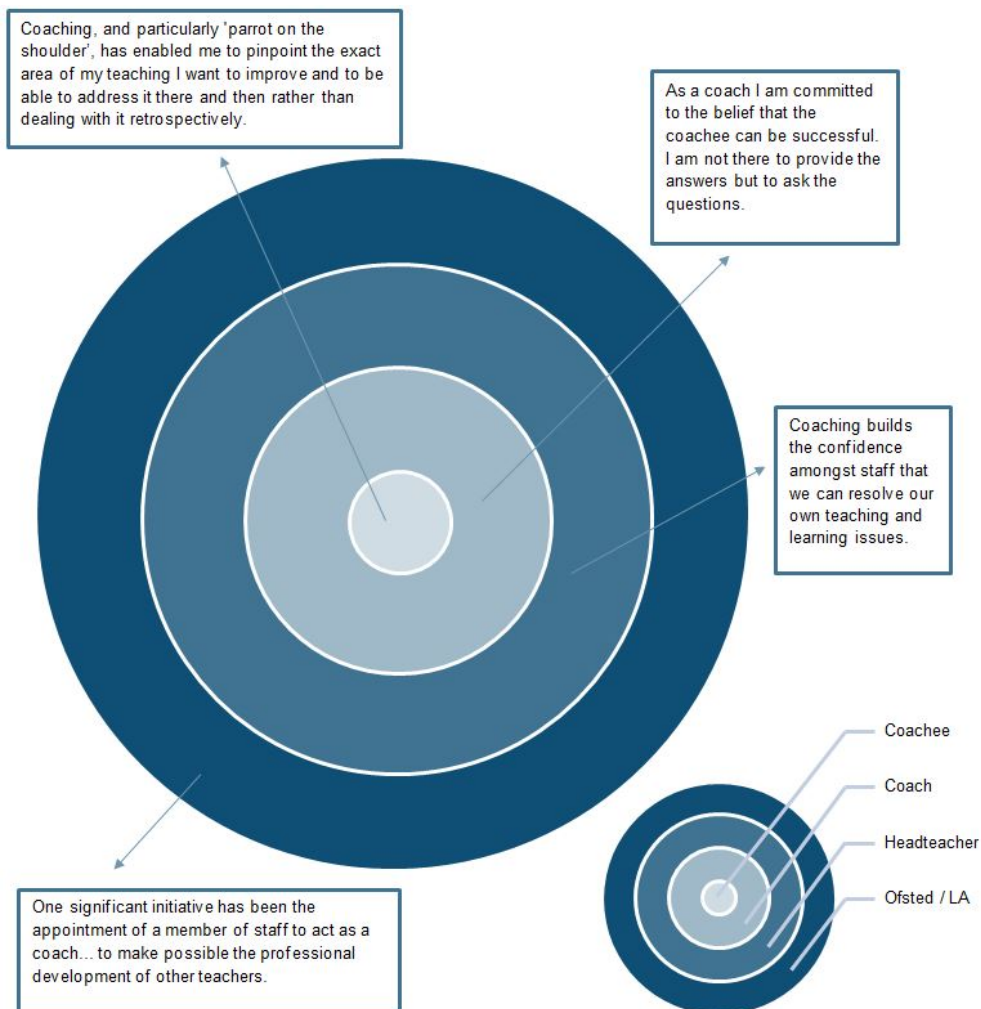
At **Sutton Secondary TSA**, progress of the teachers participating in the project was monitored through observation forms. However in the final cohort of participants, there was a change to the data collection as described:

...it was decided the forms were an imperfect way to measure progress of participants and just ticking boxes on the forms if you saw it in the lesson didn't give a real indication of progress in teaching. As a result, we decided to share our general observation data of the teachers on the final cohort to see if progress had been made. We accept this is also subjective but it is set against Ofsted criteria despite our interpretations potentially being different.

Sutton Secondary TSA case study

At **Portswood TSA**, the benefits of this non-judgemental coaching support can be seen from the feedback from various voices as described in their case study:

Figure 4: Portswood case study – feedback from a variety of voices



c) Leadership of great pedagogy at alliance level

In this section, we review the key messages from the case studies about the leadership of pedagogy projects across a TSA.

Key message 9 – work to clear strategic priorities

Our ninth key message is that TSA leaders need a **clear strategy and set of priorities to act as framework for commissioning and developing their projects**. This message links to our first message about the need to ensure that the project supports the individual school development plans. In this instance, the project needs to be seen to fit with the TSA-wide priorities and aims. It was also highlighted in our fourth modest claim from the research literature (Gu et al, 2012).

At **Fairfields TSA**, the importance of their ITT strand meant that training for their School Direct students using school-based mentors was a key priority for their alliance. The importance of this strand helped to shape the needs of the research strand as described by the Fairfields TSA co-ordinator:

As ITT was a key priority for the teaching school, it was decided that student progress and achievement was essential to the success of the programme. To ensure this was achieved the emphasis was put on the knowledge and skills of the school-based mentor as their role was paramount in the process. This then linked into the alliance R&D project. This also linked into the mentoring and coaching strand and the alliance architecture strand of the Hargreaves maturity model.

Fairfields TSA case study

Some alliances used David Hargreaves's maturity model for TSAs (2011, 2012) to help establish their priorities and the focus of their pedagogy project. For example, **TKAT Alliance** chose to focus on how learning can be improved through effective student leadership and student voice because:

The outcomes of the maturity model audit indicated that this area would be most beneficial to the alliance if embedded into its structure... the over-arching objective of the alliance is to inspire learners and change lives through the delivery of good or better teaching in all of our academies, and we wanted to involve the learners in the process of achieving this goal, by identifying what good pedagogy looks like.

TKAT Alliance case study

Similarly **Camden Primary Partnership's** classroom-based mathematics project was informed by the reflection that as "a fledging alliance, our Hargreaves priorities were building social capital and JPD."

Alliances, such as the **Enfield TSA**, also used elements of the Hargreaves model to define the success and outcomes of their research. The three primary and three secondary schools in this project engaged in a cross-phase literacy pedagogy and established a cooperative model that the alliance believes has developed their alliance competencies 'in terms of high social capital, evaluation and challenge and distributing leadership to middle leaders' (Enfield TSA case study).

At the **North Liverpool TSP**, the project to understand the impact of a new designation of SLEs (as family support workers) underpinned the alliance's aims to develop sector-leading practice to support the needs of local nursery schools, and challenge accepted thinking about the role. At the **Cabot Learning Federation** in Bristol, their project was on improving the quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science: this focus was a major part of the alliance's strategic improvement plan and were also the subjects where the largest number of their SLE subject specialists were deployed.

Where the LA is a strategic partner in an alliance there is potential to agree initiatives on a locality basis. For **Portswood TSA**, their success in using a coaching model as a means to school improvement led them to consider whether this could become a key plank of their work as a TSA:

The question was, could this success also work in other schools? Through national support school work the coaching model was introduced into three schools and, along with other interventions, had significant impact upon standards in supported schools (average rise of 19 percentage points at L4+ across the three main supported schools).

Portswood TSA case study

The project sought to understand whether the coaching model could work across a number of schools where the culture would need to be developed by the staff and leaders of the school. The research then sought to capture the impact of the initiatives and analyse how the coaching model needed to evolve.

Key message 10 – draw on skills differently

Our tenth key message is that TSA leaders **need to utilise skills and behaviours differently to develop great pedagogy across an alliance compared with a single organisation** (ie school or federation). We highlighted this issue in our seventh modest claim from the research literature (Gu et al, 2012).

The evidence from teaching schools suggested that there were several reasons for the need for this different approach. As we mentioned in the spring 2014 interim report (Taylor et al, 2014), leadership approaches may need to vary depending on whether a school (or a named individual from the school) has bought into the project; is participating

because the individual has been told they have to represent the school in the project; or has had a previous relationship with the teaching school (or other schools in the project).

Alliance leaders found that a lack of formal levers over different staff meant a different kind of system leadership was needed – while still being able to monitor progress, assess the impact of projects, and ‘not let things drift’. A number of the teaching schools reflected how the leadership of an alliance can only be brought about by negotiation, persuasion and invitation. One head of a TSA described:

...the difference between school leadership and system leadership – and a very particular kind of system leadership, one where the leader is given no power over the parties involved. A headteacher works largely by persuasion, convincing his or her staff that the next initiative is a good thing. Ultimately, however, he or she has the power to direct and things can therefore get done. This is true too of a leader of a federation or an academy chain. Leadership of an [teaching school] alliance is altogether different because here the leader does not have the ability to direct and forward movement can only be brought about by negotiation, mutual agreement and mutual interest. Leading this kind of system can be very difficult indeed, depending as it does largely on the leader’s ability to engage the support of other leaders... partner schools can enthusiastically join the alliance and participate when and to whatever extent it suits them. And who can blame them?... getting alliance partners to see themselves as partners in a joint enterprise is vital to the success of an alliance but in reality something that is very difficult to do.

Jurassic Coast TSA case study

During our regional enquiry cluster meetings, we used a leadership learning log to reflect on the key skills and behaviours that leaders were utilising to develop and lead their projects. The aspects that were most commonly reported and were highlighted as being important in developing the work of the alliance were:

- Entrepreneurial judgement – encouraging new ideas and approaches as the alliance develops and being able to assess and mitigate risks from new ventures
- Interpersonal skills – practicing interpersonal skills, persuading through vision and modelling collaborative behaviours
- Motivation – creating and sustaining commitment across the alliance, aligning people to work towards a common goal, and being able to maintain motivation when there are multiple competing priorities and pressures on schools
- Discernment – understanding the different contexts of schools, identifying their distinctive problems and the strategies needed at different points in their improvement journeys

- Communication – creating a simple, clear narrative or strategy for what the alliance is trying to achieve
- Persistence and perseverance - chasing progress and people, and addressing situations and leaders that were impeding the progress of the project

At the concluding workshop for the project, teaching school leaders added the following key behaviours:

- Being efficient – following up e-mails, starting meetings on time, setting high expectations, chasing action points
- Humility – avoiding the appearance of one school having all the answers, pushing out the credit to others, and being sensitive to schools' situations
- Co-construction – with other schools, and encouraging a project implementation approach that sees the success of projects in terms of cultural and behavioural change as well as the impact of specific interventions/initiatives.
- Reflection – and enabling this in others

We have developed the following table to expand on some of the points made during our cluster meetings. The behaviours in the middle column appear to be equally applicable to the leadership of a single school or a TSA. In the left hand column are some behaviours more applicable to leading a school – ‘exercising performance management’, ‘being accountable’, ‘setting a direction’. In the right hand column are some similar examples referring to the behaviours commonly cited in the effective leadership of a TSA – ‘persuading through vision’, ‘influencing direction’ and ‘understanding different organisations’.

Figure 5: Drawing on leadership skills differently to lead an institution and a partnership



Hill (adapted), 2008

The **Camden Primary Partnership** reflected on the need for personal resilience and tenacity:

...setting up school visits. One headteacher, of a partner school asked the head of Eleanor Palmer Primary School not to lead the follow-up as he did not want another headteacher in his classrooms. This provoked much reflection but through honest conversations it was possible to resolve the issue.

Camden Primary Partnership case study

In a similar fashion, the co-ordinator of the **Central Bedfordshire TSP** project reflected on the need for persistence and organisation:

For my leadership of the project persistence and organisation were very important. I reminded SLT links at various points within the cycles as to what they should be doing and sometimes had to remind several times, not due to unwillingness on their part, but due to other workload pressures.

Central Bedfordshire TSP case study

For **Portswood TSA**, the facilitator reflected on the skills and behaviours needed for the success of their coaching project:

The approach taken by the Portswood TSA leaders has been to talk with schools about what they are aiming to achieve and then exercise a quality assurance function as they implement their own within-school coaching initiatives. These characteristics would tend to suggest that leaders of cross-school improvement projects need to be able to:

- spot the potential of an initiative and put in place the systems that will enable its impact to be replicated
- build consent and ownership among other heads and practitioners
- champion projects and, where necessary, provide reassurance
- demonstrate strong inter-personal skills
- see their work alongside other drivers of school improvement
- adapt to changing contexts as the programme develops

Portswood TSA case study

Key message 11 – align activity

Our eleventh key message is that alliance leaders need to **align different strands of activity to ensure they are more than the sum of the individual parts.**

As the Department for Education, NCTL, EEF and others provide funding for one-off programmes, alliance leaders need to look at how they can align planned CPD courses with a more school-based enquiry or classroom coaching-based focus. There is huge potential to link formal subject development training with more teacher-to-teacher JPD or coaching approaches to ensure that learning is translated into classroom settings.

As we noted in our spring 2014 interim report (Taylor et al, 2014), one of the leadership challenges for a TSA is being able to integrate a number of different networks within the overarching umbrella of an alliance. Different schools will be involved in providing ITT placements, to those participating in CPD, to those involved in a pedagogical research project. This is particularly the case where there might be the overlapping sub-set of a MAT involving the teaching school. One of the key pieces of learning for teaching schools has been that they are very rarely operating as one cohesive alliance with a stable and consistent set of member schools. This offers huge potential in enabling schools to draw on the support they need from different places, while for the alliance the opportunity to engage different schools on different agendas. However the importance of the need to link up complex and overlapping strands is reinforced.

For the **North Liverpool TSP**, their project in developing a new role for their SLEs has involved discussions with and visits to other nursery-led TSAs across England. This provides an example of the TSA developing its regional and national leadership role at the same time as pursuing the research project.

Similarly, there is a need to align the interventions in schools where those schools are in receipt of several forms of support from the local authority or an alliance. For **Portswood TSA**, the LA is a key strategic partner that commissions packages of support from the Alliance for schools that need it. There is also a good history of local primary schools in the Southampton area working together. As the case study comments:

These two factors have provided a clear and stable context for strategic leadership of the coaching programme. For example, when a task group is formed to co-ordinate improvement support for a particular school, the leaders of the coaching programme are often members of the task group and so can see the coaching contribution to a school's improvement journey in the context of the other interventions that may be commissioned at the same time.

Portswood TSA case study

At **Jurassic Coast TSA**, their learning trio approach has spread across the alliance and become recognised as a powerful CPD tool focusing as it does on mutual support and challenge.

Similarly, the research at **Lee Chapel TSA** in Essex that focused on improving outcomes for the most able pupils in literacy and mathematics dovetailed with their broader alliance aim to increase school-led ITT and train future teachers and leaders. This was achieved by aligning the research with broad alliance CPD and key programmes such as the improving teacher programme and the outstanding teacher programme.

Key message 12 – build trust and it will deepen and extend impact

Our twelfth key message is that alliance leaders should expect **cross-school projects to help build social capital between schools and break down barriers between schools** within a MAT or alliance. This was seen as a fundamental by many of the teaching school leaders.

We highlighted the importance of developing trust and social relations across groups of schools working in partnership in our third modest claim from the research evidence (Gu et al, 2012).

If a project goes well then leaders in participating schools may well become advocates of the alliance – both within and outside the alliance. For the **Portswood TSA**, the successful extension of their coaching programme across the alliance has been based

on a steady growth in word-of-mouth support and development of trust between schools as described by the project co-ordinator:

Another aspect of key learning has been the notion of a 'tipping point'. Developing a coaching culture has not been about 'high sale' techniques and touting for business, It has been a grass roots emergence linked to a word of mouth recommendation based upon the credibility of the success at Portswood Primary School over a number of years and, more recently, the success when developed in other Southampton schools.

As the success of the coaching model was seen more schools approached the alliance for training and support. As this initiative and other alliance work increased, schools became more open which again built further trust. Whole alliance meetings allowed success stories to be shared and other forums such as the primary heads conference also provided the chance to share what was on offer.

Portswood TSA case study

For the **Wroxham Transformative Learning Alliance:**

...the work of the school, local network and subsequent TSA is underpinned by a strong set of principles and leadership dispositions that seek to offer an inclusive, invitational approach to professional learning. *Learning without Limits* (2004) and *Creating Learning without Limits* (2012) document the Wroxham school leadership and improvement agenda that seeks to resist notions of 'fixed ability' and offer 'transformability' as a principled alternative.

The Wroxham Transformative Learning Alliance case study

For several teaching schools, the importance of the ethos of the alliance – as a way of developing trust and relationships – was not to be underestimated.

We have aimed to build a collaborative culture amongst alliance school leaders that will help colleagues to lead 'without limits'. We believe from feedback that we have received, that it is possible to extend the enabling culture of our school to the culture of a group of schools. Professional courage has been gained through reconnecting colleagues with core beliefs through coaching.

The Wroxham Transformative Learning Alliance material for NCTL event –
November 2014

Leaders of TSAs have been grappling with the challenges of how to develop trust and social capital across their alliances. As mentioned earlier, the success of individual projects in itself helps to develop social ties and build trust, thereby developing trust as a corporate asset across the alliance. When the research team asked a sample of our schools leaders involved in the project about the steps they would take to build trust

across an alliance they made a number of points, several linking to some of our earlier key messages:

- listen – and ask what schools want / can bring
- get into schools to meet senior teams to try and win hearts and minds
- identify schools' (and heads') needs and focus on the aspects that matter to all schools eg literacy
- understand the context of the alliance
- get the scaling right and know which schools to start with
- look for a range of communication methods to work for the different schools: newsletters, emails and meetings were all mentioned

For some TSAs, the 'nudge approach' had been found to be useful. To help grow a culture of working together to improve pedagogy, they used projects that have gone well to build on that success and engage schools in further work even where a school considered the initial work relatively peripheral to its improvement agenda.

Key message 13 – manage risks

Alliance leaders may find that broader developments - the lead school in an alliance losing its 'outstanding' designation, re-organisation of staffing within an academy trust, or some schools within the alliance forming a MAT - may destabilise or slow programmes / projects between schools.

Three of the lead teaching schools from our original 32 TSAs were inspected after 2012 and judged by Ofsted to be 'good' and subsequently lost their teaching school designation. For these TSAs, there were sometimes other schools in the alliance that were able to take on and support the core priorities of the TSA; for others, the main activity of the TSAs stopped. Other studies such as the *Teaching school evaluation interim report* (Gu, Rea, Hill, Dunford and Smethem; 2014³ have pointed to the risk to the teaching school initiative from the current accountability framework, and the consequences should teaching schools lose their Ofsted 'outstanding' status. Some TSAs are addressing the challenge of sustainability, and trying to succession plan and manage the risk of the teaching school losing its designation (for example, by another school in the alliance seeking to be designated as a teaching school).

³ [Link to teaching school evaluation report on gov.uk](#)

In terms of TSAs' specific projects designed to support the development of great pedagogy across a group of schools they could, in theory, continue outside the umbrella of a TSAs (especially if any funding had already been utilised). They would need to mobilise the necessary leadership and agree the co-ordinating capacity to be able to achieve this. However, in practice the disruption and relationship turbulence resulting from the loss of teaching school status often makes it difficult to sustain projects in their existing form.

One other point identified by the TSA leaders, to which we will briefly return in our conclusion, is that there is also a cultural risk to the success of the overall teaching school initiative. The idea of a 'self-improving system' rests partly on whether the alliances and partnerships between schools can be truly effective in developing practitioners, supporting vulnerable schools, and ensuring higher quality education for pupils. Where that ethos exists across an alliance it tends to foster projects, for example, on coaching, JPD, lesson study, leadership development, or building social capital and professional trust. For some projects that failed to make as much progress, the priorities of the alliance did not appear to be well aligned with the aims of the projects. In addition there appeared to be less of an appetite to work together in a deep and systematic way across a group of schools. There is a challenge for alliances nationally about whether they are all yet ready – as many clearly are – of taking on this different sort of system leadership role.

The two risks – the accountability and the cultural risk – are in fact linked. Schools are less likely to invest (in terms of time, personnel and commitment) in making the success of an alliance and developing it as a key driver of improved teaching and learning, if its status is fragile and temporary.

Challenges

In the spring 2014 interim report, there were highlighted a number of leadership challenges that were already apparent to our case study schools (Taylor et al, 2014). The key points which school leaders made about the actions that could be taken in response is replicated below as it remains highly relevant.

Where projects made slower than expected progress or failed to engage participating schools as they had expected, many of the reasons were the obverse of our key messages. For example, not anchoring the purpose of the project in the key priorities of the schools or the alliance was the consequence of not following key message 1; this resulted in lower levels of engagement or reduced commitment to the project.

Similarly the flip-side of securing headteacher engagement was that where alliance project leaders found it hard or were not able to secure headteacher commitment and understanding, projects either stalled or were not as effective as they could have been. Sometimes this resistance was due to weak leadership, sometimes to personality

differences and sometimes projects found themselves “battling the sense that R&D is less important”.

One of our alliances analysed the reasons why a number of schools had dropped out of their project while it was running. The lead school reflected that there had been insufficient ownership and leadership from the headteachers at some of the participating schools to ensure the project was given a high priority so that the activity was sustained.

Likewise although the empowering of middle leaders was one of the strong messages to come from many of the projects, the potential value of this could be lost if, for example, SLEs from one school were designated but then not used.

For some of the teaching schools, the relative immaturity of the alliances they were helping to establish was a key factor in delaying their ability to move forward with the project. For others, basic issues such as communicating with schools in the alliance and the variable effectiveness of some communication methods, particularly e-mail, were significant stumbling blocks.

Another key challenge was changing personnel – particularly where a project spanned more than one academic year. Quite often key leaders and staff involved in the enquiry moved on to another school and took on, or were promoted to, different roles. This meant some loss of momentum and having to rebuild the team and the focus.

Some of the most significant challenges encountered by the projects were those often experienced by schools leading this type of development activity: an uncertain, or changing, research focus; lack of leadership time and capacity to make progress, engage with others and gather evidence of progress; and other competing priorities or lack of support from senior leaders.

We mentioned one leadership challenge in working with a group of schools under key message 4: the fidelity (or not) to particular programmes or models of support. As one TSA leader reflected in conversation with the research team: “a key leadership challenge has been how far to ‘let schools go’ in adapting the coaching programme to their own contexts – without it undermining the basic principles underpinning the model.” This applies in other instances and is an important implementation challenge for TSAs. Alliance leaders need to ensure in replicating successful models or approaches that they are rightly adapting them to suit the context of other schools, but are retaining the main features that have made the difference and implementing them along suitably similar lines.

TSA leaders made the following points during the project about some of the actions that could be taken in response:

Figure 6: Leadership challenges and actions

Workshop discussion: leadership challenges	
Key leadership challenges	Actions in response
<i>Maintaining commitment, momentum and confidence</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular communication and working together. Personal tenacity and resilience to keep going. Structured meetings • Harnessing time and energy in a positive way. Role of Isos has been a good way of revisiting and articulating progress. Milestones along the way – reminders of achievement. Revisiting core purposes
<i>Ensuring continuity and capacity to lead</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SLT oversight and support. Build capacity in early stages and establish teams. Succession planning and sustainability, and anticipate drop outs
<i>Ensuring objectivity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use triangulation strategies (e.g. feedback). Involve critical friends e.g. HEI, Isos, R+D network
<i>Setting parameters v. risk taking</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a robust action plan
<i>Shifting priorities - constant change can make it difficult</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be realistic and flexible • Example – communications/status HEIs; work with a different HEI in order that professional partnerships can evolve. Ofsted drama – how to work together
<i>New way of working together, and theorising that process</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaching. Listening. Scaffolding. Giving time. Beyond hierarchy • Freedom to discover can be daunting...



R&D national themes interim report (Taylor et al, 2014)

Section 5: Conclusions and questions

We set out below several brief conclusions from our project and five strategic leadership questions for TSAs' future role in R&D projects.

Conclusions

We have re-affirmed our eight modest claims about leadership for learning in effective inter-school partnerships from 2012. Our evidence from the case study projects supports and complements the findings from our literature summary.

Since 2012, we have seen more research evidence which supports our observation that collaborative inter-school partnerships offer resources, expertise and opportunities for organisational change and improvement in teaching and learning. Emerging findings from case studies of 18 TSAs, for example, show that a collective sense of commitment to the learning and achievement of children binds partners together and drives the development of teachers and schools (Gu, Rea, Hill, Smethem and Dunford, 2014). Chapman and Mujis's (2013, 2014) analysis of school federations reminds us that the ways in which partnerships are structured and organised can make a significant difference to their impact on student outcomes. They found that federations are more likely to have a positive impact on student outcomes when partnerships involve higher and lower attaining schools. Analysis of the effects of academy chains (Hutchings, Francis and Vries, 2014) also suggests that the sponsored model of academy chains is itself not the single answer to improving the academic achievements of low income students. Rather, the key to success is strong leadership which is driven by a clear sense of moral purpose, direction and mission and which creates appropriate and responsive structures and cultures for a sustainable approach to growth.

Throughout this report we have explained 13 key messages for practitioners and system leaders about the leadership of TSAs and the development of great pedagogy. We might call them firm findings. They describe our new learning about the leadership of projects to develop pedagogy working across a group of schools, working within a school, and the leadership of TSAs to help develop great pedagogy. These firm findings represent the leadership practices that TSAs have found that work, and they advance our understanding of the ways in which TSAs can engage successfully with other schools.

Figure 7: Firm findings

- 1: Select appropriate projects
- 2: Engage schools (and their headteachers)
- 3: Scope and plan
- 4: Exercise flexibility
- 5: Empower middle leaders
- 6: Ensure headteacher sponsorship
- 7: Designate senior leader champions
- 8: Focus on development
- 9: Work to clear strategic priorities
- 10: Draw on skills differently
- 11: Align activity
- 12: Build trust and it will deepen and extend impact
- 13: Manage risks

Strategic leadership questions

We set out below five questions about the future role of TSAs in leading R&D activity.

1. **How can the Teaching School Council and TSAs articulate and lead a clear strategic vision for the role that TSAs will play in R&D over the next five years?** Our project has demonstrated that we are at the beginning of an important shift in the position of schools in leading innovation, development activity and research. This fits with a new professional development model that combines JPD, collaborative enquiry and school-based enquiry. This role needs nurturing and supporting if it is to flourish. The Teaching School Council and potentially a new Royal College of Teaching have important roles to play in describing a national ambition, working regionally to support TSAs to develop their roles, and being in the vanguard of this reform.
2. **How can the role of TSAs in leading R&D complement TSAs role in developing and leading a school-led system?** In our 13th key message we raised the importance of the ethos of TSAs, the need for them to develop deep and systematic relationships with their alliance schools, and the challenge of developing this system leader role nationally. Effective R&D activity across a TSA

has the potential to support this positive and inclusive ethos with the aim of developing practitioners, supporting vulnerable schools, and ensuring higher quality education for pupils.

3. **How can government and TSAs create the necessary time and capacity to enable practitioners involved in or co-ordinating R&D activity to both carry out the work and have the time to reflect on their learning?** We heard repeatedly from teaching school leaders how the impact of the work was often compromised when it was simply added to the existing day job. In part the answer lies within alliances – in them willing the means, creating the business models and being creative in adopting new leadership models. However, if the route to improved pedagogy lies in teachers working with teachers, both within and across schools, then this needs to be reflected in the way that funding and investment in school improvement is allocated – both nationally and locally.
4. **How can the leaders of TSAs use the opportunity of R&D activity to engage the currently un-engaged schools?** Latest information from the NCTL suggests that about a third of schools in England are currently engaged in some form with TSAs. This is significant progress in the space of three years. Nevertheless it still leaves many schools and their staff who are not engaged, sharing their practice with a TSA, and benefiting from the interaction with other professionals
5. **How can the leaders of TSAs make the most effective use of a variety of partners in developing this role?** John Stephens, deputy director, teaching schools & school improvement at the NCTL explained to the TSAs that had been involved in the project when they came together at a national event in November 2014 that the idea of a school-led system did not mean schools doing everything for themselves. The judicious use of key partners, whether HEIs, local authorities, or other organisations, to broker, facilitate and support, is an important feature of this new landscape.

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Appendix 1: Research summary

The following table includes details of the TSAs that were involved in the theme 3 project on the leadership of great pedagogy with their research focus. The table also includes links to further material where this is available.

Table 2: Alliance project focus

Teaching school alliance	Project research focus. Link to further material or case study where available
AET TSA	<p>Impact of a film and literacy project model on raising literacy standards and closing the gap in writing for year 5 and 7 children and its potential for the model to scale up across the academy chain.</p> <p>https://sites.google.com/a/aetinet.org/academies-enterprise-trust-learning-platform/key-stage-1/english/film-into-literacy</p>
Blackfriars TSA	<p>The goal is to develop the content of ITT to better prepare teachers for effectively dealing with SEN challenges.</p>
Cabot Learning Federation	<p>How to improve the quality of teaching and learning in English, mathematics and science through the deployment of SLEs and coaching teachers and middle leaders.</p>
Camden Primary Partnership	<p>The research is testing a model of classroom-based CPD and coaching that focuses on developing great classroom pedagogy and, building on a mathematics course, finding a way to embed it in other classrooms and empowering teachers to work with each other. At the same time the intention is to help our SLEs develop their skills, confidence and profile to support their future deployment in schools.</p> <p>http://www.camdentsa.org.uk/</p>
Central Bedfordshire TSP	<p>Investigating the quality of teaching across schools in the alliance through JPD and a lesson study project.</p>
Cheshire Leadership and Teaching Alliance	<p>To establish a joint understanding across the schools within the alliance of what constitutes good and outstanding teaching and learning. This will then lead on to setting up mentoring and systems to ensure 'everyday excellence' across all of the schools.</p> <p>http://www.cheshirelta.co.uk/page/research-development/1359</p>

Teaching school alliance	Project research focus. Link to further material or case study where available
Cornwall TSA	The aim of the project is to be able to develop a video interactive guidance methodology across phase in non-specialist settings to allow analysis and evaluation of the implications for leadership and impact on teaching that can be rolled out across the alliance.
Enfield TSA	How does leadership and CPD impact on meeting literacy needs across primary to secondary transfer?
Eos TSA	<p>The focus of the project initially was to investigate the impact of Project Tuning and peer-to-peer planning, involving teams of teachers across different schools, on the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils. In a second phase it investigated how to build a collaborative system which develops self-sustaining networks across a geographically widespread alliance.</p> <p>http://www.eoseducation.co.uk/</p>
Fairfields TSA	<p>Focus on the role of the school-based mentor within the School Direct programme: how can their development lead to better quality ITT provision?</p> <p>http://fairfields.northants.sch.uk/teaching-school-training/teaching-school-alliance/</p>
George Abbot TSA	<p>How peer-to-peer planning, observation and coaching linked to teacher self-assessment can support the practice of good and outstanding practitioners – by establishing networks and cycles of peer-to-peer working both within schools and across (secondary-primary) phase schools.</p> <p>http://www.georgeabbottraining.co.uk/home-ts/</p>
George Spencer TSA	The focus of the project is on JPD: what makes for an effective teacher learning community, and how can the role of an enquiry leader support this.
Jurassic Coast TSA	<p>Evolution of the 'trio' method for developing and delivering professional development across the TSA.</p> <p>http://www.jctsa.org.uk/category/r-d-leadership-log/</p>
The Kemnal Academies Trust	How to develop student leadership to improve the quality of teaching and leadership involving four academies within the Kemnal

Teaching school alliance	Project research focus. Link to further material or case study where available
TSA (TKAT)	Academy Trust chain.
Lambeth TSA	Trialing and developing new models of leadership with a specific project focus on 'vertical learning networks'.
Lee Chapel TSA	Identifying and sharing effective practice for improving pedagogy for the most able pupils in mathematics and literacy (level 6 pupils).
LEARN Alliance	<p>How middle leaders across a successful TSA can enable the development of great pedagogy which improves reading for two specific groups of year 7 pupils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • those who are highly numerate but have weaker verbal ability and therefore weaker reading skills; and • those with weak reading skills for whom schools receive the pupil premium <p>http://learnalliance.org.uk/</p>
Milton Keynes TSA	Improving teacher capacity and the quality of teaching and learning through a cluster model of improvement and coaching of teachers involved to improve the progress of targeted pupils.
New River Teaching Alliance	The project focused on agreeing criteria for identifying effective differentiation and sharing strategies to support teachers' development so that they have an effective approach to their differentiation work. The project centred around middle managers in three schools working together – mainly through a managed learning environment (MLE).
Ninestiles TSA	Using JPD and coaching / mentoring with primary schools: working through shared CPD and reviewing impact on the quality of teaching and pupil progress.
NELTA	<p>This project is centred on 'what makes highly effective school-based ITT?' with a particular focus on whether and how learner observation feedback has an impact on the quality of teaching and learning of trainee teachers (and teachers).</p> <p>http://nelta.co.uk/r-and-d/nelta-projects/leadership_of_great_pedagogy/</p>

Teaching school alliance	Project research focus. Link to further material or case study where available
North Liverpool TSP	<p>Establishing a new early years designation for an SLE: a specialist family support leader. The enquiry would be to consider how a specialist role might provide greater specialist support and early intervention, establish and appoint to the role, and investigate impact.</p> <p>http://www.northliverpoolteachingschool.org/developing-consistently-great-pedagogy.html</p>
Oxfordshire TSA	<p>What is the impact of different lesson observation and feedback systems in developing teachers' pedagogy?</p>
Peninsula TSA	<p>How to establish, across a subset of schools in the alliance, a joint understanding of what constitutes outstanding teaching and learning and then use this as foundation for a coaching-based model of improving practice.</p> <p>The second iteration of the enquiry is focused on how, once you have a clear and shared vision for outstanding teaching, you can transfer that effectively through systems for transfer of outstanding pedagogy.</p>
Pilgrim Learning TSA	<p>Working to develop mutual trust and social capital as the range of partnerships changes and develops, and analysing how lesson observations can be used to develop practice across alliance schools.</p>
Portswood TSA	<p>How training a network of coaches and mentors can act as a major lever for school improvement in terms of impacting upon the quality of teaching and achievement.</p> <p>http://www.ptsa.org.uk/page/research/research.php</p>
Ripley TSA	<p>How is the deployment of subject and practice experts being developed across the alliance to model practice (including the strategic use of SLEs)? How can we measure the effectiveness of the impact of SLE deployments?</p>
St Thomas More Catholic TSA	<p>How can shared CPD and school-to-school support have an impact on teaching and learning in other schools?</p> <p>http://www.st-thomasmore.org.uk/page/?title=Research+and+Development&pid=2</p>

Teaching school alliance	Project research focus. Link to further material or case study where available
	4
Sutton Secondary TSA	To introduce CPD and cross-school collaboration which will help to develop the skills and practice of second year teachers in four schools, focusing on the areas of engagement, questioning and assessment.
Chimney House Alliance	How can the CPD offer for alliance schools improve teaching and learning, and how can the leadership of CPD demonstrate a growth in system and alliance leadership?
The Wroxham Transformative Learning Alliance	Creating a culture of trust and developing high social capital, and using lesson study as a means to develop opportunities for colleagues within schools to have learning conversations that could extend beyond their own setting to other schools across the alliance. http://wroxhamtla.org.uk/research/

Appendix 2: Alliances in section 4

The following table lists the 13 key messages in section 4 of the report together with the TSAs which have been mentioned in the text as examples.

Key message	TSAs mentioned in Section 4	Key message	TSAs mentioned in Section 4
KM1	Camden Primary Partnership New River Teaching Alliance Cheshire Leadership and Teaching Alliance Blackfriars TSA Central Bedfordshire TSP George Abbot TSA Cornwall TSA	KM2	Jurassic Coast TSA Fairfields TSA The Wroxham Transformative Learning Alliance Central Bedfordshire TSP Portswood TSA George Abbot TSA
KM3	North Liverpool TSP Pilgrim Learning TSA George Spencer TSA LEARN TSA Portswood TSA Camden Primary Partnership George Abbot TSA Oxfordshire TSA Central Bedfordshire TSP New River Teaching Alliance TKAT Alliance	KM4	Sutton Secondary TSA NELTA Ninestiles TSA George Abbot TSA Portswood TSA AET TSA

Key message	TSA's mentioned in Section 4	Key message	TSA's mentioned in Section 4
KM5	<p>Sutton Secondary TSA</p> <p>North East London TSA</p> <p>TKAT Alliance</p> <p>George Abbot TSA</p> <p>Eos TSA</p> <p>Fairfields TSA</p> <p>Camden Primary Partnership</p> <p>Portswood TSA</p> <p>Jurassic Coast TSA</p> <p>George Spencer TSA</p>	KM6	<p>Milton Keynes TSA</p> <p>Camden Primary Partnership</p> <p>St Thomas More Catholic TSA</p> <p>George Abbot TSA</p> <p>Portswood TSA</p>
KM7	<p>North Liverpool TSP</p> <p>New River Teaching Alliance</p> <p>Fairfields TSA</p> <p>George Spencer TSA</p> <p>Chimney House Alliance</p> <p>Pilgrim Learning TSA</p> <p>Cheshire Leadership and Teaching Alliance</p> <p>Central Bedfordshire TSP</p> <p>Sutton Secondary TSA</p>	KM8	<p>NELTA</p> <p>George Abbot TSA</p> <p>Central Bedfordshire TSP</p> <p>Sutton Secondary TSA</p>
KM9	<p>FairfieldsTSA</p> <p>TKAT Alliance</p> <p>Camden Primary</p>	KM10	<p>Jurassic Coast TSA</p> <p>Camden Primary Partnership</p>

Key message	TSA's mentioned in Section 4	Key message	TSA's mentioned in Section 4
	Partnership North Liverpool TSP Portswood TSA Cabot Learning Federation Enfield TSA		Central Bedfordshire TSP Portswood TSA
KM11	North Liverpool TSA Portswood TSA Jurassic Coast TSA Lee Chapel TSA	KM12	Portswood TSA The Wroxham Transformative Learning Alliance
KM13	Anonymised		

Appendix 3: Example case studies

At the same time as publishing this final report, NCTL is also publishing example case studies from the theme 3 project. These case studies are referenced in the text of this report in section 4. They are published alongside the report as examples of the projects that were undertaken and the learning that was gathered. The published case studies have been selected to provide evidence from a range of school phases (primary, secondary and special), from different areas of the country, and from TSAs in both urban and rural settings. The published case studies also provide evidence from a range of different projects that have focussed on different pedagogical issues.

The case studies have been published together as a single document and can be found on the publications section of www.gov.uk/nctl

Appendix 4: Intervention toolkit

This toolkit was designed to assist leaders of teaching school alliances (TSAs) to select, deploy and evaluate useful interventions that would assist the development of their alliance.

The toolkit below provides ‘candidate interventions’ for TSA leaders to use to help them develop their alliances. The interventions are based on known practice by schools partnerships, federations and chains. Leaders will on an alliance basis need to:

- develop and share a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their alliance and the issues that they need to address
- consider which of the candidate interventions is most likely to help with addressing the particular need(s) of the alliance
- consider how to create ownership of the development agenda across the alliance
- decide how a particular intervention should be led and implemented
- agree their leadership role in supporting the process
- establish at the outset their ‘success’ criteria and agree measures that will be used to assess progress

The interventions have not been linked to particular phases of maturity. Part of the purpose of the enquiry will be to try and identify whether particular interventions are more suited to different phases of an alliance’s development and maturity.

The list of candidate interventions is a beginning and is not meant to be exhaustive. If teaching schools choose to use an intervention not on the list they should try and identify whether there is previous practice that would provide a guide to its likely efficacy. Some of the interventions appear under more than one dimension of the maturity matrix.

Throughout the process alliance leaders need to bear in mind that the interventions are, of course, a means to an end: to support the development of consistently great pedagogy across the alliance.

Candidate interventions for joint practice development	
Joint practice development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating systematic joint lesson planning across schools • Developing of shared approaches to formative assessment • Developing a common model for operating learning walks • Agreeing and operating a shared approach to lesson observation – with leaders and other teachers observing each other’s lessons across the alliance • Shared CPD programmes based on a needs analysis • Introducing improving teacher programme and / or outstanding teacher programme • Deploying subject and practice experts across the alliance to model practice (including strategic use of SLEs) • Agreeing templates and protocols for sharing data on performance and progress • Developing a bank of shared resources for teachers across the alliance to draw on • Running teacher / student learning commissions to build a shared understanding of what effective learning looks like • Developing shared models for learning from student voice
Talent identification and development through distributed leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking data analysis to establish profile of leadership posts that are likely to be needed at different levels across the alliance • Auditing skills that leaders at different levels consider they lack • Developing a shared career path from NQT through to executive leadership • Organising emerging and middle leadership development programmes on an alliance basis • Sharing procurement of or partnering with an HEI to deliver an alliance-based Masters’ programme

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreeing arrangements for assigning middle and senior leaders to other schools for two-week spells, for a term or a year • Providing opportunities for developing leaders to be guests for a year on a senior leadership team • Holding alliance-wide training programmes for governors • Establishing an alliance-wide student parliament • Introducing an alliance-wide student leadership programme
Mentoring and coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting up an alliance-wide training programme on mentoring • Agreeing alliance-wide criteria on designating and using coaches • Using outstanding facilitator programme and / or training for accrediting a facilitator for middle leadership programmes • Using performance appraisal to establish mentoring and coaching needs • Developing student peer-to-peer mentoring and/or coaching within and across schools in the alliance • Organising alliance-wide training for student mentors and coaches • Using national leaders of governors with governing bodies across the alliance to sharpen accountability
Distributed staff information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreeing criteria for identifying the best teachers • Deploying subject and practice experts across the alliance to model practice (including strategic use of SLEs) • Agreeing a system for identified lead practitioners to be advertised across the alliance along with arrangements for accessing their expertise • Developing an alliance-wide initiative to seek out pockets of excellence that can be shared across the alliance • Using performance appraisal to establish mentoring and

	<p>coaching needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying and deploying governors with particular skills across the alliance
<p>Candidate interventions for partnership</p>	
<p>High social capital</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using an external facilitator to help build trust and broker relationships • Employing a coach for one day per month for the alliance strategic leadership team • Holding half-termly away days to focus on review and strategy • Organising joint staff conferences for schools across the alliances • Facilitating alliance-wide meetings of chairs of governors • Developing a shared vision, values and priorities for the alliance • Instituting a programme for alliance leaders to shadow each other and understand the culture of different schools within the alliance • Establishing protocols for handling differences – and for joining and leaving the alliance • Putting in place systematic arrangements for enabling and encouraging staff and students at all levels to interact with peers from other schools within the alliance • Using staff, student and governor feedback on alliance programmes to address issues and problems and move the alliance forward • Using peer review by other alliances to address issues and problems and move the alliance forward • Ensuring communications across the alliance are transparent, truthful and adopt a ‘plain speaking’ approach • Delivering successful results for the alliance (even quick

	wins) to establish credibility
Fit governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreeing clear systems and remits (supported by formal protocols where necessary) for governing and managing the alliance at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ at formal accountability level ○ strategic partner level ○ operational co-ordination level ○ delivery of specific programmes • Embedding business management expertise into both strategic and operational decision making within the alliance • Establishing transparent budget arrangements (through for example) a trading account • Setting up a formal company to embrace and formalise responsibility for the growing scope of alliance activity • Developing a three-year business plan for the alliance's activities • Formally identifying and managing the risks associated with the alliance's planned range of activities
Evaluation and challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreeing and implementing quality assurance systems for alliance initiatives • Implementing arrangements for reviewing quality assurance data regularly • Agreeing systems for reporting to governors • Introducing arrangements for alliance schools to 'inspect' each other and / or review each other's performance and progress data and self-evaluations • Using peer review by another alliance to address issues and problems and move the alliance forward • Using staff, student and governor feedback on alliance programmes to address issues and problems and move the

	alliance forward
Distributed system leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreeing clear systems and remits (supported by formal protocols where necessary) for governing and managing the alliance at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ formal accountability level ○ strategic partner level ○ operational co-ordination level ○ delivery of specific programmes • Alliance leaders formally reviewing with external support their strengths and weaknesses in terms of 'softer' skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ persuading ○ influencing ○ listening • Agreeing targets for SLEs working across the alliance in supporting other schools
Candidate interventions for collaborative capital	
Analytic investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreeing and operating a shared approach to lesson observation – with leaders and other teachers observing each other's lessons across the alliance • Agreed templates and protocols for sharing data on performance and progress • Alliance leaders working in pairs to establish shared approaches to 'diagnosing' other schools' improvement needs • Developing an alliance-wide due diligence framework to be used in assessing how to support another school • Brokering an agreement with the local authority(ies) on access data to schools in the area with a view to jointly identifying schools potentially needing support • Introducing arrangements for alliance schools to 'inspect'

	<p>each other and / or review each other's performance and progress data and self-evaluations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreeing and implementing quality assurance systems for alliance initiatives • Implementing arrangements for reviewing quality assurance data regularly
Creative entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedding business management expertise into both strategic and operational decision making within the alliance • Establishing transparent budget arrangements (through for example) a trading account • Developing budgets based estimates of costs and revenue for all the main streams of alliance activity • Agreeing a protocol for deciding the basis (and, where applicable, the rates) for providing services and support to schools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ within the alliance ○ outside the alliance • Developing a three-year business plan for the alliance's activities • Formally identifying and managing the risks associated with proposed new alliance activities • Agreeing formal system for monitoring revenue and expenditure and reporting to governors • Agreeing systems for identifying and bidding for funding opportunities
Disciplined innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a shared understanding with strategic partners across the alliance (including HEIs) about what disciplined innovations and school-based enquiry means • Identifying clear priority areas that would benefit from an enquiry project • Equipping a core of key staff and students with research

	<p>skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling as many schools as possible to participate in an action learning project
Alliance architecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using staff, student and governor feedback on alliance programmes to address issues and problems and move the alliance forward • Using peer review by other alliances to address issues and problems and move the alliance forward • Establishing protocols for handling differences – and for joining and leaving the alliance • Alliance leaders formally reviewing with external support their strengths and weaknesses in terms of ‘softer’ skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ persuading ○ influencing ○ listening



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