Sabbatical Topic: Reducing In-School variation (ISV)

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"In-school variation is a slow burn but ends with a big bonfire"

Introduction

In 2010 when I was appointed principal of Middleton Grange School, I came across research work from Professor David Reynolds which resonated well with my own ideas and philosophy on raising student achievement. The focus of Reynold's research considered the drivers or levers that would improve student achievement by reducing variation of practice within a school. Ultimately the question was "*how do we lift the academic achievement of students performing poorly in some departments to the level of those departments the same cohort of students performed much better in*."

From 2010 to 2015 as we implemented several of the key drivers that Professor Reynolds identified in his research, the academic results of NCEA students at Middleton Grange School steadily increased each year. My focus for the sabbatical was to meet with Professor Reynolds and visit several schools in the UK which were involved in the ISV project or which implemented these key drivers.

"In-school variation is a powerful tool for school improvement"

What is 'In-School Variation' (ISV)?

In-school variation (ISV) considers:

- The variation in achievement levels by a cohort of students in different subjects within the same school.

ISV relates to the differences in pupil achievement between similar groups, classes or subjects in a school, rather than comparisons between schools. It focuses on "the transference of effective practice from one or more class bases or departments, to all so that there is parity of experience for pupils: that all individuals and groups are advantaged not disadvantaged." (Narrowing the Gap p4)
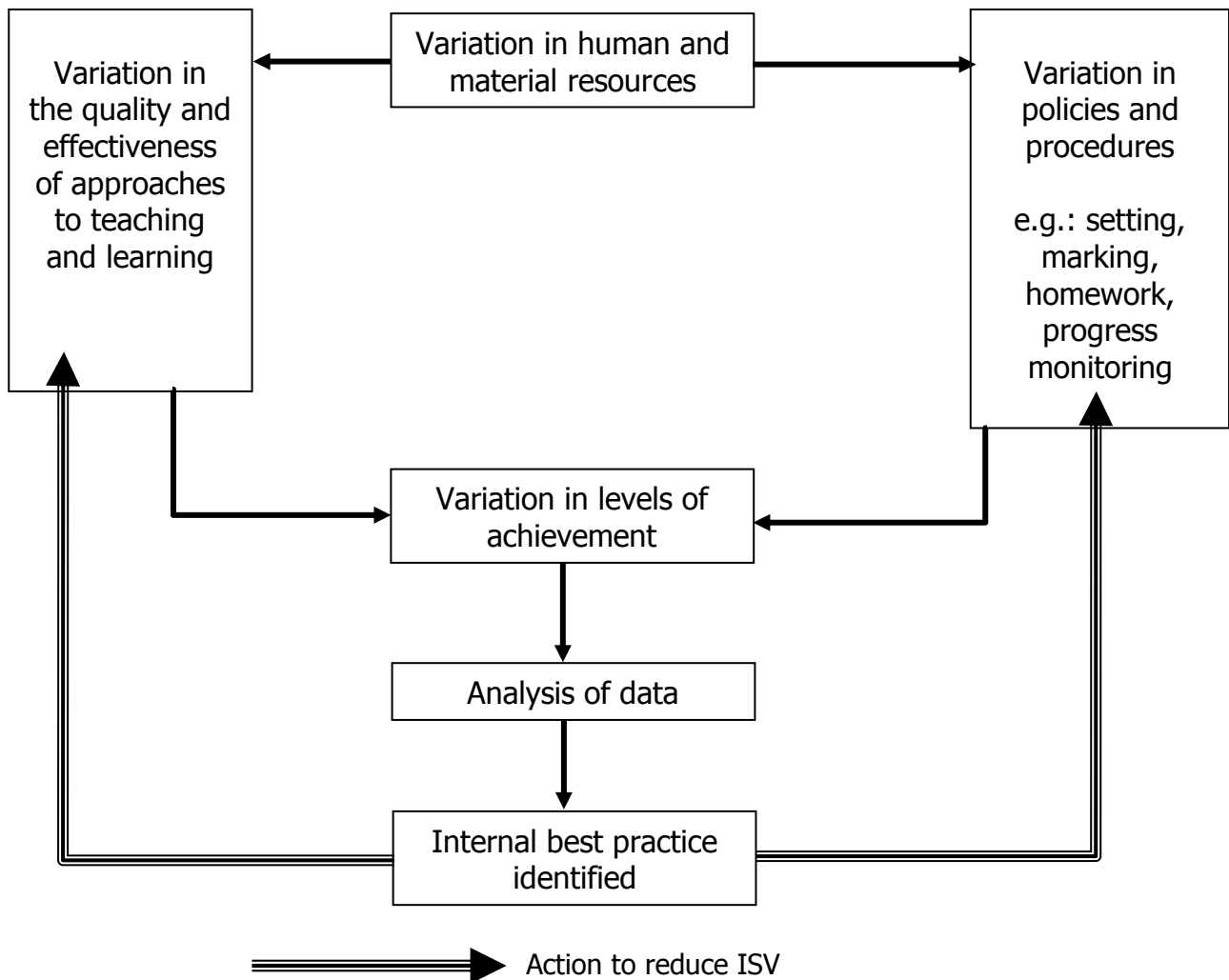
The basic principle of ISV is "to determine the difference between the average progress made by pupils in the most successful subject and the average progress made by pupils in the least successful subject within a school. The term 'success' in this instance is used to describe how good pupils achieve compared to how well they would be expected to achieve; it is used to describe the 'value added' within a subject." (Schools learning from their best, 2007, p23)

"The most powerful impact for school improvement comes from within"

ISV is particularly concerned with using the naturally occurring variation between people and units like Departments or Faculties as a building block whereby schools can simultaneously reduce the range of within organisational differences <u>and</u> increase their overall levels of students' achievement across the whole school at the same time. Literally, schools progress by learning from their own best people and practices.

A key aim of the ISV Project is to reduce the level of internal, or in-school variation across areas of organisation and, teaching and learning, that have a direct impact on student achievement. Reducing ISV is not an end in itself, and shouldn't result in inflexible uniform practice regardless of a school's culture, traditions and existing improvement plans. Rather, it is intended to ensure that practices the school has identified as effective for improving learning and raising student achievement are adopted as widely as possible across all subjects. In short, to help ensure that effective practice becomes everyday practice for all, hence the slogan *"Making Effective Practice Standard Practice."*

The diagram below can be used to help achieve a common basic understanding among staff of where significant ISV is likely to occur and how it can be identified and tackled. Parts of the diagram could be expanded to create a working strategy document.

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│ the quality and │      │ and material        │      │  policies and   │
│  effectiveness  │      │ resources           │      │  procedures     │
│  of approaches  │      └─────────────────────┘      │                 │
│  to teaching    │                                   │ e.g.: setting,  │
│  and learning   │                                   │  marking,       │
│                 │                                   │  homework,      │
│                 │                                   │  progress       │
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                           │   of achievement    │
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═══════════════════════►  Action to reduce ISV
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Early research work with ISV indicated that there are five key areas where steps taken to reduce variation within the school are likely to be most effective. They are:

- The collection and use of data
- The role and effectiveness of middle leadership
- The quality of teaching and learning
- Listening and responding to student voice
- Standardising procedures

Before explaining the 5 key drivers, there are two other important factors involved in ISV which need to be considered before delving into the specifics of the ISV work.

Leadership

From both research literature and school visits, it is clear that school leaders have a vital role in tackling ISV. Some of the ISV key levers will involve 'disruptive measures' (changes to current practice) and thus will likely cause uncertainty, tension and concern from staff, for example, analysing achievement data and making comparisons with other departments, a sharp focus on teaching and learning practices and including student voice feedback to teachers on the effectiveness of their lessons.

The leadership team, particularly the Principal need to be resolute in the implementation of ISV practices, as well as investing the time and finances to see the project through. The key to ensuring school improvement occurs is the constant (relentless) focus on developing teaching and learning alongside rigorous monitoring and evaluation of student progress.

School ethos and culture

Attention to school ethos and culture by school leadership was critical across the schools I visited. Some of the shared themes in the vision and culture the leaders insisted on were:
- All pupils can achieve highly
- All staff were to be effective teachers, satisfactory was not considered good enough
- High expectations for behavior – minimizing low level class disruption
- Expectation that teachers would take responsibility for their own learning and development above any assistance provided by the school
- Providing an engaging curriculum relevant to the needs of pupils

ISV thrives best in a culture of openness and collaboration within the school. Without this several the key ISV drivers (data, quality of teaching and learning, student voice), would potentially be impossible to implement effectively.

Attention to school culture and ethos was critical across the group of schools, since attempting to do work on ISV that necessarily involved collaboration, within an educational setting that did not foster it, would have been impossible, and possibly educationally dangerous.

Schools specifically attempted to:

- start small but quickly scaled up by either using one or two departments to start things off, or with one issue across all departments;
- use within school training events to build a coalition for support of the project;

- use re-titling (such as departments becoming 'attainment teams') to symbolise change
- use able, or aspirant, staff in schools as pioneers, given that this would maximise the chance of success;
- use off site events that ensured staff were free from the 'furniture' of the school, given that ISV is part of any school furniture.

Five Key Drivers/Levers to reduce ISV

I have ordered the five key drivers of ISV activity in a sequence that would best provide opportunity for successful implementation within schools. Without high quality **data**, you will be unaware of where your effective practice is. You need high quality **middle leadership** to ensure that your effective practices are spread through the whole school. A crucial part of effective practice is a focus on **teaching and learning**. Including **student voice** in all areas of the school including lesson effectiveness feedback, while ensuring staff and students follow **standard operating procedures** will further embed effective practice.

1 - Use of Data

All ISV activities rest on a foundation of generating and analysing data at departmental and individual student level. While the focus is on quantitative achievement data of students in each department area, the collection of data must be extended to qualitative measures that feed into student achievement e.g. attendance, ethos within the department/classrooms, student attitudes. Use of data also includes a focus on teachers through appraisal, pupil voice, surveys, results.

The underlying philosophy for collecting and analysing data is to use it 'as a stethoscope, not as a gun'. It is collected primarily to raise standards, not as a weapon of accountability. 'We measure what we value, not value what we measure.'

Embedding the understanding of what data is being collected and why is key to thinking rationally about the school. In some ways, it is to take the emotion out of the data. Staff must be clear about the purposes that data can serve. Initially, this requires "experts" in the use of data within the school, who help all staff, beginning with Middle Leaders to understand and feel confident in the use of data. The long-term benefits are when staff members are keen to have their own performance data openly available to all colleagues in their own school. Senior leaders need to work closely with Middle Leaders to decide what data to collect and how to use it.

Schools were careful not to drown in data or to have so much data that no sense could be made of it. Crucially, data was to be accurate so that valid conclusions could be made.

Therefore, work was done in each of the schools to ensure consistency across and within departments.

In all the schools, the management of assessment information has been strengthened so that teachers and leaders are effectively held accountable for their teaching and the progress of pupils. As John Hattie states, "A year's progress for a year's input" (The Politics of Distraction).

D Reynolds' research highlighted successful schools as those which sought to improve the use of existing data by more specifically developing it into useful management information to benefit students and the school. This involved:

- encouraging the sharing of data between and within departments, and from any feeder schools;
- developing clarity about what data should be used for;
- using data to build a 'coalition for change' in the school and to build morale through showing improvement;
- using data to track students against expectations;
- using data to identify the 'excellent' departments (and for that matter 'the less excellent') which could be used in whole-school work;
- developing systems for prediction of grades and performance, identification of grades and underperformance etc;
- identifying variation on a departmental/individual teacher level, based on value added scores (this generates 'the best' to benchmark against)
- comparing the performance – value added – of students in different subjects
- using data to identify and track underachieving students, with departments being required to intervene with all underachieving students
- collecting data on new areas in addition to that of academic achievement, such as student attitudes and valuing qualitative as well as quantitative data;

In summary, staff must be clear about the purposes that data can serve. The aim is for all staff to:

- Have a common understanding of the language of data and what data 'means' and 'is'
- Be comfortable with using and sharing data as a part of their normal responsibilities
- Set realistic and achievable expectations for student attainment, based on high quality data
- Analyse patterns and trends for different groups of students throughout the school year
- Have high quality data at student, subject and whole school level to facilitate comparisons

Analyses of data should focus on:

- Identifying variation on a departmental/individual teacher level, based on value added scores (this generates 'the best' to benchmark against)
- Comparing the performance – value added – of students in different subjects
- Comparing the expectations and predictions of student performance for those of similar levels of ability in different subjects as an ongoing process
- Thoroughly analysing student performance early in each academic year
- Using data to identify and track underachieving students, with departments being required to intervene with all underachieving students

Schools had in place an "Assessment and reporting" calendar that provided a focus for key points in the year when students' progress is reviewed and interventions agreed. Clear lines of accountability at every level and challenging professional discussions ensure there is no complacency and high expectations are maintained consistently across the school.

Targets are set for all pupils and regularly discussed with the teachers. Students have a clear understanding of their targets for improvement and appreciated the focus on addressing specific areas of weakness.

2 - Middle Leadership Professional Capacity

This area is pivotal to success in reducing ISV. I have often argued that Middle Leaders are the most crucial group of leaders in the school to effect change. While principals and Senior Leaders can give strategic direction, it is the Middle Leaders who will give effect to this within their departments. It is most often within department meetings that strategies to progress the strategic direction are given life or not. High quality Middle leadership is critical to driving and embedding school improvement, particularly in 3 key areas of ISV: teaching and learning; Use of data and Standard operating procedures.

Schools involved in the research found it necessary to ensure that middle leaders had student and teacher performance as their focus and that they could maintain momentum in driving ISV work forward. In addition to being competent users of data, middle leaders need skills in:

- Self-evaluation – to be aware of ISV in their own department and to measure progress against others
- Collaborating with other departments, to learn from one another
- Devising robust and well-targeted strategies for improving results
- Recognising and disseminating effective practice
- Identifying Professional Learning and Development needs amongst their staff

Strategies schools implemented to build professional capacity in their middle leaders included:

- Senior leaders modelling for middle leaders through joint observations, conducting data analysis

- Requiring middle leaders to be appraised on their responsibilities as leaders of a faculty
- Middle leadership training – either in-house or external
- Mentoring Middle Leaders

Middle leaders were given opportunities to reflect on data about student performance in their subject with senior staff, other department leaders, and colleagues in their departments. Reducing ISV requires the recognition and understanding of any under-performance as well as awareness of the characteristics of best practice in the school. Meetings between senior and middle leaders should focus on data analysis and the strategies to be used to share or improve practice.

Middle leader involvement in the performance management of teachers in their departments allows them to focus on classroom practice. Training in observation techniques and the development of an understanding of what constitutes effective teaching and learning practice is essential in fostering consistency.

Senior and middle leaders should encourage all departmental colleagues to observe within, and across, departments. Agreed videoing of lessons of the same students being taught by different teachers can be useful. Alternatively, a teacher might be encouraged to watch another colleague working with the same class. Observation at this level should be developmental rather than judgemental. It is important that observations focus on students' learning and the progress they make.

Reynolds' research highlighted some practical strategies for Middle leaders. These initiatives were specifically:

- changing philosophy from being purely middle managers to being middle leaders;
- training of middle managers, particularly in areas such as coaching/mentoring, data usage, classroom observation etc,
- 'buddying' of middle managers with others specially chosen to permit transfer of skills, attitudes and behaviours rapidly;
- using exemplary middle managers in whole-school training days;
- using key personnel – Heads of department respected by the wider staff group – to start the ball rolling;
- extending the focus to heads of Year (deans) and ensuring the same programmes were created for them as for heads of department;
- disaggregating data to subject level to permit fine-grained analysis;
- ability to analyse data to identify the issues
- ability to have 'open to learn' conversations

- time to collaborate and share best practice with other Middle Leaders. 'Learning from within'. Just as we want to reduce the 'silo' Curriculum approach for pupils, so too we need to remove the 'silo' (isolation) environment for Middle Leaders.

3 - Teaching and Learning

The personalisation of teaching and learning offers a rich means of improving school and student performance. ISV work is "located" close to the classroom because of its focus upon students and middle leaders. Effective interventions may be:

- promoting 'core' teaching behaviours across departments;
- the development of high-quality observation systems, used by peers with peers, that gathered high-quality data on teaching behaviours, student behaviours, classroom processes, learning and the culture in different classrooms;

- developing a common language and settings to describe 'teaching' to support peer observation and collaboration;
- encouraging students to feed back their opinions on their own learning-related issues as well as on the teaching;
- encouraging discussion of teaching in departments and across the school;
- attempting to enrich teaching through the use of new curriculum developments;
- attempting greater consistency in teaching behaviours and especially in the expectations of pupils, within and across departments;

Core teaching behaviours can be provided by a "Teaching and Learning" Framework that set out whole school expectations, for example, how students should enter the classroom (meet, greet, seat); or a detailed structure for lessons (Lesson Objectives, success criteria, active learning). Schools had explicit guidelines on what constitutes effective (good) teaching and learning. This lends itself to Standard Operating Procedures – Effective practice, Standard practice.

For one school, staff and faculty share skills and evaluate the effectiveness of lessons. There is a strong and ongoing focus on lesson learning objectives and success criteria in each lesson and over time.

Challenging conversations need to take place where performance is not up to standard but in an environment where staff know the expectations and that there is effective support available to assist them improve. There were many occasions where courage not compromise was needed by leaders to hold those challenging conversations.

4 - Pupil Voice

Listening to the views of students and incorporating those ideas is an area that has grown as the ISV Project developed over time. Students are sometimes better than teachers at

making comparisons across departments than staff because it's something students do informally every day. Having 5 different teachers a day gives students ample opportunity to do this.

Involving students in providing data on learning is a further example of obtaining quality data where student achievement is being addressed for a department or an individual teacher given the closeness of students to teaching and learning. Specific initiatives involved:

- greater involvement of pupils in planning for their future achievement;
- pupil-based surveys of learning styles;
- pupil-based surveys of teaching.

Students are well placed (with some training!) to provide feedback for Middle Leaders on what assists in their learning and what doesn't help. If a curriculum or style of curriculum delivery does not engage students in one department while in another it does, then students are well placed to give comment.

Allowing pupils to observe lessons and provide feedback to staff is a sensitive area but those schools which embarked on this testify to its value. Students are trained to observe and discuss all parts of the lesson but they do not judge or grade teaching. It is a developmental process rather than a judgemental one. In one school students observe jointly with a member of staff, using a "Students' Observation" form. Feedback is given to the teacher in private. By training students to be observers they come to understand teaching and learning at a deeper level and can unpack what constitutes effective learning.

Creating opportunities for pupil voice to be given was evident in several schools. Some introduced Pupil Voice committees, prefect system, Student Council. These groups would give feedback on teacher observations, school behaviour management. Pupil views were actively sought on the quality of teaching, level of engagement in classes, subject choices. During class time pupil voice was sought on whether pupils understood the purpose of the lesson, what constituted success at the end of the lesson.

Subject ambassadors supported the learning of their peers in subjects in which they excelled. Displaying pupil work was another example of pupil voice as is showing pupil achievement around the school.

5 - Standard Operating Procedures

As schools explored the variation in their gains across different departments and year levels shown by their use of data systems, and attempted to focus on training of middle

managers, many of them moved towards tighter specification of systems, procedures and responses to pupil needs to iron out ISV.

The experience of the work on data that most schools began with was that there was huge variation in what was regarded as the normal procedures in what happened to the data, what was meant by data-related words and indeed what 'data' was. Most schools used in-service sessions, based on a presentation from the departments or parts of the pastoral structure that were exemplary in their use of data, to ensure that there was reliability and consistency in these issues, and most schools gained remarkable improvements, with limited efforts and limited time.

As Reynold's found, this encouraged a broader focus on other areas:
- on ensuring all departments and Year teams had consistency in other areas in their expectations and procedures;
- reducing the isolation of staff by promoting team approaches and networking;
- on ensuring at school level that there were clear expectations of what was expected from pupils in their commitment to school (for example, timekeeping, bringing the right equipment, getting work in on time, ensuring work was properly presented).
- common use and application of a standardised data system, essential to the identification and support of individual students. All staff need to use the same terminology which is understood by students and their parents.
- standardised procedures for lessons, allowing opportunities for creativity and variety; but ensuring a systematic approach which includes objectives, assessment for learning opportunities and a rigorous focus on student learning, engagement and the measurement of individual progress.
- collection of student voice should be discussed across departments and standardised approaches used.

Most schools would already have a 'Handbook for Assessment' that all staff are to follow. The 'Handbook for Assessment' would cover aspects such as: course outline formats; assessment procedures; dealing with late assessments; assessment marking turnaround (pupils should be informed of this!) etc. Crucially, it is up to Middle Leaders to ensure their staff follow the Handbook.

Consistency is the ultimate goal for this key lever. Arguably it is one of the more difficult to attain. Even if there is only one teacher in a school there is room for inconsistency from day to day, let alone for a school with multiple departments and a hundred staff! The key for this driver is to identify a core of procedures and behaviours for all staff to follow and avoid unnecessary variation in outcomes.

Three key questions from the publication "Narrowing the Gap":
- *What kind of Standard Operating Procedures stimulate rather than stifle creativity?*

- *How do such Standard Operating Procedures have to be created for this to happen?*
- *How can Standard Operating Procedures be sustained and renewed?*

The following information is taken from the publication: "Learning from In-School variation – A new kind of school improvement"

Planning and running an ISV project

Success in any school improvement comes through having the right strategic direction, and the right tactics to deliver the strategy. ISV is a different kind of improvement but it still requires good strategy and tactics. The following advice comes from effective schools where ISV has worked.

Planning at the start

- Audit existing activities in the key ISV areas such as data usage, peer observation, buddying arrangements etc. Plans for what a school should do needs to be built on recognition of what it <u>is</u> doing;
- Have a limited number of focused ISV goals and stick to them;
- Be consistent with the schools' priorities, presenting this as an opportunity to move things forward in new ways;
- Build in sufficient project planning and monitoring time for key project players;
- Ensure all staff realise that ISV is not the usual school improvement, and ensure high levels of understanding of what it is.

Finding good people

- Ensure that the school's head teacher and senior team understand, and central role in, the leadership of the project and ISV;
- Use aspirant, well respected and able staff to implement the Project from the beginning, to maximise the chances of success;
- Ensure the implementation of ISV activities is done in a supportive, non-threatening, collegial fashion to protect and motivate individuals.

Getting everyone on board

- Aim for 'quick wins' that demonstrate the power of the initiative e.g. Standard Operating Procedures that bring rapid, obvious changes;
- Ensure that those managing the project know how and when to bring different groups of staff on board;

- Use the national and international significance of ISV to build support for it at project launch, and through presentations at conferences etc to build staff self-esteem;

- Use multiple high quality 'off site' celebratory and training events to ensure staff are free from the 'furniture' of their schools;

- Ensure that staff understand how they will personally benefit from the process of learning from others;

- Use symbols of change to build momentum e.g. re-titling departments as 'Attainment Teams'.

Evaluating and Reviewing Progress

- Collect high quality data from the beginning to show how ISV is having positive effects;

- Ensure ISV is the significant focus in your school development plan;

- Use the data to build a coalition of support for ISV work;

- Recognise that ISV may need time to achieve results. ISV may be 'slow burn but big bonfire'.

Making things last

- Ensure that effective practice somewhere in a school becomes effective practice everywhere by using high quality Professional Development;

- Learn from your own best people, in the short term, and use other schools and networks to bring in new ideas later;

- Follow the cycle of evaluate- plan- act- review – re-plan for all ISV activities.

In School Variation: the problems in addressing it

Historical barriers to dealing with ISV may be the following:

- Weak school management that finds it hard to confront the issue and to develop mechanisms to learn from best practice.

- False modesty on the part of effective teachers/departments, perhaps associated with a misplaced egalitarianism that does not reward helping other practitioners who are less effective because this would mean marking the less effective out and labelling them.

- Small schools in which the range of excellence between teachers may be less and therefore more difficult to use, and the one/two-person departments that may make performance evaluation by subject a highly personal activity.

- The absence of systems to 'buddy' the less good with the better, because of the difficulty of the intense micro-political issues in this area.

- Budget/time constraints that make it difficult to create these skills sharing systems since they require time, space and buy-out of teaching for observation/debriefing etc.
- The difficulty of separating out the personal reasons for some teachers'/ departments' more effective practice from the methods that are being used, since all factors appear confounded with each other.
- The difficulty in secondary schools of getting departments to see any utility in swapping practice when the subject cultures of departments are so strong (For example 'it is not like that in art!').
- The practice of using exceptional individuals as the models for others when the exceptional may often be idiosyncratic, and utilising their character as much as any distinctive methods. The exceptional may also be so far in advance of the remainder of the staff in a school that they cannot be imitated.

APPENDICES – SCHOOL VISIT REPORTS

The following appendices contain my notes from the school visits and a meeting with Professor David Reynolds. They are my construct of the school and I acknowledge that these are my impressions which may not convey the actual culture or views of those I met. I do hope that they are reflective of the fantastic schools and Headteachers that I met.

1 – Southhampton University: Professor David Reynolds

2 - Lawrence Sherrif School: Headteacher Dr Peter Kent

3 - East Barnett School, North London: Headteacher Nick Christou

4 - Cantell School, Southampton: Headteacher Ruth Evans

Assistant Headteacher and Achievement Leader: Claire Herridge

5 - St Mary's CoE School, Southampton: Executive Principal Llyn Codling

SOUTHAMPTON UNIVERSITY, HAMPSHIRE

Professor David Reynolds

Data Collection
- The most crucial aspect of Within School Variation is the collection of data. All the discussions revolve around what the data shows.
- Crucially it is Value Added data and this could be determined in NZ through MidYIS and Yellis as examples.
- It is also important to look at other examples of surveys that NZCER might do on *attitudes to learning*.
- It is important to be able to compare performance between departments and to compare performance to National Standards as set by Curriculum levels.
- With the data, it is also important to drill down to lower levels e.g.: a department level, teacher level
- Collect lots of data. Start with between department analysis and then train Middle Leadership staff to do analysis within their departments.

Middle Leadership Middle Leaders need to be trained in data. Whatever Senior Leaders give to the staff the Middle Leaders need to know in advance. There should be no surprises to Middle Leaders and in many ways, it is more crucial to convince the Middle Leaders first before giving information to staff. There should be management training for staff e.g.: transformational leadership, instructional leadership, open to learn conversations are all important.

Staff Pupil Achievement Targets
- Prof David is a strong advocate that for appraisal each staff member must have individual pupil achievement targets for at least one of their classes. This is to hold the teacher accountable and to give them a focus for improving learning and achievement in that class.
- The default for many schools is to do 'nice' things rather than things that matter. Schools need to drive into the corners to challenge what has been done.

Standardised Operating Procedures
This is a feature of high reliability schools and is crucial. Prof David uses the phrase '*failure free organisations'* and it is important to standardize procedures so there is no room for failure as people know exactly what to do.

Standardising procedures as a means to codify <u>core</u> behaviours: appointment of staff, what a lesson looks like and any area of the school life that is important to determining outcomes e.g.: there needs to be a standard operating procedure to lessons, that there be three parts to them:
- an opening
- teaching

- cognitive closure;

how the teachers do each of them is up to them but there must be those three parts.

Another example of standardized operating procedures would be homework.
- how much is to be given at each level
- what type

Other examples are school rules.

In terms of the argument that it makes everyone the same. That is not the case. It does provide uniformity but not sameness. The expectation is to deliver the same thing but context changes by age or gender. In some areas, there is no variation e.g.: the return of assessments must be done within a certain timeframe.

Identify the irreducible core of expectations and then there can be variances around that, but no variations of the irreducible core.

LAWRENCE SHERRIF SCHOOL

Headteacher Dr Peter Kent

Lawrence Sherrif School is a Year 7 – 13 school and has a very settled community from Years 7 – 11, however, for the final two years (Sixth Form years) the school has 40% new intake. The size of the Sixth Form (Years 12 – 13) is 340.

As I arrived at the school the Visitor Waiting area had a sheet of paper showing the academic pass rates of each Curriculum Area for the previous year.

In 2003 Lawrence Sherrif School became involved with In-School Variation (ISV) and this had a dramatic impact and continues to have an impact, although because the school is at a very high standard now, the impact is less. For three years, the school had the highest results in the county and in terms of Value Added was in the top percentile in the United Kingdom.

Quotes from Dr Peter Kent, Headteacher
- *ISV is a powerful tool for school improvement*
- *The school was doing fine but ISV sharpened up our act*
- *The most powerful impact for school improvement is to improve from within*
- *ISV is a slow burn but ends with a big bonfire*

For the Headteacher ISV is a cultural change and this is where the slow burn occurs but once the cultural change has occurred then the impact on school improvement and results is quite dramatic.

The initial area of focus for the Headteacher was the refusal to accept that some departments were not doing as well as other departments. The question for the Headteacher is '*why can't all departments perform as well as the best department?'*

ISV has been in place since 2003. The Headteacher commented that you can't keep doing the same thing, it does get stale, and so there always needs to be something new but this is once ISV has become standard practice.

Data Analysis ISV data analysis is focused around ages 16 and 18. For the Headteacher one of the key issues of ISV is the openness of data. It is vital that there is good transparency of data, results are displayed not only around the school and with parents, but staff are very familiar with seeing data not just about their departments, but of all departments.

Peer Observation Another key for ISV is Peer Observation. This is reciprocal peer observation where teachers observe each other but not in their own subject area. This

means they are not focusing on curriculum knowledge but more on the pedagogy, the delivery of curriculum. This is not a judgmental process but it is a chance to learn from one another. For the Headteacher now that the school is in a position where there are good results and a high trust level, he too has said to the staff '*as a sign of trust, we will not do performance management observations as Senior Leaders, we will rely on staff to do this.*' The school is in a place where these judgments are accurate and rigorous and are evidenced by the performance of students within those departments.

The Headteacher gave an example on Teacher Only Day, held the day before I visited, where all the staff looked at data from the last exam results and some of it wasn't particularly good, but it was open and transparent to all. It is important to present data in a way that people understand the data. This removes resistance as well as helping people to connect to the data.

At Lawrence Sherrif School data is managed by a team consisting of: Data Manager, the Headmaster who does the headline stuff and a teacher with a statistical bent.

There is analysis of data not just between departments but within departments by Middle Leaders. Middle Leaders currently look at raw data and a Value-Added score but are now moving to a sharper focus on Value Added as high raw results can mask poor Value Added e.g.: it may show that a department has 100% pass rates but pupils are only passing and the number at a high end of achievement is low.

In terms of Value Added software there are many options available in England. Lawrence Sherrif has introduced a tool because the government are moving to a Value-Added measure based around ten subjects. Lawrence Sherrif has found the best way to measure Value Added is using its own ISV measure where all students have targets based on National expectations and that is compared to what their actual performance is. I.e. student targets are based on where the government says the students should be at. It predicts a grade e.g.: A Curriculum level, and then the school measures the progression of a student towards this target.

It was agreed that when a school is performing extremely well you need to be careful at the margins e.g.: to move from 96-97% or to drop from 97-96% can be the result of one person achieving or failing.

Middle Leadership the Headteacher meets with Middle Leaders on a regular basis and will always have an educational topic to discuss for the year and this year it is *Education Post 16*. The Headteacher believes it is important to have a dialogue between the Headteacher and Middle Leaders. For the Headteacher it is crucial that he does not delegate this type of pedagogical leadership to anyone else because his own work has shown that the Headteacher needs to be visible as an instructional leader.

Lesson Observations for Real the Headteacher explained a very interesting activity called *Lesson Observations for Real*. This is where a very good teacher teaches a class in a hall in front of 120 teachers who watch the teacher teach and then there is a debrief. The class is the teacher's normal class. The only thing that is different is that fact that 120 teachers are watching and it takes place in a different room i.e.: the hall. The debrief after the meeting is led by people who have the skills in lesson observation and good teaching pedagogy who then deconstruct the lesson. They do ten of these types of lessons in a year.

Senior Leaders the Headteacher meets with the Senior Leadership Team once a week formally. They begin with lunch and go through the afternoon where the focus is high level, not on administrative detail. One example recently was where the Headteacher did some training with Ofsted and he then shared this training with the Senior Leaders. The headteacher would spend one to two hours in preparation for a Senior Leadership Team meeting and the focus is on the big picture stuff, not only to challenge the Senior Leaders but also himself.

Culture for the Headteacher our most important role as a Headmaster is to be the gatekeeper of Culture. ISV and Culture are closely linked. This is the cultural shift which takes a lot longer, the slow burn.

The Headteacher indicated that while culture change is a collection of voices, he does believe that the loudest voice needs to be that of the Headteacher.

Another strength of ISV is sharing the positives, i.e. best practice.

Teaching and Learning I met with Jamie Abbott, Head of History, and Marcus Gregory, Head of House around Teaching and Learning. For them Hattie's work has been a huge help for them. They asked students to highlight the most important factors for their learning and came up with three including:
- Reciprocal Teaching
- Questioning
- Subject Knowledge

Teachers were given the list of three and asked to rate the three in terms of how well they understood the three factors. They would then pair up the teachers e.g.: on the skill of *Questioning* they would pair up a teacher who rated themselves as 'Very Proficient' in this area with someone who rated themselves as 'Very Poor'. Then those two would do reciprocal observations of each other.

With the three factors, they put in the staffroom a very large blank sheet, divided into the three areas with the three topics, and teachers who were working together in

'*Questioning*' or others in '*Reciprocal Teaching*' had to write up comments of what they observed and the ratio was:

- five 'What went wells?' and
- one 'Even better if …'.

These observations were non-judgmental but to learn from each other. They were expected to meet and observe each other once a term. These became very popular and helped to develop the open-door policy.

Data Collection This is where teachers can choose their own topics and collect their own data. They also work as part of Student Voice where pupils can also be data collectors so that teachers can see the impact they are having from a pupil perspective.

An example Marcus gave was being part of the *Questioning* group and he asked two students to make a note of the number of closed questions and open questions he would ask in a lesson. Marcus felt that he had asked quite a lot of open questions, and yet from the student perspective they felt he had asked more closed questions. The work done prior to this data collection by students was that Marcus gave them definitions and examples of open and closed questions. Marcus then re-taught the lesson with another class and collected data from them to compare.

Another example given by Jamie was '*Are students feeling challenged in their lessons?*' This is where every ten minutes students would make a note on paper as to how challenged they were feeling by the material being taught. This would then be aggregated to provide a graph for the lesson. This was based around the work of Mike Hughes (Education Advisor) who came and gave a lecture at the school.

Mike Hughes also promotes heavily the videoing of lessons for teachers to be able to look back on how they have been going.   This was used for beginning teachers.

Student Voice / Student Council I then met with Mike Hickling, Assistant Headteacher, about Student Voice. Mike has oversight of Student Voice. The Student Council was previously run by the Deputy Headteacher and when Mike became the Assistant Headteacher he took this over. Mike's attitude is that these are intelligent boys so why not give them some autonomy and voice into the leadership of the school.

The Student Council has a constitution. It has panels (groups) focusing on charity, environment, anti-bullying etc. There are 40-50 students in the Council, one from each Form Class from Years 7-13. There is a General Secretary, appointed by Mike, who acts as a link between the Student Council and the Senior Leadership Team. The General Secretary student is a very good admin person.

The Student Council deals with topics such as food, toilets, basically anything. There is an expectation that students feed back to their form class any discussions.

The full Council meets once a week and the Executive (Chair, Vice Chair, General Secretary, Heads of Panels) also meets weekly.

Student Voice and feedback This is a great initiative where students go into classes and observe lessons. They then provide a report which is given to Mike who then feeds it to the teachers. This might be on an issue that they are looking at e.g.: British values or formative assessment. The selection of the boys is by Curriculum Leaders who choose two boys to do the observations. Mike and the student researchers work together to come up with a checklist and questions for areas of focus. Then the students will spend time visiting classes to collect this data.   It gave great confidence to the boys and gave them very different perspective on what work teachers must do.

In the past boys, have gone into do observations but with no clear instructions. In a sense, they were given free reign, which was a disaster. Observations are not whether the lesson was good or not. The feedback went back to the heads of departments via Mike and the ages of the research students used to do the observations are from Years 7 – 13.

Lawrence Sherrif School used Pupil Voice to reduce variation between departments in the following way: Departments were paired (e.g.: History and Geography) and pupils who took both subjects were asked to suggest three things that each department would learn from each other. This information was then shared with the department heads and showed that pupils had a clear perception of good practice.

EAST BARNETT SCHOOL, NORTH LONDON

Headteacher Nick Christou

East Barnett School (EBS) is a co-educational comprehensive secondary school with approximately 1350 students, of whom 300 are in Years 12 and 13 (Sixth Form). The age range is 11 – 19.

One of the first impressions of EBS is that it is very deliberate in developing school culture through symbols, signage and artifacts which are displayed around the school.

The school gates have been specially designed by an ex pupil and reflect various aspects of teaching. As you walk down the long path towards the administration block there are a series of sculptures each depicting a different aspect of education e.g.: *acorn in the palm of a hand* to reflect the growth in learning.

Looking at the main administration building it is very clear to see the school motto *I want to learn*. The motto is a clear indication of the personal responsibility pupils have and the importance of teachers to create an environment in which pupils want to learn.

"Our motto, 'I want to learn', reflects a belief that motivation is the most important factor for achieving success in education. We also know that interesting and challenging lessons, combined with a culture where educational success is valued and respected by all members of the school community, will ensure that students remain focused on learning. Our success in achieving such a culture is undoubtedly the reason for the high academic standards and popularity of East Barnet School." (Headteacher)

Another important aspect of the school philosophy is the headteacher's mantra 'Learning Without Walls'. The meaning behind 'Learning Without Walls' is to clearly tell pupils that all their learning does not happen within the four walls of the classroom. Their learning also takes place outside the classroom, in school corridors, through sports, visits to museums and interactions with people. For the Headteacher it is important that pupils do not equate learning just with school but with all of life.

To support the 'Learning without walls' mantra, the school offers its students international trips. They also have large number of guest speakers coming to the school who are of significant influence within their field of knowledge and the school promotes very strongly participation in national and international competitions.

The Motto *I Want To Learn was* displayed throughout the school as well as other statements e.g.: underpinning the discipline policy was the statement *'do the right thing'* and this too was displayed around the school.

Sixth Form Sixth form students have several privileges. The first is that the students can wear mufti as part of their transition to university. The school also has a sixth form café only available for staff and sixth form students to buy lunch and coffee and this can be a social area. The school also has a supervised study area about the size of a school library (300 sixth form students). This study area is incredibly well resourced with computers and individual study cubicles and tables. There are some round tables for very quiet discussion but anyone who works in this area is to work without talking. This is to model for the student's life at a university.

Assemblies the Headteacher holds a weekly whole school assembly for half an hour and this is often led by the Deputy Headteacher who will lead the assembly but the Headteacher will always close with a 5-10-minute talk about a certain theme or aspect of the school philosophy. Everything the assemblies point to is the school motto or philosophy in some area. There are separate year level assemblies where there is more pupil involvement and these are often pupil led assemblies.

Cycle Track The school has built a cycle track, not a fancy one, but also purchased 50 pushbikes for pupils to access as part of their fitness curriculum.

Wetland Through pupil voice the school also introduced a wetland used for Biology nature studies.

Headteacher While talking to the Headteacher, he indicated they will have a regular stream of visitors to the school and he very much enjoys the aspect of talking to visitors because it allows him to listen to himself as he talks about the school philosophy and this is his own test of 'are we still delivering what we say we are?'

School culture is held by staff and students and it is important to have a significant critical mass of staff and students who buy into the school culture to give weight to it. This means that as new staff and new students arrive the weight of the culture is strong enough to withstand any significant changes attempted to be made to it.

Succession Planning This is very important to The Headteacher, not just at a Principal level, but also at Curriculum leadership level.

Staff Council The Headteacher has a staff council made up of staff with whom he meets termly. This is an opportunity for the staff council to bring forward any ideas, issues and problems, but with solutions. The staff council has eight members on it and includes the Union representatives e.g.: for us it would be our PPTA rep, and three staff elected by the rest of the staff, the Property Manager and the Finance Manager. This committee also gives The Headteacher a good insight into how staff are going and where the concerns are.

Middle Leaders This is the absolute key to a well-functioning school. The Headteacher described working with another school (The Headteacher is used by the Local Education Authority to work with poor performing schools to lift their performance) where the Middle Leaders complained about the Senior Leadership Team as being ineffective. The Headteacher called a meeting with the Middle Leaders, including Curriculum Leaders and Year 10 leaders. After listening to their complaints about the senior leaders he said 'if you all did your jobs properly, then what is the problem?' By implication he is saying that if Middle Leaders are doing their work effectively and efficiently, in fact they can cover a lot of the poor leadership by the senior leaders.   Of course, his next role was to then work with the senior leaders to ensure that they lifted their game.

Assistant Heads of School At East Barnett there are six Senior Leaders and fifteen Middle Leaders. The Middle Leaders are the Heads of Faculty (nine) and Year Level Deans (six).

Four years ago, the Deputy Headteacher left East Barnett and The Headteacher did not replace him creating a financial saving which was used to create a new distributed leadership structure. Nine Learning Faculties were established. The nine faculties included:

- Head of Faculty Expressive Arts who looks after the Heads of Music, Drama, Dance and Art

Each Middle Leader has whole school responsibilities e.g.:

- Communications for the school is under the responsibility of the Head of Faculty English
- Head of Faculty Maths - whole school behavior tracking systems

The Headteacher gave them all a new title for this position: Assistant Head of School. While they are called the Assistant Head of School with responsibility in communications, their substantive role is still e.g.: Faculty Head of English or Head of Year Level.   The use of the title was to give authority to the position so that when the Head of Faculty English is talking to a staff member it is in the role of Assistant Head, rather than the Head of Faculty English.

***Widening Leadership* Course** The Headteacher strongly promotes from within the school and runs his own leadership course which all staff must do if they are keen for future promotion within the school. The name of his leadership course is *Widening Leadership* and he has pared down his leadership philosophy to ten points. He uses this as training with individual staff and it doesn't guarantee job promotion. One of the outcomes of the leadership course is that each staff member must come up with a three-year plan for the Strategic Vision of their Curriculum Area or of an innovative idea. The *Widening Leadership* course is run with a minimum of three sessions to a maximum of five, and each session is two – three hours. The Headteacher leads this. When he first introduced this, he had ten staff who were Curriculum Leaders and Heads of Year participate in the course and he did this over five evenings. Now with most of the staff

keen for promotion having done it, he runs them individually during the day, one on one in his office.

Questions The Headteacher asks include: 'I would follow someone if ....' and discuss with that person their responses. Often he would talk about trust and what creates trust, the competency of the person, their character and he would talk about problem solving. For the Headteacher leadership can be summarized in three words which he goes through with those on the course *Vision, Communication, Strategy*. These people are also put on various committees for experience.

Quotes from The Headteacher
- '*I am the defender of the school*.' This is to make sure that he works to support the school rather than against it, particularly in government initiatives.
- '*I cannot be everywhere in person, but I can be there in spirit. The way that I can be there in spirit is to have worked with the staff to understand expectations. Only that one teacher will be in that one classroom dealing with that one situation. Only one Year Level Dean is working with that one student, it is not me physically, but I do need to be in their mind when they are dealing with those students*.' For the Headteacher the key is to train the person, don't just focus on the administration because anyone can be taught to do that, but training the person in terms of their skills and character to be able to make judgments and wise decisions.

Discipline The Headteacher deals a lot with discipline and gave a good example of dealing with students who are angry. When they arrive to his office The Headteacher will not deal with them while they are in that state and he explains to them that he can see they are angry and it is best for them not to meet now because the student may say something that they will regret. What the Headteacher does is to say 'Can I get you a glass of water? You can wait outside my office at this desk and when you calm down, then knock on my door and we can have a discussion. This is for your protection, not for mine.' Pupils respond well to this.

Staff Selection All new teachers must teach a lesson at the school which is observed by the Assistant Head of Teaching and Learning. The new teacher is critiqued by the Assistant Head and feedback is also obtained from students. Students do not participate in the actual selection of the staff member, but their feedback is considered.

Performance Management Their system is very like New Zealand schools however at EBS they also incorporate a 'Book Review'. This is where the Headteacher and a Senior Leader will meet with a group of students of a teacher and ask them to bring with them their school books. The students are asked questions about their learning in the classroom; asked for evidence of that learning and feedback they receive from the teacher on their learning. The Headteacher and Curriculum Leaders all do Learning Walks.

Student Voice East Barnett has a Student Committee elected by the other students. This group of ten students has a lunch with the Principal once a term to chat about how things are going in the school. There is a special leadership programme for the Sixth Form students all of whom must sign an agreement to be in school and as part of that agreement must commit to doing one hour a week or using leadership skills e.g.: working in the Primary School or out in the community.

Each year the Headteacher runs a training day focused on leadership. He plays video clips from famous speeches such as Winston Churchill, Martin Luther and has questions such as 'My ideal leader would …..' and then has a series of statements which are true and false.

Curriculum East Barnett has a EEE Curriculum – *Enhancement, Enrichment and Extension*. This takes the form:
- In Years 7 and 8 for two afternoons each week the students follow a series of modules four to six weeks long of *Learning Through Inspiration* programme.
- They do activities such as CAD drawing, 3D modelling, Robotics and they provide extension to the most able students to apply the knowledge and skills they have learnt in the classroom.
- The school is very strong on bringing outside people in and so they have at various times during the year, had an artist in residence for one day a week and a writer in residence.
- The school runs a homework club. Sometimes this is voluntary for students to attend although numbers of students are required to attend and these are pupils who for discipline reasons or are falling behind in their work.

Clock One of the amazing displays I saw was of the clock which had 60 spokes (refer photo). The clock moves around very slowly and each of the spokes was to represent the 60 years the school existed but obviously also the 60 minutes in an hour. The school will change the theme of the artifacts shown on the clock and while I was there, the theme was *music over the years* and within each box on the clock there was representation of music in that year. When previously the focus of the clock was *reading,* they had books through the last 60 years.
Crucially what linked to the clock was a computer video display where pupils could push/tap a tab on e.g.: 1967 and retrieve more detail about that artifact box year. All this information was done by pupils but checked by a staff member.

Motion Another display was on motion (refer photo). The purpose of the motion display was to show pupils from a technology and physics perspective how things moved.

Poster / Display Boards Throughout the school there were posters and display boards in every corridor.   According to the Headteacher it is important that anything that goes on the walls tells a story and also needs to look professional.

CANTELL SCHOOL, SOUTHAMPTON, HAMPSHIRE

Headteacher Ruth Evans
Assistant Headteacher and Achievement Leader Claire Herridge
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Middle Leadership The focus on building Middle Leader capacity is deliberate in this school. All Middle Leaders are expected to participate in professional development. In England, there is a Teaching Leaders and Future Leaders Programme. The school pays for Middle Leaders to attend this and it has quite a time commitment including residential for two weeks a year, as well as being mentored during the year. The Senior Leadership Team consists of six people, however, they also run an extended Senior Leadership Team where the Heads of Faculty attend meetings along with the Senior Leadership Team.

One of the initiatives of the Headteacher was to do away with individual Head of Departments and to create Heads of Faculty. The major reason for this was to ensure consistency between Curriculum Areas e.g.: Head of Faculty Creative Arts, covers Music, Drama, Visual Art. The Faculty Heads of Maths, English and Science meet more regularly than the other Faculty Heads being that these are the three core areas in the school and considered important that they have strong links with each other. This initiative ties in well with one of the key ISV drivers "Standardised Operating procedures."

Meetings
- Faculty Heads meet fortnightly with a focus on teaching and learning aspects.
- Faculty meetings are once a month.
- Extended Senior Leadership Team meetings are weekly at 8.00 am for 20 minutes and the focus of these is to share information e.g.: the last topic was on Finance where the extended Senior Leadership Team were given the whole school budget to consider how they might reduce the deficit. The extended Senior Leadership Team is used to ensure transparency in the school and the sharing of information.

The Headteacher acknowledged that there are a lot of meetings and while this wasn't ideal it was needed to keep the culture of professional development going. There was a real push to ensure that meetings have a professional focus and move away from administration.

Teaching Periods The school runs a 30-period week.
- A teacher would generally teach 25/30
- A Head of Department in charge of one Curriculum Area would teach 22/30
- A Faculty Head 18/30

Within School Variation - There have been two key strategies in this:
- **Data** has been the other strong area**.** The school has employed Data Leader who collects achievement data from teachers and Faculty Heads, analyses it and then

works with Faculty Heads in the analysis of the data. There are four points in the year where achievement data is put into the student management system. The Data Leader and the Faculty Heads consider the variation <u>between</u> their Curriculum Areas but also drill down to the variance <u>between teachers</u> of the same subject. They also look at key students who are performing well in one subject but poorly in another and looking at reasons for this. The Data leader is a member of extended Senior Leadership Team. On the evidence of the data, Faculty Heads are required to have conversations with staff in their faculties for whom they may have concerns.

- **Learning Walks There** are a huge number of Learning Walks done by several people, the first is Deputy Headteacher in charge of Teaching & Learning. Initially this person was released from all classes to focus on learning walks and embed it as part of the ISV culture. Faculty Heads have now taken over the bulk of the learning Walks for their staff.

RAP The school also runs a RAP programme, *Raising Attainment and Progress* and this is for all Year 11 students (final year). This is led by the Claire, Assistant Headteacher and Achievement leader. Claire meets with several staff each Monday where they review the progress of Year 11 students, particularly those at risk of failing. This weekly focus on the students ensures they are tracked incredibly well.

Minutes the Headteacher receives Minutes of all Curriculum and pastoral care meetings.

Data Management Meeting I attended an extended Senior Leadership Team meeting led by the Deputy Headteacher of Teaching and Learning. The focus of this meeting was to consider tracking of students and measuring value added. An excellent meeting with good discussion. What was interesting as they were analyzing student / Curriculum results it became clear that not all staff had the same common understanding of what 'Above', 'At' or 'Below' level achievement looked like between the subject areas. This invalidated to a degree the data between Curriculum areas. It is essential that all staff have a common understanding of how achievement is measured, its terminology. This is part of the Standardised Operating procedures and Quality Data drivers for ISV.

Stretch Programme This is a programme run by the school and is the name for the enrichment extension programme for students. It is aimed at Year 5 and staff volunteer to lead this. It is a five week programme running after school and while the school is unable to pay teachers for this they do get TOIL (time off in lieu).

Self-Evaluation One of the neat things I saw in this school was the Self-Evaluation and School-Improvement programme. The Senior Leadership Team write this up once a year. The process is that they each get allocated one of the OFSTED categories and work on this in pairs coming up with statements based on evidence they have seen e.g.: around teaching and learning or behavior. The pairs then present their results to rest of the

Senior Leaders and they brainstorm and question and argue and then this is put together into a very good self-evaluation and School Improvement Programme (SIP) document which I have a copy of. This is done yearly.

Performance Management Every teacher must have three formal observations. This is done by the Faculty Head who does his or her own staff. All support staff are done by line managers. The appraisal goals for individual teachers is very specific e.g.: this year all staff had to have as an appraisal goal the academic performance of White British Girls because this group had lower performance. The Headteacher is unapologetic about being very directive but she has found this has proved very beneficial.

Lead Practitioners The focus of the Deputy Headteacher, Teaching & Learning, was to coach teachers. The school also implemented lead practitioners to do this coaching and in previous years they have had five to six lead practitioners who are given a time allowance of two – three hours per week. The Deputy Headteacher has coached these lead practitioners (the role is the same as our Specialist Classroom Teacher). The Deputy Headteacher meets weekly with these lead practitioners and has a longer meeting once a month. The goal of these lead practitioners is to work alongside staff who are struggling and/or who have self-volunteered for certain areas that they want to improve on. This has been a very good area of using teachers who have excellent practice to share their expertise.

The Headteacher insists that Faculty leaders should know how their staff are going and should at least on a weekly basis have done some observations either formal or informal.

ST MARY'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL, SOUTHAMPTON, HAMPSHIRE

Executive Principal Llyn Codling

The school is part of the Portswood Teaching School Primary Academy which is an academy of four schools. It began when St Mary's School was not doing well and Portswood came to assist. The Executive Principal Llyn is based at Portswood and oversees the four schools. There is also Dr Keith Watson whose role is to coach staff. I met with Katy Leonard, Assistant Vice Principal who is also a Phase Leader or what we would describe as a Learning Team Leader.

Classes The school is divided into three 'Phases': Key Stage 1, which includes Years 1 and 2, a Lower Key Stage 2 - Years 3 and 4 and an Upper Key Stage 2 - Years 5 and 6.

Coaching The major feature of this school is the coaching and what they call the *Parrot on the Shoulder* which will be described later. Every Phase leader is a coach and expected to do lesson observations and coaching several times a week. The coaching is led by Dr Keith Watson, Director of Teaching & Learning. He works across all four schools and trains the coaches. There is a large amount of in-house training and discussion with Middle Leaders.

Parrot on the Shoulder style of coaching is where the coach is in the classroom observing the lesson and standing very near to the teacher. As the teacher is teaching, the coach will make constructive comments, or identify areas the teacher needs to focus on. The effect is that there is instant change, rather than waiting until the end of the period to discuss and try and remember events that happened in the period. The *Parrot on the Shoulder* does not necessarily tell the teacher what to do, although that happens at time, but usually poses a lot of questions to provoke reflection. This is a common part of the school and pupils don't bat an eyelid.

All teachers in the school can expect to be coached by someone else but there are priorities that the Senior Leadership Team identify and these may be teachers who have some concerns about, or could be outstanding teachers who need specific coaching in one area of pedagogy i.e.: higher order thinking.

The expression *Parrot on the Shoulder* came from a drama setting where they call it 'hot seating' and this is where someone is asked to role play another person and if they are unsure there is someone who stands next to them giving them advice.

Blusky Education Software The school uses Blusky Education Software which, from my brief look was a very good way of recording appraisal documentation. All teachers in the school are to have an Attainment Target as part of their appraisal and this is where they have identified a certain percentage of students that are to pass in their class. A teacher

can have two coaches for the one person and these two coaches would look on Blusky software to see what the last appraisal was about.

The process to be a Middle Leader and to coach others is that a teacher will observe a Middle Leader who is doing a coaching session. They will then watch the lesson together and review it. They will also coach together at the same time, where the main coach is the *Parrot on the Shoulder* of the trainee coach, who is the *Parrot on the Shoulder* of the teacher. It all sounds complicated but seems to work very well.

Phase Reviews (Learning Team or Curriculum Area Reviews) Each term every Phase is reviewed. This is where three people across the four schools in the Academy will go to one of the four schools and look at a Phase or a Learning Team. They will review:
- the quality of teaching and learning in the Phase
- books
- interview pupils
- data evidence

Following this review, they write a report. One is done in the Autumn term and one in the Spring term. They use Ofsted criteria to determine the rating that they will give to the Phase (Learning Team). The report is usually completed within 48 hours of the visit. The Phase receives the report as well as the Senior Leadership Team and then there is specific training for the Phase team around the next steps identified.

The Board of Governors are very generous with their Professional Development and will cover the costs of University courses for people to improve.

Meetings The Senior Leadership Team meets weekly on a Tuesday, and covers high level information. Every Wednesday is a Phase Team Briefing to discuss the outcomes of the Senior Leadership Team meeting which are held the day before and set targets from the Phase reviews. They will also do a quick 'Book Look' which is where they look at each other's planning.

For one hour, every Tuesday after school Professional Development meetings are held and there is to be no administration but purely Professional Development and this goes onto the individual teachers' Blusky.

Phase Leaders will do a *Whip Around* each morning around their teachers to check they are ready for the day.

At St Mary's every Phase Leader must do a monitoring report once a month which is shared with the School Principal and Executive Principal. The Phase Leader meets with the Principal to discuss the report. It is read in advance and if there are questions these will be added on the Blusky software.

Class Profiles Teacher assess pupils three times a year and place them on an 'arch' / 'half circle' shape and group them according to pre-emerging, emerging, expected, exceeding expectations so this gives them a visual look at where students are at. Teachers plot pupils in the arch to get a good idea of the class profile. This then allows them to set targets for the class. The Phase Leader crunches this data of the arch which is then given to the School Principal who summaries it for the whole school which is then shared at the Senior Leadership Team meetings.

Assistant Vice Principal for Coaching I then met with Stephanie Mander who is the Assistant Vice Principal for Coaching. She does not do any teaching, has only been in the role since September, is in her sixth year in education, and she works across two schools, Portswood and St Mary's. She works directly under Dr Keith Watson and has a teaching coach meeting with Keith weekly. Together they set priorities to determine what teachers to work with. While there are no expectations for the number of *Parrot on the Shoulder* observations, coaching sessions that she does, she will do at least five or six a week. She meets with Dr Keith Watson on a Friday to set the diary for the following week. Dr Keith Watson has coined the phrase *Parrot on the Shoulder* and has a paper regarding this.

Observations Each observation that Steph or Katy do is written up on Blusky and captures what was discussed. This is most crucial to the conversation afterwards and then the conversation is also typed up on Blusky.

These conversations happen during teacher lunchtimes or after school and because the culture is so used to this, and teachers are so reflective, it is not seen as an imposition.

The conversations and follow up can take only 15-20 minutes.

Reflection One of the key objectives for *Parrot on the Shoulder* is to build reflection with teachers rather than nit picking. A lot of articles are given to staff to constantly develop their knowledge around pedagogy. Lessons are videoed for reflection and sharing with other teachers.

The Phase Leader (Learning Team Leader) is expected to do one session coaching a week with their own team staff and this can be 15-20 mins long. They can do some observations which are not *Parrot on the Shoulder* session and this may be as a follow up to some earlier observations or learning done.

The *Parrot on the Shoulder* coach does not get introduced to the class as a 'coach' but just as an extra person in the classroom.

Pre-Lesson Visit Discussion where they look at the lesson plan to discuss and advance how it's going to go, and that is designed to preempt any issues.