

Mentoring-coaching: moving beyond the theory.

A report as a consequence of the
sabbatical leave taken by John Heyes,
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Foreword

This report was initially planned to be solely on the topic of mentoring and coaching; however in the months between submission and completion an important document was released by the Ministry of Education: ***Teacher Professional Learning and Development – Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration***. Also as my knowledge and understanding developed of mentoring-coaching it made sense for me to consider in my report how practicing principals might be able to act as a mentor-coach within their schools. As a consequence my report has become more of a personal mentoring-coaching response to the BES rather than yet another argument for the centrality of coaching and mentoring of teachers within schools.

Mentoring-coaching in relation to the ideas contained in the BES

In the foreword to the BES Dr Earl states: *“Many factors influence student learning, but it is increasingly clear that what teachers know and are able to do is one of the most important of all.”* (page vii) Later she states, *“...effective professional learning is a powerful lever for getting the kinds of change that can enhance student learning.”* (page ix)

Robin Duff, president of the PPTA reinforces this sentiment when he writes, *“... quality professional learning comes from providing opportunities for each teacher to engage at a deep level with ideas and approaches.”* (page xii)

The BES then moves on to discuss the place of External Expertise and bluntly states, *“It is unlikely that any group of professionals would be able to manage this level of new learning without support and challenge from someone with expertise in this area. It is not sufficient simply to provide time and opportunity”*; however there is a caveat to this, *“Experts need more than knowledge of the content of changes in teaching practice that might make a difference to students; they also need to know how to make the content meaningful to teachers and manageable within the context of teaching practice.”* (page xxix)

And this is where mentoring-coaching comes into its own. Barry Joy, of the London Centre for Leadership in Learning, sees the role of the expert as a mentor-coach. A person who *“helps another to think things through”* (from course material). To Joy the role of the mentor-coach is not that of disengaged expert but rather someone who *“provides great opportunities to help someone else reach their potential as the same time (as) developing a whole range of skills in the mentor-coach.”* (from course material). This work of Joy’s picks up the themes of coaching as a means of building educational leadership capacity as espoused by Jan Robertson in her work **Coaching Leadership, NZCER Press, Wellington, 2005.**

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Throughout this important work Robertson argues persuasively for the power of coaching and concludes with the sentiments:

Essentially coaching is boundary breaking because it is a powerful learning methodology. It allows for the development of a particular kind of organisational culture in which authentic learning and leadership are the two key components for all participants ... those who experience the coaching relationship with their colleagues bring these qualities and practices to their relationship and work ... They will be people who will have the courage to create opportunities for critical conversations centred on continual learning and improvement. (page 197)

Now we already see the nascent stirrings of this philosophy being created in New Zealand through the First Time Principals' programme where participants gain the support of a mentor as they begin their practice. But once this concludes, unless a private arrangement is made to continue, there is no further use made of this dynamic learning tool and professional support mechanism. The only other contact that principals may receive with mentoring is should they choose to enrol, after three (originally five) years of practice, in the Principals' Development Planning Centre. Here a principal becomes immersed in an intensive week-long professional learning session where each day concludes with anything up to hour-long powerful learning conversations with a mentor-coach. But this too is essentially a one-off experience and the terms mentor or coach are not used.

With the continuing debate on the role and function of principals within the New Zealand educational context I urge for careful consideration to be given by the Ministry of Education to investigate how all principals could be encouraged to participate in mentoring.

Definition of mentoring-coaching

It is useful at this point to make clear exactly what is meant by a mentor-coach. I had to adjust my mental picture of what a mentor is once I recognised that Barry Joy of the London Centre used the term to define a role, rather than a power-relationship. So if you carry an image of mentoring that involves a young neophyte kneeling at the feet of an older wiser expert who dispenses sage advice then you need to accept that the London Centre does not subscribe to this image. Mentoring-coaching is seen as a six-stage process; with the first three stages being mentoring that moves to the last three stages as being coaching.

Mentoring is seen as involving the skills of listening, questioning, and empathising – essentially establishing and maintaining a relationship with others. This is perceived as being holistic, long-term and not delivered by the mentee's line manager. The aim is to allow the individual to identify key issues or points of focus that they recognise in their professional practice and then to establish responsibility and ownership of a commitment to change.

So long as the mentoring has been successful there is then the potential to move into coaching. This by contrast is specific and short-term, where the coach assists the individual to envision positive outcomes from the coaching and to generate the possible first steps towards achieving this outcome. The coach then assists the individual to decide on the preferred approach or approaches and then works alongside the individual to ensure commitment to action.

As can be seen the biggest challenge for a mentor-coach is to avoid slipping back into the role of a traditional mentor – one who has all the answers. As the course material carefully explained:

Skilful questioning is perhaps the most valuable arrow in the mentor-coach's quiver. The key is to question in a way that makes the learner do the thinking, frame solutions and do the work – with the help of the empathetic mentor

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coach... You have to listen, observe, interrupt, think on your toes, and be ready to come up with an appropriate question that will further prompt the mentee/coachee's thinking... The ultimate test of quality for the mentor-coach's questioning is the quality of the resulting questions raised by the mentee/coachee.

Barry Joy further developed this client responsibility approach when he presented material adapted from O'Neill:

Attitudes of the mentor coach:

- You believe that the mentees-coachees have to come up with approaches that they are comfortable with rather than uncritically adopting yours.*
- You know that you are involved for a relatively short time and that the mentees-coachees are the ones who have to live with their results.*
- You accept that a "good enough" action by a committed and motivated mentee-coachee is ten times better than an outstanding action on your part that creates passivity and dependency on the mentee-coachee.*
- You focus on the mentee-coachee's strengths.*

Behaviours of the mentor-coach:

- You stimulate the mentees'-coachees' thinking so that they know and understand better their role.*
- You seek opportunities to enable the mentee-coachee to make informed decisions and to articulate that decision clearly to others.*
- You aim for an 80% (mentee-coachee) 20% (you) ratio of talking.*
- You invite the mentee-coachee to keep "tuned in" and to stay in a productive relationship with other stakeholders.*

(From course material)

Putting it all together

Many years ago Michael Barber wrote his provocative work **The Learning Game – Arguments for an Education Revolution**, London, 1996 and his sentiments on Tony Blair's England remain pertinent for New Zealand to this day:

Teachers need to learn to keep up to date and to improve their performance in line with society's ever increasing expectations. They need to learn to implement government reforms and to make use of advances in technology. They need to learn to address the weaknesses they will identify from time to time in their performances. They need to learn to stay effective as society in general and the communities in which they work change. But most of all they need to learn because otherwise they will die professionally. (pages 234-5)

The BES picks up this theme

It appears from this analysis that teachers require similar conditions to students when in-depth leanings being promoted; that is they need multiple opportunities to learn though a range of activates. (p xxxvii)

It is not surprising that teachers, like other learners, need a powerful reason to engage with new information in sufficient depth to change their practice. (p xxxviii)

The focus of this new knowledge was on the links between teaching and its impact on student learning. The professional learning environment provided teachers with extended opportunities to learn though a variety of activities and assisted them to integrate new learning into alternative forms of practice. (p xlv)

Professional development that led to sustained better practice had a focus on developing teachers' pedagogical content knowledge in sufficient depth to

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form the basis of principled decision about practice ... participants needed the organisational support of their school in terms of the evidence base, collective goals to aim for, and circumstances to motivate improvement. (p xlvi)

Despite the persuasiveness of this line of thought the underlying challenge in New Zealand is that schools are not resourced to allow them to invest more than intellectual support for this approach.

The BES also recognises that:

While motivation plays a key role for all learners, as adults, teacher learners are less likely than school-aged students to engage in new learning experiences if they do not see the relevance to their professional lives. The immediate demands of everyday teaching inevitably compete with the demands of professional learning. For busy and overworked teachers to devote effort to engage with new learning and changing their practice, they need a good reason. Faced with a new teaching strategy, teachers want to know what is practical and useful and they are unlikely to sustain their involvement if the learning experience is not sufficiently meaningful. (p 12)

And it is timely and appropriate to re-read the above paragraph replacing the word **teachers** with **principals**.

The BES continues to present the potential that learning communities offer the profession:

... the establishment of professional learning communities was a feature of all the core studies and some of the supplementary studies. To be effective, these communities needed to have input from an expert leader, establish common goals, and be concerned with the learning of students who had similar needs. (page 154)

The BES devotes time to discussing the role of school leaders in promoting teacher professional development when it quotes from Stein and Nash:

Professional development for teachers is not sufficient to change instructional practice, especially across an entire system. Teachers must believe that serious engagement in their own learning is part and parcel of what it means to be a professional and they must expect to be held accountable for continually improving instructional practice. Similarly, principals must not only be capable of providing professional development for their teachers, but also have the knowledge, skills, and strength of character to hold teachers accountable for integrating what they have learned in professional development into their ongoing practice (page 192)

Michael Fullan in **Turnaround Leadership** expresses the above sentiment in this way:

... What on earth is going to motivate teachers to change? The answer has to be deep engagement with other colleagues and with mentors in exploring, refining and improving their practice as well as setting up an environment in which this not only can happen but is encouraged, rewarded and pressed to happen ... the only way we can accomplish the changes we need is through intense focus on improving classroom practice... Teachers and teacher leaders will have to take some risks here. It is one area that is both powerful and within the control of teachers: break down the autonomy of the classroom so that greater consistency of effective practice can be achieved... (pp 57 – 58)

The BES concludes with a realistic statement on the challenge of “sustainability”:

Changing teaching practice in ways that have a significant impact of student outcomes is not easy. Policy and organisational contexts that continually shift priorities ... with little understanding/evaluation of how current practice is impacting on desired outcomes for students, undermine the sustainability of changes already underway. Innovation needs to be carefully balanced with

consolidation if professional learning experiences are to impact positively on student outcomes. (p 225)

Mentoring-coaching in the wider context

So here lies the challenge for not just a school but for the entire New Zealand education service. New Zealand, as every other OECD country, is facing the reality that over the next 15 years the current baby-boomers in senior management positions will be reaching retirement age and indications are that there will be a dearth of younger educational practitioners, either able or willing, to move into these senior management positions.

It is timely to recognise that education is not alone in this plight. The New Zealand Herald on Thursday June 19, 2008 ran an article carrying the headline:

Leadership shortage looming.

The article presented the following facts:

59% of medium-sized firms are run by people over 50; 23% are run by people over 60; 63% of owners are concerned about who will take over; and 17% have done something about it. The article then looked at the issue of succession planning and presented it in the following terms:

Succession planning was all the more important because of a demographic "tsunami" on its way ... Generation X – the 35-45 year olds who should be the next generation of business owners – is much smaller in numbers than the baby-boomer generation looking to retire, both because of lower birth rates and because of a higher proportion still overseas.

It is useful to recognise just how many educational initiatives there are across the OECD that are cognisant of the above reality and value the use of mentoring-coaching. To feature just two:

In Scotland, Continuing Professional Developments used SEED (Social Economy Enterprise Development Fund) funding to set up an initiative to build capacity in coaching and mentoring across local authorities. This was to meet the commitment that had been made to develop coaching and mentoring opportunities. There is now widespread activity across almost all of the local

authorities in Scotland involving significant numbers of professional staff who are taking coaching and mentoring forward in different ways:

- In support of teaching and learning;
- As part of their leadership of management approach;
- In collaborative work with peers.

In Boston (United States of America) the Boston Plan for Excellence in the Public Schools includes Collaborative Coaching and Learning which sees groups of teachers spending eight-week long courses analysing a particular instructional strategy through inquiry, lab sites and follow up – all with the support of an expert coach. It is interesting to note that this work placed the principal at the heart of the matter. In *Straight Talk about CCL: A Guide for School Leaders* it states:

“As you know, principal/headmaster leadership profoundly affects what gets done at a school. This is particularly true when it comes to transforming the way things are usually done, as CCL does.”

The current initiatives revolving around Kiwi Leadership are the first steps to attempt to ameliorate the dire effects of this future “tsunami”, but I believe that mentoring-coaching must also be firmly embedded in this thinking. The experience-rich resource of the current baby-boomers in senior management positions needs to be tapped to ensure that the potential hiatus in educational leadership does not occur. This will involve major investment by the Ministry of Education in mentor-coaching programmes and also the presentation to current school leaders of viable career moves into the area of mentoring-coaching.

This development is also supported by the current work of Prof Viviane Robinson whose BES on School Leadership is currently in the editing process. In her monograph delivered as the ACEL William Walker Oration for 2007 Robinson draws on her literature search for the BES and presents the fact that the largest effect size in studies of leadership dimensions is that of Promoting and Participating in Teacher Learning and Development. This

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dimension is defined as being: *Leadership that not only promotes, but directly participates with teachers in formal or informal professional learning.* (ACEL Monograph Series, Number 41. October 2007, page 8)

Robinson further develops this line of argument when she expands on the seven qualities of school leadership and concludes her list with “*involving school leaders who supported the learning by setting and monitoring targets and **developing the leadership of others*** (my emphasis). (Page 17)

Robinson concludes by recognising that her analysis is “*limited by the small number of available studies*”. (p21) She also states that she “does not indicate the particular qualities of teacher professional development that leaders need to promote.” She does point out that: *If the research focus shifted to leaders’ promotion of, and **participation in**,* (my emphasis) *the kinds of professional development that had a demonstrable impact on students as well as on the participating teachers, then the impact of this leadership dimension on student outcomes is likely to be even larger than that reported to date.”* (page 22)

This “... participation in... developing the leadership of others...” goes to the very heart of the mentoring-coaching relationship. The London Centre for Leadership in Learning in its **Guidelines for Mentoring-Coaching** says:

5) The goal of mentoring-coaching is to help the mentee/coaches progress professionally in ways which both address their work-related issues and benefit the learning community.

So what is a principal to do? In most schools the Specialist Classroom Teacher goes some way to fulfilling this mentoring-coaching role, but with the limited nature of this resource there are many teachers on a staff who are not able to access the benefits of entering a mentoring-coaching relationship. So no matter how supportive a principal is of the work that the SCT does it is clear that the SCT resource is not enough to be able to offer all the mentoring-coaching that could move the whole school forward.

Who can a principal mentor-coach?

This raises the question as to who within the school should the current principal be involved with as a mentor-coach. With the various legal responsibilities on a principal as regards competency and disciplinary issues it would appear that a principal would have to restrict the mentoring-coaching to those who have already moved into middle management and who express a willingness to engage in the process. For the guidelines of mentor-coaching also state:

- 1) The mentoring-coaching relationship is voluntary for both parties.
- 2) It is crucial that the confidentiality of conversation between mentor-coach and the mentee-coachee is guaranteed.
- 3) Any notes about mentoring-coaching meetings should be made and kept in absolute confidence.

It should be obvious from the above that the possibility for a principal to be a mentor-coach is restricted to those with recognised potential who will not bring to the relationship any factors that will compromise the ability of the principal to fulfil these legal requirements.

Nearly 20 years ago Peter Senge began to develop his theories on leadership in **The Fifth Discipline** and he came to recognise that in learning organisations the leaders needed to be “designers, stewards, and teachers.” (page 340) He develops this further when he writes:

“Leader as teacher” is not about “teaching” people how to achieve their vision. It is about fostering learning, for everyone. Such leaders help people throughout the organisation develop systemic understandings. (page 356)

Notwithstanding the above, a principal is still able to exert the mentor-coach role by endeavouring to embed in the entire school the centrality of mentoring-coaching. At Swiss Cottage School the head teacher Kay Bedford ensures that all applicants for positions, both teaching and support staff, are aware that the whole school professional development revolves around mentoring-coaching. (Refer Appendix for Swiss Cottage School Information Booklet)

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It is pertinent for us to look back over the past 20 years. This is nearly the same length of time that Tomorrow's Schools has been in existence. So here we are nearly a decade into the 21st Century and it is only now that the weight of 20 year's theory and practice is coming to bear on schools in New Zealand, and as I have said we are doing this in the knowledge of the "tsunami" that lies ahead of us in the second decade of this century.

Despite the resourcing that has gone into developing the Kiwi Leadership package, and the creation and support of the Specialist Classroom Teacher, I do not believe that the Ministry of Education has looked sufficiently widely at how to resource the potential that mentoring-coaching offers within our schools.

Recommendations:

All principals receive training in mentoring-coaching.

All principals are encouraged to enter into a mentoring relationship with a trusted colleague.

Principals offer mentoring-coaching to middle-managers within their schools.

Further resourcing be given to extend the work of the specialist classroom teacher.

Appendix:

Swiss Cottage Specialist SEN School

Headteacher: Kay Bedford MA



"There is an unswerving belief that focussing on positive relationships is the heart of the school's success and the emphasis is on best practice and excellence."

MISSION STATEMENT

Swiss Cottage School is committed to providing for all individuals a positive ethos and quality of education, that will facilitate the development of self confidence, strategies and skills for successful learning, and the ability to use them in all aspects of life.

INFORMATION BOOKLET

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ABOUT SWISS COTTAGE SPECIALIST SCHOOL

1. GENERAL

History

Swiss Cottage School is an amalgamation of two special schools. The amalgamation took place in April 1995. Since the amalgamation,

- We have had three 'outstanding' Ofsted inspections (July '98; Dec '02 and Feb '07). This has been achieved by only a handful of schools in the country.
- We gained 'Investor in People' recognition first in February '99, re-recognition in October 2000 and in July 2003 we gained liP Profile (all L4's) and Leadership and Management. In 2004 we became a 'Champion liP Organisation' and gained re-recognition in July 2006.
- We became a Beacon School in January 2000; and a Specialist School for SEN in Sept 2006.
- The school has expanded to take 143 children, and is still hugely oversubscribed. It is a first choice school for many parents.
- The range of needs has widened and become more complex
- Overtime we have won a number of Curriculum Awards e.g. Sportsmark, Active Mark, 2 Achievement Awards, Artsmark, and NAACE
- In September 2006 we became a Specialist School for SEN – cognition and learning.

Organisation

The school is situated on an attractive site, in a prosperous area, well served by public transport. There is very limited parking on site for staff. Instead, staff travel to and from school by bike, foot or on public transport.

The school has 4 Key Stages – Early years (which includes an Assessment Nursery class)/ Reception, KS 1/2, KS3 & KS4. The Assessment Nursery class caters for children with a wider range of special needs than the rest of the school and only some of the children from the Assessment Nursery Class move into the main school – others go to specialist provision elsewhere.

The main school (Key Stage 1-4) caters for students with predominately learning, communication and physical needs, but with an increasing number of children with ASD.

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In each department, students are taught in small groups with a very high level of adult support. The size of the group depends on the age and special needs of the students in the group, e.g. Reception class may have 6 students and 4 staff; Year 11 may have 12 students with 3 staff.

Most class groups have a teaching team comprising a teacher and 2-3 full time Teaching Assistants (TAs).

Management of the School

School Leadership Team comprises:

- Senior Leadership Team: Headteacher; 2 Deputy Head teachers; 2 Assistant Heads and Bursar.

“Leadership and management are exceptionally strong and successfully dispersed throughout the staff so that all have the responsibility for learner’s achievements” **Ofsted Feb 2007**

“Your approach to people development and leadership and management is groundbreaking and innovative” **liP 2003**

Key Stage Teams: These are each led by 2 teachers with TLR responsibilities for learners & learning.

“Your middle managers are articulate, focused and show a keenness and enthusiasm to develop their teams”. **liP 2003**

Teaching Teams: Class teacher and teaching assistant/s.

“Swiss Cottage is an extremely successful school, achieving excellence in its work. The Headteacher’s excellent leadership is visionary, dynamic and inspirational to the pupils, parents and staff alike. Leadership at other levels is also excellent, providing clarity of purpose and direction for continued improvements. Pupils, by the time they leave, are as independent as possible and many gain nationally recognised awards. A high proportion of the teaching is very good and a significant amount is excellent, leading to pupils achieving very well over time. There is an excellent atmosphere for learning, where expectations are high, yet realistic, and the pupils’ achievements and effort are paramount. The school provides very good value for money and has the capacity to sustain excellence. The school is justifiably proud of its ‘Beacon’ status, recently confirmed for another three years, for all areas of its work, and has numerous awards locally and nationally.”

Ofsted '02

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School Development Plan (SDP):

This plan is drawn up in consultation with the whole school, from the Areas for Improvement identified in the whole school self-evaluation process. It is fully costed; has whole school, and individual targets (performance development), and is supported at each level by a Continuing Professional Development programme (CPD).

Investor in People (IiP):

We gained recognition in February '99 and re-recognition in Oct' 2000, then again in July 2003 and July 2006.

We chose to be assessed using the new Profile tool, in July 2003. Organisations are assessed on 23 indicators at levels 1,2,3,4. We were the first organisation in the UK to gain level 4 on all 23 indicators, and remain the only organisation to have achieved this to this date.

We were named as a 'Champion IiP organisation' in May 2004, and look forward to re-recognition in Sept 2007.

"The school was a pleasure to assess" IiP February '99.

"It was a privilege to have the opportunity to undertake this review and, like all who visit the school, I emerged inspired and full of admiration for all who work there" IiP July '06

Performance Development:

All staff have regular performance development meetings with Senior Staff. Based on their Job description and Teachers Standards (teachers only), they draw up agreed action plans based on the SDP objectives. Progress on these plans is formally reviewed at the end of each year and a report presented to Governors. These meetings are part of our Staff Development Programme and are used to help staff do their job even better.

"The atmosphere in the school is almost tangible; it feels upbeat and very productive.

...

The supportive environment at Swiss Cottage School provides a firm foundation for performance based assessment and training and development needs identification." IiP 2000

Our Staff

We have a very favourable pupil: teacher ratio (approx 2:1) and a trained and developing work force. We currently have 20 teaching staff. We also have 43 support staff. We have 3 premises staff, 5 administration staff, 1 school nurse and a team of physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech therapists, who work on site with our students and also in the local

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community. We also have visiting psychotherapists from the Tavistock who work with our children and their families on site.

“Team work is very strong; adults cooperate and collaborate exceptionally well and contribute much additional effort to enrich the pupils’ education.

...

The outstanding opportunities for continuous professional development, equip staff, enable them to improve their practice, and develop all adults’ potential for the overall benefit of the pupils.

...

There is great emphasis upon working together as a team, and the school has clear principles established for building and sustaining strong professional relationships.

...

There is a high degree of satisfaction expressed by staff at the school as they feel valued and appreciated for their work. This means they contribute additional effort, work as efficiently as possible and give of their very best.”

Ofsted ‘02

“The level of commitment demonstrated by staff at the school is extremely high. Staff are positive, open and friendly. They speak with enthusiasm about the school, the students and each other. The atmosphere in the school is almost tangible. It feels upbeat and very productive.” **liP 2000**

Staff at every level are enthusiastic and passionate about their work” **liP2003**

Our Students

Our students are aged 2-16 years. We currently have 53% who have English as an Additional Language. The most common languages after English are Bengali, Somali and Arabic.

“The very high proportion of good, very good and excellent teaching ensures that all pupils achieve high standards for their degree of special educational needs; teaching assistants make an excellent contribution to the pupils’ learning.

...

“The excellent relationships between learners and staff underpin learner’s outstanding behaviour, enjoyment and willingness to conform and take part in, all that is offered” **Ofsted Feb ‘07**

Our Parents

Parents and students agree a contract on entering the school. Parents continue to be overwhelmingly supportive of the school. We have good attendance (approximately 50%) at Parents' events and 100% parental attendance at Annual Reviews. Ofsted(99) described parents as "overwhelmingly supportive".

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“The school has a very strong partnership with parents.”

Ofsted '02

“.....parents have extremely high satisfaction with every aspect of the school”

Ofsted Feb '07

Our Governors

They are active, knowledgeable and supportive of the school. The whole Governing Body meets once every half term and committees meet regularly as required e.g. Finance and Premises Committee meets once per month; Curriculum Committee, Personnel Committee and Student Welfare Committee meet as needed.

“The governing body is led very ably, and governors bring a wide range of skills and expertise to the school; they have a clear and strategic overview and hold the school rigorously to account.”

Ofsted '02

“Governance is fully effective” **Ofsted Feb '07**

Camden Education Authority

Camden is an excellent Authority, which is very supportive of its schools.

The Local Community

We have many links with the community, e.g.

- Our Year 11 students attend a link course term at a local FE College.
- They also have work experience placements and mentoring support
- We have ongoing links with, for example, the Hampstead Theatre and local Sports Associations.
- We use local facilities e.g. Talacre Sports Centre, Swiss Cottage Library etc.

Our Beacon Work

We became a Beacon School for;

- Leadership and people management
- Behaviour Management
- Special Educational Needs
- Continuing Professional Development

We had an extensive Beacon programme delivered locally, nationally and internationally by various members of staff.

Our Specialist School Work

- We have 6 partner schools, and 6 community organisations with whom we actively work. We have a four year action plan to run between Sept '06 and July '11, based on a very detailed audit of strengths and areas for

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development both within the school and within our partner organisations. Our focus is on 'Cognition and Learning' and in particular on Literacy, Numeracy and P.S.D.

The school is widely recognised as an excellent school.

Everybody benefits from being part of this school.

2. SUMMARIES OF SOME KEY POLICIES

I. Behaviour Policy

We have developed a Whole School Positive Behaviour Policy. We believe that students want to, and can, learn better ways of managing conflict and uncomfortable feelings. We teach students strategies for doing so, and we train all staff to intervene positively and effectively with students. We want our children to be emotionally literate.

Our Behaviour Policy is based on the following key beliefs:

- At Swiss Cottage we believe that:
 - : pupils want to behave well
 - : pupils can learn to improve their behaviour
 - : mistakes are part of the learning process
 - : all adults can learn strategies to support pupils to improve their behaviour

- We can support our pupils by:
 - : the quality of our relationships with each other and them
 - : the quality of our teaching
 - : the scaffolding we put in place

- The scaffolding consists of:
 - rights and responsibilities
 - rules
 - routines
 - the language of choice
 - rewards and consequences
 - reparation
 - descriptive praise

II. Staff Relationship Guidelines

Integrity is important in relationships - to help us achieve this, we have all agreed to consciously implement the following guidelines:

In general, we will:

- treat ourselves and each other with dignity and respect
- give and receive praise from each other frequently – using descriptive language and just saying “thank you”
- understand that we are responsible for our own behaviour – others don’t make us ‘**do**’ anything
- greet each other with a word & a smile – just practise this
- see the funny side of things – laughing makes us feel better
- look for the ‘good’ reasons behind decisions / actions, and act accordingly
- look for solutions – not focus on problems – a ‘can do’ approach
- Remember: most communication occurs through our body language – facial expressions, tone of voice, stance...

If you feel you need help, approach:

- a peer
- Team Leader
- member of the Senior Team who has the skills to coach you in addressing this problem so you achieve a positive outcome.

Conflicts MUST be addressed – feelings don’t go away

To resolve any conflict, I will:

- sort out exactly what I am upset about
- speak to the other person, in order to resolve the situation (know your outcome)
- imagine why the other person said / did what s/he did (empathy)
- **tell** the other person what is upsetting you (and why)
- listen to his/her answer, trying to understand it from his/her point of view (empathy)
- agree a way forward
- forgive and let go

III. Recruitment, Induction, leaving Policy

Recruitment

We believe a vacancy is better than a poor appointment. The cost of a poor appointment is very heavy, and so we have the following in place to help us to choose the best person for the job.

1. Job advertised
2. Candidates short listed
3. Short listed applicants to visit school
4. The selection process may comprise:
 - A formal interview, including presentation, if relevant by senior staff
 - Observation, in candidates' school/work and/or observation of lesson taught here
 - A task
 - An interview by our school council
 - References addressing particular points e.g. attendance record for the previous 12 months, description of current job, evaluation of performance in current job, staff development undertaken, quality of relationships with management, colleagues and students, any disciplinary action in 12 months or pending.
5. Job Offer-subject to satisfactory references, health and Police checks.

Induction

On appointment, all staff have a period of induction at the school. This comprises a package, which includes time for:

- Observing good practice in the school
- Meetings with key staff
- Housekeeping issues e.g. tour of the school, Health & Safety procedures etc
- A taught programme

The amount of time allocated for this depends on the job.

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All new staff are allocated a buddy, to help them during their initial 'settling in' period.

Probation

All support staff have a 6 month probation period. Subject to satisfactory performance, all staff move to a permanent contract following that. Any issues to be addressed are raised and attended to during this period. Occasionally the time frame is extended.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

The Governors and School Leadership Team firmly believe that training and developing every member of staff underpins the success of this school. This training and development is delivered at 3 layers - whole school, team and individual level and is expected to result in demonstrable improvements in practice.

All members of staff are covered by this Policy.

As we are an Equal Opportunities Employer, decisions about training and development are made irrespective of race, gender, religion, age or disability.

The opportunities the School affords to every employee ... are exceptional. Personal testimonies of growth were powerful" liP 2003

Leaving

This school values feedback as a valuable source of learning. When a member of staff is leaving, s/he will be asked to:

- Complete all outstanding work
- Hand in keys and other school property e.g. Staff Handbook
- Do an exit interview with a Governor - "What I think the school does well; what I think the school could do better; what I have learned in my time here." These interviews are collated, anonymously, and issues identified which could potentially help the school to further improve its practice.

Pay Policy

Teachers: Pay is assessed annually by the Governors' Pay Committee and a written statement given to each member of staff. The salary of a qualified classroom teacher is determined by the total number of points held by the teacher.

Additional Points are awarded for:

- **SEN – one point is mandatory, a second is awarded for relevant SEN Qualifications**

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- **TLR's – for leadership and management; in learning or learners.**
- **R & R- for all teachers**

Teachers are also eligible to apply for Chartered London Status (value £1,000).

Teaching Assistants: We have recently agreed and implemented a new pay scale for our teaching assistants. There are now 2 levels of job description, with accompanying person specifications. Pay reflects the qualifications and additional responsibilities. The pay scale starts at point 18, and continues for anyone who meets the criteria to point 25 (Scale 4 and Scale 5). There are also a smaller number of HLTA posts on point 26 – 28. Our teaching assistants are a highly trained, effective and valuable workforce.

Support Staff: Pay scales reflect the levels of responsibility within our administration, premises, and curriculum support teams.

After 10 years of successful service all staff are eligible to apply for 2 days paid leave attached to a holiday weekend and a sabbatical period of one month.

2. CLOSING COMMENTS

Swiss Cottage is a highly successful, very happy learning school. If you are an emotionally mature person, with top class skills, and a positive attitude to work, please apply. We really look forward to welcoming you to the school. If you're not sure, please phone before completing the application form.

Due to its successes Swiss Cottage is currently subject to plans to completely rebuild and expand it, to take 230 children aged between 2 and 19 years with learning needs, including PMLD and autistic spectrum. We see this as a great opportunity for the school.

Kay Bedford
Headteacher

April 2008

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