

Jurassic Coast

Teaching Schools Alliance

Newsletter No. 4



Literacy Conference



The first JCTSA Literacy Conference took place on the 25th October at Haselbury Mill in Somerset and proved to be a great success. Despite a few problems with the acoustics in the conference centre, the day went very well, with a wide range of informative and entertaining contributions from a fascinating set of speakers. Lunch was good too!

We were particularly pleased to welcome children's authors Ellen Renner and Philip Reeve, who spoke about their work, but the programme was balanced by thoughtful contributions from Jo Pike, Sarah Wilds and Debra Myhill. The range of topics covered was particularly helpful, with useful input on Ofsted, practical advice from Debra and Sarah, and inspirational moments from Ellen and Phillip. It seems we were able to strike the appropriate balance between the practical and the inspirational.

(cont.)

The Alliance

Axe Valley Community College
 Axminster Community Primary School
 Budmouth College
 Charmouth Primary School
 Colyton Grammar School
 Holyrood Academy
 Marshwood CE VC Primary School
 Mountjoy Special School
 Musbury Primary School
 Mrs Ethelston's Primary School
 St Mary's Catholic Primary School
 St Mary's CE VC Primary School
 St Mary's Thorncombe Primary School
 St Michael's Primary School
 The Kings School
 The University of Exeter
 The Woodroffe School

'In all schools, inspectors ... will be trying to judge how well leaders and managers foster a culture of high expectations in terms of reading so that every single child is a good reader by the time she or he leaves the school. This culture comes, first for all, from the headteacher'.



Literacy Conference (cont.)

The evaluations suggested that delegates enjoyed the conference and there were some very positive comments:

"The day far exceeded what I was expecting. An excellent day, thank you."

"I found the conference highly enjoyable and informative."

"I thought it was excellent especially the authors."

I found the Ofsted session very useful as it supported what I am trying to establish at my school."



The conference was discussed at the recent steering group meeting and it was agreed that we should try another one, this time bringing it forward to June in order to attract a wider audience. Although there were 60 delegates in the end, it took a while for this number to be reached. It was felt that June was a better time of year when colleagues were more likely to find the time for such an event.

As a result, we have discussed the theme, in response to the steering group's guidance and the delegates' evaluations and come up with the title:

Writing Beyond English; Reading Beyond the Classroom



This will allow us to widen the scope to look, in particular, at issues around writing, but it will also allow us to inject the inspirational elements provided by the writers. Writing Beyond English is a theme currently being pursued by the University of Exeter and we hope to secure their involvement once again, and I am delighted to say that Philip Reeve has agreed to take part too. He has also invited Sarah McIntyre, the illustrator of his next book, Seawigs, to take part in his presentation so it should be fascinating.

The provisional date has been fixed for **June 19th** so put it in your diaries now. We will be returning to Monk's Yard, near Ilminster, where we held our first Teaching Schools Conference.

If you have any ideas regarding the rest of the programme, please get in contact so that we can plan them in.

School Direct

The window for School Direct applications is now open and I am sure that colleagues will be aware of the national debate surrounding this new route into teaching. As an alliance we have opted for a tentative start, with six non-salaried places now confirmed.

The following subjects have been offered:

- Physics at Woodroffe
- English at Kings
- Maths at Axe Valley
- Technology at Budmouth
- KS1 at Mrs Ethelston's/Chardstock
- Early Years at Axminster County Primary

Full details are available on the jctsa website and there is a link to us on The University of Exeter website.

We were surprised to receive an enquiry as soon as the application round opened and there have been one or two since. We are working closely with Kate Watson at The University of Exeter since we plan to tie in our School Direct work closely with the PGCE course, if only to make it as easy to administer as possible.

There is a lot of detail to iron out – and the Teaching Agency seems to be moving the goal posts daily – but we should be able to run the scheme fairly effectively once we have the candidates in place. Since the guidance on when the application window closes is vague to say the least, we are unsure when that will be. Of course, we may not attract any suitable candidates but I am sure it won't come to that.

The first year could well turn out to be both a very useful pilot and a steep learning experience.



Trios

We have now made our first steps towards developing a network of collaborative working across the alliance with the introduction of two cross-alliance Trios.

There is a detailed account of The Woodroffe School's approach to Trio working on the jctsa website and it is hoped that the new Trios will lead the next stage of development.

The Alliance Trios have now been trained and agreed a focus for their work. Each Trio is being led by an SLE and it is hoped that newly appointed SLEs will also take a significant part in the development of future Trios so that in a few years' time we will have a sophisticated network of colleagues learning from one another and spreading good practice across all our schools.

A key part of the plan is to ensure that the work done by each of the groups is disseminated across the alliance via the website, presentations and school visits. Hopefully we will be able to build up a really useful bank of pedagogical studies to inform future practice.



We are delighted to welcome Musbury Primary School in to the Alliance.

Research

We have now embarked upon our NCSL action research project which is being conducted in conjunction with the ISOS partnership, which describes itself thus:

Isos is a small advisory company, specialising in work for the public sector. We work with our clients to develop practical solutions, which are evidence-based and outcome focused.

They are involved in a wide range of research projects nationally and bring a range of interesting expertise to our alliance which is sure to stimulate a great deal of thinking.

For further details see their website:
<http://www.isospartnership.com>

The theme we have been selected to pursue is very broad:

Theme three: How can leaders lead successful teaching school alliances which enable the development of consistently great pedagogy?

However, such is the degree of flexibility in this question that we can easily tailor it to our own interests. Therefore, in simple terms, the hypothesis will be that Trio/Collaborative working will enable us to develop consistently great pedagogy across the Teaching Alliance. Can it help to spread good practice and raise standards? Can it help to build social capital across alliance partners?

All those involved in Trio working will therefore be expected to contribute to this research, via their discussions, presentations and final reports. Since the over-arching theme is leadership, we will be looking closely at leadership at all levels, from heads working collaboratively to design and introduce the scheme through to the leadership of Teaching and Learning in the classroom.

Acceptance of the research grant entails a considerable commitment on the part of the schools involved but it does offer the opportunity to be involved in cutting edge research.



SLEs

Following the recent application round, the Alliance received six applications from colleagues to become Specialist Leaders in Education.

Adam Shelley put together a very interesting and challenging day for the candidates, using the NCSL criteria but adapting it to the needs of the alliance. The feedback from the candidates was very positive and they were pleased to have been challenged so comprehensively.

Part of the day involved a presentation to the Headteachers of Colyton and Woodroffe and these were all highly professional and very thoughtful.

All six candidates have been recommended to the National College for approval and we should hear whether they have been successful by mid December.

Cultural Education

I am delighted to report that the JCTSA bid to become a lead school in the government's latest initiative around cultural education was successful and we will soon be starting work with The Arts Council to plan a programme of activities.

This is a significant coup for the alliance as it could result in funding of up to £50k and allow us to develop both a range of cultural activities across our schools and a range of support materials to be distributed nationwide. It is also worth pointing out that there will be only two lead schools in the country – us and one in Doncaster (a town somewhere near Mordor, I believe).

The next stage is to work with the Arts Council to draw up a detailed proposal which must satisfy a fairly demanding set of criteria. The application should reflect the following points. It should

- contain some high level milestones and timeline for action, as well as detail on how you would move your proposed actions forward;
- contain a budget for the proposed activity;
- be broadly based – it should focus on a wide range of cultural experiences and cultural education providers;
- consider the curriculum experience in cultural subjects, not just extra-curricular experiences;
- be reasonably diverse in the types of support it proposes;
- cover the expected impacts of the range of proposed activity;
- consider how the lessons learned from the work can be disseminated within and potentially beyond your teaching school alliance and to cultural education providers.
- consider how the activity can become sustainable after the funding period ends;
- clearly lay out how your role of co-ordinator will add value to the work done by the other schools. This should include how you will kick-start the programme in January/February once funding is confirmed and get all schools' activity off to a good start.
- consider how the lessons learned in the programme can be shared effectively after the funding period ends with teaching schools not participating in the programme, including new teaching schools.

CULTURAL EDUCATION IN ENGLAND

An independent review by Darren Henley for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Education



MA Update

The introduction of an alliance MA has proved to be much more complicated than originally thought. Following extensive discussions with both The University of Exeter and Bath Spa University, there is no doubt that it would be possible to introduce an MA which is based locally and which is closely related to the day to day lives of busy teachers. This year, however, it may have been a step too far and many colleagues felt that such a course needs to be planned into their CPD programmes for next year. The plan is therefore to try a re-launch again in the spring.



School to School Support

At the recent meeting of the JCTSA steering group, the shape and nature of an alliance Directory of Expertise was discussed at some length and it was agreed that we would focus not on individuals but on packages of support.

It is essential that as a Teaching School Alliance we create an offer of support which suits both our own needs and those of schools seeking assistance and training. The group agreed that we would create an offer based on the combined strengths of the schools in the alliance, drawing upon our SLEs and other areas of expertise. The aim is to produce a booklet which indicates the type of support we can offer, rather than a directory of faces. Once a school contacts us for support, we can then tailor a suitable package using our knowledge of staff across the alliance. This will of course entail the creation of a 'shadow' directory to be held centrally, which we will use to match colleagues to the skill sets requested.

It was also agreed that within the alliance we will work on the basis of mutual support. If a school within the alliance requests support, we will put them in contact with the best school to provide that support. There will be no charge as it is assumed that at some point in the future the receiving school will become a provider and offer to help out using its own areas of strength.

This could turn out to be a very positive way of working but it will have to be monitored very closely to ensure that one or two schools are not swamped with requests for help. Given the quality of all the schools in our alliance, however, that strikes me as unlikely. It will of course involve a considerable commitment on the part of the staff of alliance schools.

A scale of charges for schools beyond the alliance will need to be agreed.

The proposed directory will be ready for the next steering group meeting.

Steering Group Dates

All dates are for a Thursday afternoons
between 1 - 3.00pm

08 November

13 December

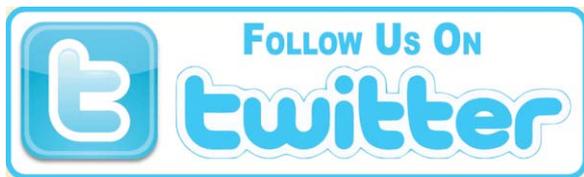
07 February

14 March

25 April

Twitter

Not only a website but Twitter too! If you would like to post anything, email Nicola Payne and she will ensure it gets tweeted. Sign up via the website – just click on the logo.



Actions

- If you haven't replied to Nicola regarding the Directory of Expertise, please do so
- If you have CPD opportunities you may wish to open up to staff from other schools in the alliance please let Nicola know and she can publicize them
- Encourage colleagues to join a Trio
- Consider including details of the MA course in your CPD programme for next year
- If you are linked to a strong Primary school which you think would fit neatly into our alliance please make contact
- If you are aware of any colleagues considering taking part in an NPQH course get them in contact with Holyrood where the new modular courses will be delivered
- Any idea relating to anything in this newsletter gratefully received.



Website, Steering Group and other information



The Website and Existing Research

Now that the website is up and running it is hoped to include examples of the research taking place across the alliance. If there are any colleagues in any of the alliance schools who have already completed a research project, please forward a copy to Nicola and we will post it on the website

NCSL Discussion Group

All headteachers/principals of our alliance schools should now have access to the NCSL Teaching Schools Group on their website:

<https://network.nationalcollege.org.uk/groups/16391>

Access is limited for some unknown reason but if you contact Woodroffe, a groveling request can be made on your behalf and you may be allowed to join if you promise not to reveal any of the fantastically confidential information hidden on the site.



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