



THE PRINCE'S
TEACHING
INSTITUTE



Headteachers' Conference

2014 Report



Contents

Introduction.....	3
Key Themes.....	4
Developing an ethos and culture of high aspiration.....	4
Maintaining high academic standards of teaching.....	6
Effective leadership of schools.....	8
Plenary Panel Discussion.....	9
Conference Participants.....	11

Introduction

The hallmark of all Prince's Teaching Institute (PTI) courses is that they are designed and run by teachers for teachers, and their purpose is to disseminate the best principles and practice in education that we have identified. From the first we have been convinced that subject knowledge and a passion for communicating it lie at the heart of effective teaching for children of all abilities. We therefore believe that all pupils, irrespective of their background or ability, are entitled to a rich, subject-based curriculum, taught with rigour and real enthusiasm.



Acting on this proposition has had a very positive effect on teachers. Many have told us that involvement with the PTI has reminded them of why they became teachers in the first place – because they loved their subject; a few have even admitted that they were thinking of giving up the profession but had decided to stay after being inspired by one of our courses.

Our work with Heads began six years ago in January 2008. We wanted to know what their success was built on, what really worked in their schools, so that we could see whether it might be replicated.

Two of the main messages that emerged were, first, that basing the curriculum just on what is regarded as relevant or accessible is patronising and limits pupils' aspirations. There is therefore a moral imperative to give every child the challenge and the opportunity of acquiring powerful knowledge as well as skills. Second, in order to realise their vision for the school, Heads need freedom, and yet over the last twenty-five years the degree of central control has steadily increased; ironically, schools in the most challenging circumstances, which might well respond best to imaginative initiatives, are subject to the most restrictive measures.

The courses that the PTI has subsequently been running for Heads have therefore focused mainly on the leadership that is required in order to give every child the benefit of a rich and challenging school experience. The programme for this January 2014 Residential at Madingley was put together with this same end in view.

One point that emerged strongly was that, for all the talk of greater autonomy in schools, the present framework of accountability, in terms of assessment by examination and evaluation by inspection, is still very tight. This, it was suggested, tends to discourage Heads from following their convictions, particularly in weaker schools, and leads them to play safe: insisting on teaching to the test and limiting aspirations to the number of A*-C grades.

At the end of our two days we put this and other conclusions to a panel of educationalists, and you can read their responses in the summary report that follows. Among them were enthusiastic expressions of support for the idea of a College of Teaching which would potentially enable the profession to determine its own standards and become a centre for research into what is really best in terms of teaching and curriculum, rather than leaving these things to the mercy of political changes and fashionable ideologies. The PTI has been happy to take on the role of 'honest broker' in facilitating discussion between interested parties about the proposition.

On the evidence of the detailed feedback we have received, this course has been an outstanding success, particularly in terms of the value of the experience for Heads and the impact it will have on their schools. Delegates were unanimous in saying that the PTI should run more of the same. We will do our best to oblige them.

Bernice McCabe, Course Director
Co-Director, The Prince's Teaching Institute

Key Themes

During this two-day Residential Conference for Headteachers, presentations and discussions were focused around three main themes:

- Developing an ethos and culture of high aspiration
- Maintaining high academic standards of teaching
- Effective leadership of schools

Developing an ethos and culture of high aspiration

In their discussions, participant Headteachers agreed that in order to sustain a culture of high achievement in schools, it is necessary to establish an ethos in which this is generally accepted. The role of leadership is paramount and includes these steps in the process:



Vision

- understanding the established ethos but being prepared to challenge existing norms
- setting high expectations
- being clear about what you are aiming for

Articulation

- making the general principles particular
- making the message consistent
- making the ethos visible through for example the prospectus, displays, dress

Realisation

- setting the tone by personal example
- developing staff to act as role models
- engaging pupils with your mission and making them aware of their part in achieving it
- creating a community of feeling, a sense of the 'school family', as:
 - a counterweight to malign external influences
 - a safe haven of protection for those with social difficulties at home
- quality assurance through constant monitoring and review

The ideal is a congruity between the top down and bottom up modes of creating the ethos, and the internal and external manifestations of it.

"The academy is 'perched' ready to change its ethos from one striving to be 'good' to aiming to be outstanding. I now have more tools in my kit bag to support this journey"

Dr Gavin Alexander, Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge The Meaning of Ethos

Ethos is a Greek word with a range of meanings, from 'customary place' through 'custom', 'disposition' and 'moral character' to 'character in a play'. It provides the root of 'ethics', the behaviour that society is comfortable with. It only came into the English language in 1851 and was adopted by the Victorians in its current sense because of their admiration for Ancient Greek culture.

An institution like a school can develop an ethos of its own from the behaviour of its members, and an individual may seek to bring about a change of ethos by requiring different modes of behaviour. So ethos can come from the inside or the outside. It can come from the top down or from the bottom up.

To carry conviction, ethos should arise from established behaviour that you also believe in. If a school gets its ethos right, it will produce citizens who not only act well but also think well and demonstrate virtues such as intellectual curiosity and compassion.



Sir Paul Grant, Headteacher of the Robert Clack School, Dagenham Developing a Culture of High Aspiration in a School in Challenging Circumstances



The Robert Clack School was transformed from dysfunctional to outstanding by value-centred leadership applied without compromise.

The twin pillars it rests on are:

- firm and consistent behaviour management, always emphasising the positive
- embedding a culture of good teaching, built around the "Robert Clack School Good Lesson" which is a distillation of the best practice from different departments

In order to reach and develop the potential in every pupil there is a very wide range of extra-curricular activities, some of them carried out in conjunction with local organizations.

The school aims to live up to its motto:
"For the brave, nothing is difficult"

Maintaining high academic standards of teaching

"I have been reminded about the importance of subject knowledge CPD. Pedagogy is important but without the fire to ignite the wood, it is pointless"

The Headteachers' discussions focused on the role of leaders in creating the environment in which high quality teaching and learning are the norm, and also on how to develop subject knowledge and passion for subjects in staff and pupils:

Creating the culture

- recruiting teachers with good subject knowledge and a passion for teaching
- drawing up job descriptions which make good teaching the main responsibility
- creating positive teaching and learning relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves
- showing willingness to trust and to take risks (e.g. with innovative teaching)
- encouraging a spirit of openness (e.g. open door teaching)

Sustaining the culture

- ensuring that staff professional development is focused and personalised, and including those unwilling to change
- insisting on the constant pursuit of improvement in subject knowledge and teaching expertise, including peer coaching and the sharing of good practice
- putting teaching and learning at the heart of all management meetings
- finding dedicated training time and resources for teaching and learning
- setting up partnerships to enlarge experience
- evaluating objectively new uses of technology
- showing sensitivity to pupils' individual modes of learning

Developing subject knowledge and passion for subjects

- putting subject leaders in charge of Initial Teacher Training
- arranging teacher exchanges
- establishing regular links with university departments
- encouraging project work
- encouraging teaching beyond the textbook
- doing subject-related MA modules

Dr Gavin Alexander, Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge

How do we learn?

Learning is the relationship between the learner and the thing learned; it can also be the product of that relationship.

English has a number of different words connected with teaching – such as education, instruction, pedagogy – and all of these have different shades of meaning (show, build up, lead etc), as do those of other European languages (enseignement, Bildung, etc.).

These are perhaps indicative of the different ways of acquiring and imparting knowledge. Some have sought to differentiate separate kinds of intelligence, and there are discrete mental domains (mathematical, spatial, linguistic, etc.) and different ways of learning (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic). What they have in common is that the process of learning is either imitation (repeating what you have learnt) or analogy (applying what you have learnt to a new context).

David Kennedy (Headteacher) and
Jeremy Scott (Deputy Headteacher),
John Warner School
**Developing school leadership of teaching
and learning**

Raising the status of teachers and the quality of learning in our school required putting teaching and learning at the heart of:

1. **Effective Leadership:** evident in the leadership structures and the activities undertaken by the school leadership team.
2. **Personalised continuous professional development of staff:** aimed at mastery of the teaching role and balanced evaluation of the innovative. Much of this is best done collaboratively.
3. **Intelligent accountability:** involving constant self-evaluation, regular lesson observation and structured faculty review.
4. **Pragmatic innovation:** realistic assessment of what new technologies can contribute to teaching and learning, and openness to the potential of social media to engage pupils in their work.
5. **Authentic partnerships:** networks need to be based on a genuine commonality of purpose, but pupils, teachers and schools can gain significantly from links with other schools, universities and local businesses.



Mark Johnson (Headteacher) and Frances Suc-Diamond (Head of Modern
Foreign Languages), St Angela's Ursuline School
Using subjects to develop curriculum challenge and enrichment

Pupils at St Angela's are encouraged to be academically ambitious and not to feel constrained by considerations of gender or background. They study two foreign languages at KS3 and most of them continue with at least one to KS4. The department is held in high regard in the school.

The cornerstones of high academic aspiration are enrichment and challenge. With limited resources, as much enrichment as possible is embedded in the curriculum by means of such things as:

- the European day of languages
- the production of culture booklets
- book week, with foreign texts
- pen friends and links with overseas schools
- MFL Assistants

Opportunities for enrichment outside the classroom include:

- inter-school speech competitions
- foreign trips, using a company to ensure that activities are in the target language
- exchanges with a German school (established post WWII to bring about better mutual understanding)

Challenge is provided by:

- focus on writing and speaking from KS3
- using Controlled Assessment imaginatively (e.g. suppose you were a secret agent, or a mermaid...)
- using literature as the main basis for A level teaching, as it not only helps with grammar, vocabulary and cultural understanding, but is the best preparation for University



Effective leadership of schools

Group discussions about the effective leadership of schools illustrated the many-faceted nature of the job and the qualities that these call for:

Vision

- knowledge of the institution and the ability to see what others don't
- clarity of aim and purpose

Style

Whether one's general approach tends towards the autocratic or the consensual, this has to be adaptable: principles tempered by pragmatism. As well as flexibility, desirable attributes include:

- visibility and approachability
- projection of a positive image
- openness and facility in communication

Personal qualities

Many of these are a matter of being aware of one's own strengths and weaknesses and sensitive towards those of others. From these spring an ability and readiness to:

- appreciate other viewpoints
- see and reward excellence
- build a team that shares the vision but brings different skills
- develop leadership in others
- exercise negotiating and mediating skills
- look after oneself and find ways of 'feeding the soul'

"It has provided an opportunity for reflection on leadership and how to improve provision through high quality leadership"

Lord Wilson of Dinton, former Cabinet Secretary Effective Leadership

Some general principles:

1. Leadership is different from Management (which is a matter of putting systems in place). Good managers do not necessarily make good leaders.
2. Leaders are not perfect and must find an individual style that accommodates both their strengths and their weaknesses.
3. Leadership matters; in a difficult and demanding world people need and expect the support of their leaders.

Some characteristics of good leadership:

- having a clear view of what your job is
- building a team that shares the same convictions
- being able to deliver
- giving the people around you hope and self-respect
- engendering trust
- having the temperament necessary to concentrate on essentials, entailing if necessary a certain ruthlessness about excluding other matters

Personal qualities needed:

- an evident sense of humour and enjoyment
- stamina
- the ability to relax and get enough sleep

Dangers:

- **isolation** - power distorts relationships and leaders need trusted advisers who will tell them things as they really are
- **overload** - success attracts ever more work and leaders must be able to delegate and use their time efficiently



Plenary Panel Discussion

Bernice McCabe	Chair, Co-Director of The Prince's Teaching Institute
Ian Bauckham	President of the Association of School and College Leaders
Tim Gartside	Head Master of Altrincham Grammar School for Boys
Andrew Hall	Chief Executive of the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance
Mark Johnson	Headteacher of St. Angela's Ursuline School, Newham
Charlie Taylor	Chief Executive of the National College for Teaching and Leadership

After brief presentations summarising the main issues raised during the conference, concerning ethos, professional development, teaching standards and leadership, questions were put to the panel by the Chair and then opened up for general discussion.

There is an evident tension between current models of assessment and inspection, which tend to be mechanistic, and the proper aspirations of Heads to create a broad and enriching educational culture. How do you think this could be resolved?

In discussing this question, the panel members and audience made the following key points:

- Teaching for exams is not, or should not be, the only thing a school does. Its ethos should be concerned with the development of the whole person and that means going beyond precise specifications.
- Even if you are teaching an exam syllabus, that doesn't have to limit your capacity to enlighten and inspire.
- Fear is a potent factor. Schools under pressure to produce better A*–C grades will tend to teach narrowly to the test.
- Exam boards would like to take a broader view of accountability, but it is frustrating how difficult this is to achieve. If a freer structure is introduced, how will it be used, and will it create other sorts of tension?
- Schools need to show that they can take on the responsibility for their own assessment, for instance through schemes for school to school accountability. If the only regime of accountability is externally imposed, that will tend to limit schools' aspirations.
- What interests Heads most is not what qualifications their pupils are going to achieve but what sort of people their schools are producing. Until that can be made the main focus of assessment, there will continue to be a disconnect.
- Exam boards do their best to keep their approach to subjects refreshed through subject panels, which contain representatives not just of universities but of schoolteachers as well.
- It is not easy to get the balance right between autonomy and accountability. Children need and deserve the best system of education, and so long as schools are delivering this, they should be trusted more. At the moment the rhetoric (of autonomy) is at odds with the policy (of control).



What do you think is the best way of ensuring and maintaining the best professional standards in teaching?

The discussion brought up the following points:

- The teaching profession has been blown in the wind of political change recently, more than other professions. This is partly because it hasn't been good at engaging with evidence-based research and so has allowed itself to be dictated to. So anything that can be done to generate authoritative research, such as a College of Teaching, is to be welcomed.
- Medicine and education are different in that the desirable outcomes of one are clear, of the other (being an 'educated' person) subject to change and dispute.
- There are special qualities about the best of British education, much sought after in the rest of the world, which do need better definition and closer research.
- The idea of a College of Teaching, as a centre for such research, commands wide support; but if it is to come into being, it will need:
 - to overcome cynicism arising from the failure of the General Teaching Council for England
 - to get a kick start from Government but then to be left at arm's length
 - to have a clear and distinctive impact which will make teachers want to join

What kind of continuing professional development (CPD) should we give to our teachers in order to encourage and enable them to add enrichment and challenge to the experience of their pupils?

Headteachers and panel members considered the topic, raising these issues:

- For Headteachers the important thing is that CPD should generate passion for the teacher's subject. This is what has impact on the pupils, by keeping teachers enthused and reminding them why they teach.
- It must be a planned and coherent system of CPD, extending from the first day of Initial Teacher Training to senior management level.
- Teachers must be encouraged take on more responsibility for their own development and not wait for it to happen to them.
- Involving staff in mentoring reduces the present high drop-out level.
- The emphasis on subjects is going to be a challenge for primary schools, especially in Mathematics and Science. They will look to partnerships with Secondary Schools for help.



Leaders

Sara Davey	Mounts Bay Academy
Tim Gartside	Altrincham Grammar School for Boys
Alun Harding	Ysgol Rhiwabon
Jack Jackson	Launceston College
Mark Johnson	St Angela's Ursuline
David Kennedy	The John Warner School

Attendees

William Bancroft	Dallam School		
Rachel Cave	Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre	Christopher Powell	South Shore Academy
Andy Edmonds	Brannel School	Helen Renard	Sir Robert Pattinson Academy
Neil Enright	Queen Elizabeth's School, Barnet	Karen Ross	Treviglas Community College
Michael Eyre	Monks' Dyke Tennyson College	Nigel Ryan	Spalding Grammar School
Sue Flanagan	Plumstead Manor School	Martin Shevill	Ossett School and Sixth Form Centre
Debbie Godfrey-Phaure	Avonbourne Academy Trust	Peter Slough	Small Heath School
Samantha Green	Pimlico Academy	Vicky Smith	Rainham School for Girls
Nicola Hall	Knutsford Academy	Mary Speakman	Altrincham Grammar School for Girls
Craig Jansen	Moseley School	Andrew Stones	William Farr C of E Comprehensive School
Andrew John	Sprowston Community High School	Peter Sweeney	St Joan of Arc Catholic School
Linda Jonhson	King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Girls	Pat Towey	United City Academy
James Kilmartin	Cardinal Newman Catholic School	Emily Vernon	North Liverpool Academy
Carol Kitson	Abbey Grange C of E Academy	Elisabeth Wager	King Edward VI Handsworth
Anthony Lamberton	Christleton High School	Craig Watson	Bury Church of England High School
Peter Lang	Uxbridge High School	Mandy Watts	The Henrietta Barnett School
James Ludlow	Small Heath School	Jonathan Wilden	Wallington County Grammar School
Martin McLeman	Queen Elizabeth's School, Dorset	Angela Williams	Ysgol Gyfun Garth Olwg
John Perry	Fowey Community College	Ian Wilson	Little Ilford School

The Prince's Teaching Institute

Bernice McCabe	Course Director & Co-Director, The Prince's Teaching Institute Headmistress, North London Collegiate School
Chris Pope	Co-Director, The Prince's Teaching Institute
Oliver Blond	Academic Director, The Prince's Teaching Institute Headteacher, Roedean School
Martin Roberts	Academic Consultant, The Prince's Teaching Institute Former Headteacher, The Cherwell School
James Sabben-Clare	Academic Consultant, The Prince's Teaching Institute Former Headmaster, Winchester College
Barbara Pomeroy	Education Advisor, The Prince's Teaching Institute Former Deputy-Headmistress, North London Collegiate School



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