



Case studies of local authority school improvement practice

by

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A

Outcomes: 'A' has no schools in a category and a high proportion of schools which are good or outstanding.

Context: 'A' is a core city with some of the highest deprivation in the country, some turbulence in schools with changing populations and high levels of asylum seekers and speakers of other languages. It is a constant challenge for school leaders to maintain and improve their high standards. *"'A' means to make things even better if schools are good or satisfactory."*

'A' has come up from a low base; it was deemed to be a failing authority and has steadily raised its game over the intervening years. Where there have been more recent problems, it has often been in schools with long standing heads, which have been wary of external challenge and have not kept up-to-date.

Children's Services overall are judged to be performing excellently. Social care is under high demand with nearly 1,000 children in care. The Every Child Matters approach is alive and well. Heads say that they, *'can't live and work in this area and just do education.'* They identify that the work of the children's centres, for example, with parents, is having a direct and positive effect on children in school.

Approach

There is an extremely strong partnership of schools and the local authority; the family of schools is much treasured by schools and the local authority alike. 45% reductions to the school improvement budget were assuaged by a partnership approach. A detailed and rigorous consultation led to services designed by schools to their requirements and largely funded from within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). All schools chose to receive the universal services.

Services agreed include five visits a year to all schools, including to converter academies, by redesigned SIPs for target setting, annual review, performance management, key cohorts, narrowing the gap and vulnerable groups plus local and "tailored" agenda with a report to governors.

Schools causing concern receive additional 'SIP' days. Every school also has access to a named/assigned local authority officer contact who will provide advice, guidance and signpost to alternative support should a need arise. This is all part of the universal offer which is funded as an 'insurance' by all schools by joint agreement. This is a powerful arrangement reliant on the partnership approach being sustained.

Quality assurance is inherent in the provision and heads and others scrutinise the evidence. The importance of good HR support has been recognised and school employment services have returned to the fold of school improvement.

The local authority is also a strategic partner in the Teaching School Alliance and brokers the use of NLEs and LLEs. Schools in nearby local authorities

are buying services. The potential for more collective work with other local authorities has been discussed but it has been slow to achieve many joint efficiencies.

The **Teaching School Alliance** works closely with the LA as a strategic partner and sees the LA brokerage role as key, *'This is about building on strengths and matching personality and skills.'*

Concerns

Heads expressed a fear of the erosion of the current excellent partnerships with other schools through the effects of national policy.

The alliance is trying to maintain a mutually protective network. It was felt that if the local authority reduced any more then the pressure on school-to-school support would impact on their own schools. *'Every school has an area of concern, we are all here to help each other. However as small schools there are capacity issues.'*

If, for example, a very good teacher goes out to support another school they have to leave work for a supply teacher and this will have an effect on the pupils. Heads in the Teaching School Alliance believed:

- the maturity was not there to take over from the local authority yet;
- there would continue to be real issues over capacity;
- it requires an overview with local knowledge to broker successfully;
- it requires a different type of leadership;
- it would be a grave loss if people went from local authority who had overview and local and national intelligence.

Whilst relationships remain good, there is a much higher rate of **exclusions** from academies than other schools (49% of exclusions from 25% of schools). The headteacher chair of the Fairer Access Panel quotes the Department for Education as encouraging academies not to accept pupils excluded from other schools; the practice of working with *'all our children'* and many successful managed moves is a valued approach. The chair in this instance has been able to use his personal relationship and moral pressure to persuade academies to stand by the local arrangements.

Some heads also expressed anger at one size fits all **floor standards** that made no allowance for context. As one head said where the school has very high levels of asylum seekers in the school population, *'Let Michael Gove take key stage 2 SATS in Somali and see how well he does.'* They also felt the judgements on staff were very unfair, *'it is very hard work here, they choose to stay,'* *'we have outstanding teachers but the national statistics demolish them,'* and, in relation to the progress made, *'we have the cleverest children in the world but cannot reach floor targets.'*

B

Outcomes: 'B' has well over 80% of schools are good or outstanding. However a stubborn third of secondary schools remain no better than satisfactory.

Context: 'B' is a medium sized urban authority with a history of few schools entering a category and with swift recovery when it occurs.

Approach

The local authority is getting more forensic in approach, tracking groups of children as 'virtual schools' and scrutinising their progress. Progress is the key indicator of teaching and learning; what makes a difference every day in the classroom to every child. The school improvement team works with all schools, *'immersed, know what works and use networks,'*

An unusual feature is the monitoring panel of elected members. This provides a confidential forum for scrutiny. The affiliation of members is only to children of the area. It monitors, celebrates success, examines critical areas and provides a mandate for action; it works discreetly. Heads are invited to explain themselves or to be congratulated and all heads respect its place. The process is believed to keep members up-to-date, officers on their toes and to assist in sharing local intelligence in a proactive approach. Or as a member described it, *'poking around to make sure that we have good schools.'*

Governor services are seen as a key part of school improvement services. Training for chairs of governors is given a high profile with thanks from the mayor and other high profile figures. The training has benefits in itself but also in the development of intelligence networks and relationships.

Use of soft and hard intelligence is seen as crucial in pre-empting decline, although not always totally effective as a secondary school went into special measures, under the new framework, during this research. All schools, including academies, get a minimum of six visits a year from an adviser. Officers attend governing body meetings and attend all the governing body meetings of secondary schools. Schools that are only satisfactory receive a whole school review which can be compared to an Ofsted inspection.

This is in addition to facilitating meetings of headteachers and professional development. The local authority describes a, *'preventative model based on local knowledge, knowing schools well, quality of team, sharing of information, detailed analysis of information, trusting but robust relationships and adult learning approach based on balance of accountability, authority and responsibility.'*

A primary head who had led her school out of special measures and has now achieved outstanding described how, *'adviser visits require forethought which helps keeps school on its toes, this is good because I know I know my stuff. This challenges intellectually and creates mutual respect.'*

A secondary head who has brought her school out of notice to improve felt, *'Challenge and support is of high quality which deters moves to become an academy and I believe most heads will agree, 'team worth working with, don't feel done to, feel done with.'*

The local authority believes it provides, *'pressure for progress of all pupils with very collaborative approach which could be described as a 'modernised old-fashioned approach' with supportive learning environment for adults as well as pupils.'* It also says, *'we don't hang about,'* with *'regular consideration of hard and soft intelligence, clear steps of escalation we hunt in packs for intensive and swift effect.'*

C

Outcomes: 'C' has no schools in a category and very high proportion good or outstanding. It is one of the few authorities to be narrowing the gap at all key stages. In 2011 over 60% of pupils achieved 5+ A* - C including English and maths.

Context: 'C' is a small urban authority with very high levels of deprivation and high proportions of pupils with English as an additional language with 80% with black or minority ethnic backgrounds. All children's centres are attached to their local school; an Every Child Matters approach is taken. In 1998 the local authority had poor educational standards; now they are amongst the highest in England.

The local authority is convinced that strong schools make strong communities and so there is a whole authority commitment. The local authority acts as a mediator: supporting schools with the understanding and implementation of national policy and supporting school self-evaluation.

The knowledge of schools and the positive working relationships it has with all of them, including most academies, supports the local authority in anticipating problems and, in its brokerage role, to address them early.

The local authority has seen the speed with which urban schools in a challenging environment can decline and the cost to the pupils and the community when it happens. It sees early investment as a moral imperative and value for money. As a local chair of governors and IEB said, *'Someone needs to be able to identify failure early enough and to stop schools bumping along. Action needs to be bold, brave and early; if left then capacity lost to improve quickly.'*

Approach: All schools have a linked adviser visit once a term. All information, and the local authority has access to a wide range, is frequently considered by the central team. Relationships are fostered with all schools and improvement is a shared journey. Additional elements include:

- Significant investment in school leadership with heads as system leaders. Investment into a Future Leaders (or succession planning) programme gave opportunities for the very best to stay in primary education in borough and to nurture new leaders. The expectations of heads were raised and have kept on rising. School leaders are very highly valued and supported in their career journey with the local authority as a mediating layer; the development of executive heads for federations is one example of how the local authority encourages, *'talented head teachers to stay in the most challenging schools.'*
- In-depth research with data analysis creates intelligence which provides focus for action; an example is the in detailed analysis on the progress of Afro-Caribbean boys: The research stimulated and informed discussion which led to joint and effective action.
- Brokering school-to-school support, with fixed term federations a common element. This is seen as particularly powerful in a fast

changing urban environment. The art of persuasion is strong and effective.

Ofsted's Annual Report in 2009 - 10 describes the work of the local authority with schools in a category as a good practice case study; one example was where a primary school was removed from special measures after just one monitoring visit, *'The local authority acted swiftly and decisively when serious concerns were raised about the school before the inspection which put it in special measures. The authority had removed delegated powers, suspended the headteacher and begun to set up an interim executive board. The local authority arranged for the headteacher of a successful primary school to take over as executive headteacher with the deputy head from the support school becoming the acting headteacher. A federation was established between the two schools, intended to last at least three years.'* (Ofsted, 2010)

The steps and support provided by these means that on the second visit the inspector said, *'Staff were keen, bright and enthused by their success. The pupils were flying. I judged that the school no longer required special measures.'*

D

Outcomes: 'D' has a very low and decreasing proportion of schools in a category (none in special measures) and high and increasing number of schools which are good or outstanding. Key stage results at and around national figures

Context: 'D' is a large authority including pockets of urban deprivation, affluence and rural poverty with need to support schools in sparsely populated and isolated areas.

In recent memory the local authority was not doing well. It had poor relations with some of its secondary schools and had kept its distance. Intervention from central government actually gave it a new confidence to be proactive and the effects of that can be seen in the robust approach of the local authority. It is now keen to move to developing best practice through a partnership or collective responsibility with all schools for all the children in the local authority.

The local authority has a traditional image. The number of small schools and geographical isolation may tend to encourage a paternalistic mindset. The development of converter academies has brought new tensions, whether real or imagined. The size of the authority can make the local authority seem distant and authoritarian.

A sponsored academy continues to have low results and has recently been judged as requiring a notice to improve.

Approach

The local authority school improvement provision, a substantial team, is a mixture of core funded and bought in. Advisers are previous heads or senior leaders from secondary schools. Fresh talent is brought in through secondments of headteachers as associates. Every school has an allocated adviser and gets half a day conversation each autumn term. Schools that are less than good get more time on a sliding scale. All schools can buy in more and most do.

There is extensive use of NLEs and LLEs. Every school which the local authority categorises as causing concern has one allocated to them depending on the skills and context. Even schools involved in this programme are unaware of the extent of school-to-school support with over 45 LLEs engaged.

Federation is rarely used. Communities and members have not supported this approach and, while other ways remain effective, there is little heart for the approach.

The local authority works hard to identify schools at risk and is well on its way to achieve its ambition to have all schools as good or outstanding. Its categorisation is unusual in having six levels; two for satisfactory plus; two for avoiding potential problems; and two for those formally causing concern. One head described this as very helpful in motivating staff as the school can see its steps to improvement formally noted.

The local authority is renowned for being quick on the draw when moving heads on. The barrier to improvement is almost always leadership. An analysis of the cost of the head staying is made and a compromise agreement offered. This is always accepted; the unions understand the need. Last year 15 –20 heads moved on in this way; *'don't mess around,'* this is much faster than is common.

The local authority is willing to take risks in the interests of children; this requires confidence. It has found no need to use warning notices. However, sometimes the local authority has no evidence for action or entry until a school moves into a category; it feels that the local authority should not fear a category but use it if needed. Schools in a category are robustly challenged and robustly supported.

There is the risk that the effective practice is based on personalities. In addition, given the fast changing local and national environment, there are dangers of fragmentation and/or alienation with people and schools in different places on the journey.

On the other hand there are opportunities being developed for a stronger partnership approach with a real family of schools and collective responsibility based on mutual respect and moral purpose for all the children in the area to achieve the best possible results. This will use all the intelligence in the area to develop even better practice and identify and support schools which falter.

E

Outcomes: In 'E', the results and Ofsted judgements achieved by schools generally reflect national averages for the type of area.

Context: 'E' is a large and mainly rural county. The sizes of schools range from very big secondary schools to tiny primary schools, some in sparsely populated areas.

Approach

'E' has invested time and energy into supporting collaboration, with a very strong record on federation particularly primary federations but also all through schools. Drivers have been:

- Standards
 - Stronger schools supporting schools causing concern or at risk of causing concern.
 - Increasing difficulty in recruiting heads.
 - Developing capacity through collaboration (heads saying that the job is not doable).

- Economic
 - The number of small schools were not believed to be economic long term.
 - Schools working together created economies.

As a result 'E' has developed nationally recognised frameworks for federation in partnership with schools. National evaluation would indicate that federations aimed at leading learning are more successful than those aiming to manage falling pupil numbers.

The school improvement service has had a traded services approach and is outsourced through a strategic partner together with other education services. It retains, despite significant reductions to the local authority education budget, a large body of advisers by selling services to an area larger than the local authority.

In terms of school improvement the principles are:

- Methodical approach to identification based on data analysis and precise steps to be taken and when (including all powers available).
- Intervention in inverse proportion to success.
- Schools are self-managing so there is no contact if they choose not to purchase services **or** are not identified under early intervention processes.

The school improvement service, commissioned by the local authority, is proud of its systematic approach and quality assurance mechanisms. Factors that have limited the ability of schools to improve include:

- The difficulty some schools have in recruiting good staff because of the remote location.

- The need to wait for evidence to be accrued to take action on leadership.
- Ofsted judgements which are deemed too favourable.

40% of secondary schools are academies, this supports the view that primary schools are in a very different situation to secondary schools.

The local authority seeks to influence rather than dictate, it *'wishes to be multi-lingual, giving choice of type of school but with focus on benefits to children's education The two key considerations are what's in it for learners, and how to secure maximum choice for schools with minimum amount of coercion to go into new arrangements'*

The head of an outstanding secondary academy describes nothing as having changed for the school since the conversion in November 2011. Their experience of *'benign neglect'* as an improving maintained school resulted in a 'hands-off' approach: *'In the last 13 years the local authority has not stopped us doing anything we wanted to do.'* The subtle change is that the school, and its governors now know that they are on their own the head thinks that, *'they may step up their game accordingly'*.

Commenting on other schools' performance, the head also wonders, *'How is it some similar schools with similar catchment areas are still only hitting 50% A* - C and not being held to account?'*

Supporting other schools is not a high priority unless there is something in it for the academy, *'why should we? There may be some benefit to us but it is not proven taking into account the investment we would have to make.'*

The incentive to change was the additional £500,000 which the school plans to use better than the local authority. *'The local authority was an artificial construct, trying to blend the interests of schools and their communities when they are very different. Local authorities have a tendency to develop flab, chains of academies will do the same. Some body on the ground, locally, with teeth, is needed. Whitehall cannot manage 23,000 schools'*

F

Outcomes: 'F' had been described as a place where, '*virtually every indicator around learning, skills, participation and health were at the 'wrong' end of the league table.*' When research began 10% of schools were in a category, the latest estimates were 4.7%.

Six years ago 55 of the then 84 primary schools had been categorised as causing concern. Now it is six with 69% good or better.

Context: 'F' is a post-industrial area of high deprivation and stable population.

This is a community where qualifications were deemed unnecessary as there was always unskilled employment available. This is no longer the case. There remains a very strong community with low crime rates but also low aspirations; low level practical skills are still the preferred route to employment.

The lack of parental ambition has contributed to schools being satisfied with being satisfactory. Schools tended to compare with other local schools and the culture of low aspirations was promulgated.

The historical approach

A heavy handed approach to move this on had led to poor relations between schools and the local authority, '*The relationship with schools became that of a big stick where heads were only called in for criticism. The support was missing from the challenge. There was:*

- *marginalisation of teaching and learning;*
- *too many longstanding heads with longstanding staff who were unaware of how their school could improve;*
- *an excuse culture;*
- *antagonism between local authority and schools;*
- *a feeling of 'done to' in schools.'*

(local head)

The stability meant few changes over several decades. A governor describes how, '*The area had a culture problem. Too many heads, governors and politicians had been around too long.*'

Stronger performance in secondary schools supported greater autonomy and the self-selection of SIPs. The result was a lack of challenge and complacency. School leadership, including governance, was resistant to local authority challenge as many were still sitting on Ofsted judgements of good under the previous framework. They were then caught out by changes in the Ofsted framework and the measure of 5+ A* - C to include English and maths. They could not demonstrate progress and in one week three secondary schools went into a category. This sent shockwaves through schools and politicians.

A governor at one of the schools describes how the inspector asked, *'Do you have any idea what is going on here?'* *'Have you ever seen Raise online?'* The governor asked what Raise online was. The inspector closed the meeting as a waste of time and put the school into special measures.

The triangulation of head, governors and local authority had not done its job. *'No one is a professional if they allow schools to go into special measures and the education of children to suffer for up to five years.'* (governor)

The governor, very experienced and senior in business, now knows that the head:

- did not provide key information to governors,
- persuaded the SIP to tone down criticism;
- provided induction himself to new governors.

In addition:

- there was no local governor association,
- the information to governors from the local authority did not highlight the accountability and challenge there should be in the role.

The new approach

Under-performance in primary schools was challenged and a substantial professional development programme put in place based on outstanding practice. This two year programme focused on the development of quality teaching. Every school was asked to identify two teachers who were outstanding or had potential to be outstanding and these became the 'Lead Learners' in each school. A comprehensive programme based on coaching and mentoring was used to support these teachers to raise individual and whole school practice. Headteachers still talk about the positive impact of this programme.

Secondary schools were a different challenge. The local authority got stronger and:

- replaced ineffective SIPs;
- used IEBs and additional governors where governors were still over protective;
- supported governors to establish a local governor association;
- worked with Ofsted to ensure clear messages;
- moved on 14 heads in 18 months.

A new DCS brought a new attitude which acknowledged the need for improvement and working creatively in partnership to find ways to make it happen.

From an authority with members that were, *'reluctant to embrace the academy agenda,'* there is a new vision that is inclusive and a brave political mandate to effect change. A 'Challenge Partnership' has been created which includes a wide range of educationalists, (including HE and FE), private sector partners, work and skills board representatives and senior local politicians.

This Challenge Plan describes schools, *'looking to the local authority to develop a plan that allows for robust, external support whilst maintaining a strong sense of local partnership and 'family' of schools.'*

'This creates an improved offer to all learners:

- *The expansion of high quality collaboration.*
- *The rationalisation of partnership activity where appropriate.*
- *The devolution of responsibilities and resources from the local authority to groups of schools and other partners.'*

This is *'accelerated through the development of academy trusts or federated groups of schools.'*

Academies are part of the solution, but selected on their willingness to demonstrate:

1. *'Commitment to collaborative and partnership working with all members of the Challenge Partnership in order to maintain an appropriate focus on Borough wide challenges.*
2. *Proven phase specific track record in school improvement in challenging contexts.*
3. *Commitment to community access and use of facilities through agreed extended opening and non discriminatory lettings policy.*
4. *Fair access to the school for all pupils as governed by the local authority's admission code, the national Admission Code of Practice and local agreements for students who present challenging behaviours.*
5. *Commitment to maintaining current high levels of inclusion and cooperation to determine the resourcing of appropriate specialist services and alternative provision.*
6. *Agreement to co-locate community well being teams and resources.*
7. *The sponsor will commit to not selling off any land from the estate, unless the proceeds are for the direct benefit only of the children and young people of the local learning community; and comply with any current planning law.*
8. *The sponsor will commit to maintain an open dialogue with the local authority regarding the academy's performance and will discuss and alert to issues causing concern in order that they may be addressed and managed.'*

These criteria has attracted sponsors with similar principles and objectives who are looking for a collaborative approach. As one sponsor said, *'We want*

a good relationship with the local authority and we are excited by the wider opportunities such as Every Child Matters, addressing NEETs and co-construction. We want outstanding schools for local communities with families of schools and working with the local authority.'

A primary school head who has worked locally for 21 years described how, *'Trust has grown. The local authority works with school leaders, not only NLE and LLE, across schools to put things right using the expertise in the system. Working together is key, when once it was big guns against a school; now schools are given the opportunity to succeed although are still expected to agree challenging improvement targets which they are involved in developing.*

There has been a dramatic turnover of heads and:

- *a real and joined-up focus on teaching and learning often led by deputy / middle leaders;*
- *a rise in standards;*
- *improved morale;*
- *more mutual support;*
- *some resistance and some feel pushed to be academies.'*

'The approach being taken now means that relationships are not changing if a school becomes an academy so it is the best of both worlds. The model is an interesting one in that academies are welcomed into the fold.' (primary head)

Results are now rising, but not fast enough in secondary where only 44.3% attained 5 A*-C (including English and maths) in 2011. The strategy being implemented includes a model of school-to-school support with outstanding heads to develop capacity and take improvement to the next level. This marks the move to a commissioning model using contemporary expertise from wherever it can be found and not just rely on internal resources.

The local authority is confident that the leadership changes will accelerate the rate of improvement and is working with the Office for Schools Commissioner (OSC) to agree structural change and academy sponsorship where appropriate to bring in good school leadership fast.

G

Outcomes: 'G' has a roughly average proportion of schools in a category and a lower proportion than nationally of schools that are good or outstanding. Standards are around the national averages. The authority has had a higher proportion of schools than can be explained by its size which have 'yo-yoed', that is come out of a category and then gone back in. Similarly there have been schools that have moved from notice to improve to special measures.

Context: 'G' is a very large authority that tends to operate in subdivisions with some autonomy. Overall the levels of deprivation are average but areas of low and high deprivation both exist here. There is a mixture of urban and rural with some very isolated areas.

There is high and growing proportion of academies and there is considerable pressure from the Department for Education for more primary academies because of the proportion of schools below the floor target. The Department for Education is resisting moves for outstanding primary schools, which are not academies, to partner these schools.

Over half the secondary schools are academies. Previously sponsored academies are not all doing well. Several are below the floor standard and a second sponsor is taking one over. No non-academy secondary school is below the floor standard.

The reductions in the resources available have been an opportunity to ensure higher standards of local authority staff and to focus on key needs. Historically, the local authority had significant resources but it cannot indicate significant benefits in terms of attainment as a result.

Historical approach:

There appears to have been a complacency in many schools which was not challenged by the local authority. There was a good relationship based on support. Since new officers have come in the level of challenge has significantly increased.

Elected members were not aware that the local authority was slipping back, that it was improving more slowly than other areas. Once members understood that progress was not enough, that, '*satisfactory was not a destination,*' they have supported all the recent changes.

Many heads have been born, bred and educated in the area and sometimes their whole career has been in one school. This can exacerbate the tendency to be inward looking; initiatives '*flow through*' and may have had little effect. Governors have indicated that they have not felt confident in holding the head

to account. They have also been reluctant to do so, partly because headteacher recruitment is hard; some jobs have to be advertised five times.

There is also some excellent work within some schools but schools tended not to share their good practice, perhaps even internally. The school standards and improvement team now intend to ensure that this best practice is captured and shared.

There was a lack of awareness of the changing educational context. This supported a bit of an excuse culture and, given the supportive approach of the local authority, small gains were given more credit than they should have been.

New approach:

Recent changes in leadership in the local authority are changing the culture. The more robust approach of the local authority has had some resistance, the local authority now asks, *'would you want your child to go to this school?'*

One powerful approach has been using data more informatively. Schools tended to compare themselves with other schools in the area. The local authority leadership now shows what similar schools are achieving nationally and this changes expectations considerably. In a significant proportion of schools the headteacher, once fully aware of what the data meant, decided to leave.

There are high ambitions to develop a network of schools that will raise expectations and provide the school-to-school support to achieve better standards. New networks of heads have been established which are more focused on standards.

The local authority is involved in every headteacher appointment as see it as crucial, *'get that right and we are out of a job.'* An agreement has been made to attend headteacher appointments for academies. No charge is made to schools and human resources costs come out of school improvement funds. For focus schools there is more support. Currently there is a bulge, part age profile and partly the effect of heads being moved on, with approximately 80 headteacher appointments in a year.

The local authority is concentrating its efforts on the schools which are less than satisfactory or approaching borderline. Given the size of the authority and the large number of schools which are satisfactory, this is a massive task.

Identified schools are now in receipt of support and challenge which includes:

- An adviser working with the school;
- An audit of need and development of a plan to raise achievement;
- Formal meetings every six weeks to review progress with the expectation that every child will make accelerated progress.

- Reports to a central board made up of the local authority and heads to review progress and any further action required including the use of a warning notice.

The Ofsted statement of action is used as a template; this de-clutters plans to focus on teaching and learning. This has proved essential as many schools included very peripheral matters in their planning.

NLEs and LLEs are supported by the local authority and deployed according to their skills set with the target schools. The local authority perceives that the quality varies and the job of supporting a school is very different to running a school. Some lack the personal skills needed. Some have not had experience of the journey from satisfactory to good to outstanding and do not recognise that it has to be a journey.

In one instance the concerns regarding the internal dynamics of a school and the effect on the pupils has led to the local authority calling in Ofsted (as a quicker route than a warning notice). At one time the local authority was reluctant to use warning notices because of the potential effect on relationships. Now it is reluctant to use them as they take too long when there are faster routes to achieve the desired outcomes.

Concerns

The size of the challenge is significant. It is hard to work with all schools and their good and outstanding practice when there is a high proportion that are satisfactory and/or below the floor standards.

The Department for Education appear to consider that it is too late for the local authority to apply local solutions and the pressure is for large scale changes to academies. The Department for Education does not deem moves to federations with good or outstanding schools as effective as being sponsored academies.