



meeting	EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING SELECT COMMITTEE		
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## **REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING SELECT COMMITTEE DISSEMINATION OF GOOD PRACTICE STUDY GROUP**

### **Review of Dissemination of Good Practice in the Nottinghamshire Local Education Service**

#### **Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of the review is to examine how good practice is collected and shared between schools in Nottinghamshire in order to improve the quality of education and pupils' performance.

#### **Information and Advice**

##### **Background**

2. The group was created to consider the range of initiatives being employed to disseminate good practice across Nottinghamshire schools. The terms of reference were as follows:
  - i) to consider the current systems and methods for collecting good practice on all aspects of teaching, learning, curriculum delivery and leadership and management in schools from within and beyond the LEA
  - ii) to scrutinise the effectiveness of the LEA's mechanisms for and approach to, disseminating and sharing good practice between Nottinghamshire schools
  - iii) to consider how the LEA evaluates the impact of its dissemination of good practice on Nottinghamshire schools
  - iv) to consider the LEA's work on sharing good practice in the developing context of joint working and partnership.

## Dissemination of good practice

3. It was reported that a budget of £30,000 per annum had been allocated for good practice work within the LEA. This has enabled two good practice co-ordinators to be seconded from schools for one day per week to engage with schools and to identify and disseminate good practice.
4. The study group scrutinised 'Celebrating and Sharing Success', the LEA policy on identifying, collecting and disseminating good practice in Nottinghamshire. This document provides a simple definition of good practice and identifies the LEA's role in the identification, assimilation and dissemination of good practice. The need for schools to be able to self-identify and the importance of looking for and sharing good practice beyond Nottinghamshire are also important themes.
5. It was agreed that the study group would concentrate on the internal dissemination of good practice in schools, how it was shared across families, networks and the LEA and explore how good practice from other LEAs, including our statistical neighbours, could be identified and shared.
6. The study group considered the range of strategies already being employed within the LEA and these are as follows:
  - two good practice co-ordinators seconded from schools for 1 day per week to gather examples of good practice, lead projects, write newsletters and support the development of the good practice website
  - link inspectors are expected to identify aspects of good practice during visits to schools and ensure that these are reported to the good practice co-ordinators
  - termly good practice newsletters prepared and circulated to schools and between departments
  - networking and pairing of schools in order to share good practice across the LEA and to facilitate school improvement
  - Beacon/ Leading Edge and Specialist Schools are used to support other schools
  - Advanced Skills Teachers are deployed in schools across all phases to spread good practice and support school improvement
  - Area School Effectiveness meetings are held termly and at these meetings good practice in schools is discussed by LEA officers
  - networks of strategy groups sharing good practice provide opportunities for discussions to be held with colleagues from other LEAs including our statistical neighbours e.g.

- 14-19 network
  - Primary Strategy
  - KS3 Strategy
  - small schools network etc.
- the involvement of inspectors in projects and national initiatives provide opportunities for good practice to be observed and discussed outside of Nottinghamshire and eventually used to effect school improvement
  - cluster meetings for category 1 and 2 schools to discuss elements of good practice. These are now being extended to cover areas of development generic to all schools
  - school improvement projects linked to National Strategies used to identify good practice and utilise this to support further school improvement:
    - Improving Schools
    - Intensifying schools
    - Primary Leadership
    - 3-19 Projects
    - Modern Foreign Languages etc.
  - conferences organised specifically to disseminate good practice e.g.
    - Gifted and Talented
    - Leading Learning etc.
  - Celebrating Success fortnight held from 28 June – 9 July 2004. This enabled all schools to display work, put on performances and engage with communities to demonstrate what is happening in Nottinghamshire schools
  - Good Practice conference held on 28 June 2004. This was an opportunity for good practice to be shared with schools. The conference provided a range of workshops and speakers together with an opportunity for schools to display aspects of good practice.
  - examples of good practice are placed on the good practice web site enabling the LEA to disseminate good practice but also providing schools with the facility to self-identify.
  - The good practice website was originally found on the LEAs 'WIRED' intranet site. WIRED provided schools with the opportunity to access aspects of good practice, share their own good practice and talk to other schools. There was a clear path to the good practice section on the site. This site was later amalgamated into a learning platform called 'Assimilate'. This facilitated communication with other local authorities connected

through the East Midlands Broadband Consortium. The transfer of information onto the 'Assimilate' site resulted in schools having problems in finding information, particularly aspects of good practice. The clear path to accessing good practice was lost. Peter Scott attended a meeting to explain how the LEA is moving towards an upgraded version of 'Assimilate' that will ensure schools can access information easily, through clear routes and be able to network with each other. It is important that good practice has a high profile on the new website.

## **7. Recommendations:**

- **to further develop contacts with other LEAs, including our statistical neighbours, to ensure that good practice is identified, shared and disseminated for the benefit of Nottinghamshire schools**
- **dissemination of good practice electronically via a website is an important aid to school improvement and networking. The LEA must continue to develop the good practice website, now to be sited on the upgraded 'Assimilate' learning platform, ensuring that it is easily accessible to all schools and that routes to specific examples of good practice are clearly defined**
- **continue to produce the excellent good practice newsletters.**

## **Visits to schools undertaken by the study group**

8. The study group visited six primary schools and two secondary schools to look at:
  - the strategies schools use to identify good practice
  - how they have shared good practice with other schools
  - the type and quality of good practice they have received
  - the providers of good practice available within the LEA and brokered by the LEA
  - the quality of the newsletter and the good practice website
  - any recommendations the schools could make to further enhance the use of good practice as a school improvement tool.
9. Following the school visits members of the study group reported back on their findings and made the following comments:
  - good practice is being identified consistently and being used internally by schools to model effective practice and ensure school improvement

- the LEA is playing a central role in the identification of good practice, the brokerage of good practice and in using this to support schools requiring assistance with elements of school improvement
- specialist schools are playing a key role in supporting schools
- Advanced Skills Teachers (ASTs) are used effectively to model effective practice, to support individual teachers and schools as a whole, to provide curriculum direction and in sharing elements of good practice from schools around Nottinghamshire
- the role of the good practice co-ordinators was well regarded by the schools that had been in contact with them
- schools are seeking involvement in a range of projects to enable support, time and resources to be channelled towards priorities for school improvement
- the good practice newsletters are seen as being of very high quality and are read regularly by schools
- schools confirmed the initial feelings about the accessibility of the good practice website. Schools felt that improvements could be made to the site in order to make access to elements of good practice more straight forward
- schools appreciated the development of networking and the working within families of schools e.g. 3-19 project, as means by which good practice can be identified and disseminated. However it was felt that this could be extended and developed into different working practices with schools.

### **The use of projects to disseminate good practice and contribute towards school improvement.**

10. Peter Eardley, Head of Primary School Improvement, was invited to talk to the group about projects linked to the Primary Strategy and how these are impacting on school improvement.
11. Peter outlined the various ways that the LEA identifies schools needing extra support and the variety of projects available to provide this support. He then concentrated on how the 'Improving Schools Project' is used to work with schools in a different way. Teams of inspectors, consultants, school improvement officers from across the LEA and staff members from the school design school improvement projects specific to the needs of schools and then use time, resources, expertise and elements of good practice to ensure the school is able to achieve the aims of the project.

12. The emerging evidence shows that schools engaged in projects such as the 'Improving Schools Project' have made up to three times the amount of progress compared with other schools in the LEA.
13. Hilary Craik and Sally Bates, head teachers in two Nottinghamshire schools, attended a meeting to talk about effective networking within a family of schools. This networking arrangement enables the schools to identify and share good practice for the benefit of the pupils in the area. Networking has assisted these schools to identify generic development issues, pool resources, problem solve using the expertise present in the schools and work cross-phase enhancing transfer and transition procedures.
14. The commitment of all the schools to support initiatives with financial contributions has enabled staff to be employed to work in all the schools within the network. This is illustrated by the work of the network special educational needs co-ordinator who is able to identify and share good practice within and across the schools.
15. The study group was invited to visit the Dukeries College to observe the good practice in the area of ICT. The following strategies are examples of the many initiatives that this school is engaged in:
  - the school is able to broaden the range of subjects offered to pupils by providing video conferencing facilities linked to tutors in other parts of the country.
  - skills, expertise and technical support are provided for all feeder primary schools through an effective family of schools network.
  - the school is currently developing links with parents, pupils (outside school hours) and the community by providing broadband facilities and computers to enable internet access and access to the Dukeries website and library of resources thus facilitating adult education and homework study support.
16. The developments at Dukeries (and in other schools) have been facilitated by the commitment and expertise of the head teacher and staff and a willingness to look outside the school to seek examples of good practice. Nottinghamshire is fortunate to have head teachers, teachers and specialist staff who have skills, experience and expertise that could be used to support projects in other schools and disseminate the good practice they have developed. Consideration should be given to identifying what can be provided by such people and then making appropriate linkages with schools requiring support.
17. **Recommendation:**
  - **further extend the networking and family grouping of schools as mechanisms for the identification and dissemination of good practice. Use the evidence and experience of current working groups to explore different ways of working with schools.**

- **support schools in networks to explore the possibilities of employing specialist staff to work in all the schools thus providing valuable skills and expertise that a single school would be unable to provide.**
- **provide opportunities for networks of schools to link with other networks and other educational establishments e.g. Nottingham Trent University in order to engage in best practice research and further share effective practice.**
- **explore ways of utilising the skills, experience and expertise of head teachers and staff by facilitating linkages with schools engaged in similar projects.**

### **The work of the good practice co-ordinators**

18. The study group was presented with information about the work of the good practice co-ordinators by Elaine Cockburn who had been seconded from school for one day per week to undertake one of these posts.
19. The study group acknowledged the valuable work that the co-ordinators were doing particularly in relation to the contact with schools, the collection and dissemination of good practice, the development work connected with the website and their efforts in ensuring a successful good practice conference and fortnight in 2004.
20. Connections with other working groups are being developed particularly in relation to Gifted and Talented, the Foundation Stage and Special Educational Needs. However this is time consuming but is important in developing the connection between good practice and all aspects of school improvement. From the information presented and the evidence of the scrutiny so far the study group felt that there was more work to be done than time available from two people one day per week. It was strongly felt that this was more like a full-time post.
21. **Recommendation:**
  - **consideration should be given to the budget allocated to good practice and the possibility of a future full-time co-ordinator linked to Gifted and Talented and the development of the Primary Strategy.**

### **The good practice conference and fortnight celebration**

22. Members of the study group attended the good practice conference held at the Newark Show Ground. They reported that this had been a great success. 300 delegates from schools and the LEA attended, 38 schools provided displays and 12 schools were involved in workshops. Nationally renowned speakers provided the introduction and conclusion as well as one of the workshops.

23. Evaluations from those attending echo the views of the study group by judging the conference to have been a tremendous success.
24. 95 schools were involved during the festival fortnight either by displaying pupils' work, putting on performances or engaged in work in the community.
25. **Recommendation:**
- **although the conference and festival fortnight were successes, consideration should be given to strategies to ensure that more schools are involved or have the opportunity to be involved. Future events could follow a family of schools theme/structure.**

### **The work of ASTs**

26. Sue Craggs provided the study group with an overview of the number of ASTs currently appointed within Nottinghamshire and how these are deployed to support school improvement.
27. It was acknowledged that ASTs undertake a valuable role in disseminating good practice and in supporting schools with a variety of school improvement issues. The strategic use of ASTs working alongside other school improvement officers leads to greater, more sustainable school improvement. This type of joined up work needs to become more widespread. Peter Eardley stated that we need to find connections between the projects and strategies employed by schools and the work of ASTs and other school improvement professionals in order to best use and disseminate good practice for the benefit of all schools in Nottinghamshire.
28. **Recommendation:**
- **Support strategies and examples of good practice in isolation have limited impact. Connections must be made between the work of schools, projects, strategies and the deployment of ASTs and other school improvement officers in order to maximise the use of good practice in school improvement.**
29. Sue explained how the AST programme is funded and that changes in this funding arrangement will come in to force from 2006. What was originally AST funding will be allocated to schools through the AWPU. LEAs will no longer be in control of this funding. The options facing LEAs are as follows:
- Discontinue AST work.
  - LEAs pick up the total cost.
  - Schools contribute to a central AST fund.
  - Possible use of block standards fund grant.
  - Establish a charging structure for AST work.



30. The study group feel that ASTs are a valuable resource which should not be lost. They contribute greatly to school improvement and the dissemination of good practice.
31. **Recommendation**
- **Every effort should be made to ensure that AST work continues after 2006. Consideration should be given to how the future funding of the AST programme can be secured.**

**COUNCILLOR STELLA SMEDLEY**

Chair of the Education and Lifelong Learning Select Committee  
Dissemination of Good Practice Study Group

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