



Federation News November 2017

**Incorporating the
Annual Report
2016 – 2017**

SLF Annual Report 2016-17

Newsletter November 2017

Directors and Institutions, 2016-17

Mr A Lund, Appleby School
(Vice Chair: September 2016 – August 2017)
Dr P Williams, Cartmel Priory School
Mr W Bancroft Dallam School
(Chair: September 2016– August 2017)
Mr P Blackburn, John Ruskin School
Mr G Wilkinson, Kendal College
Mr P Hyman, Kirkbie Kendal School
Mrs R Houston, Kirkby Stephen Grammar School
Mr A Cunningham, The Lakes School
Mr C Clarke, Queen Elizabeth School
Mrs J Fletcher Sandgate School
Ms K Grant (Acting Head), Settlebeck School
Ms K Fox, University of Cumbria

Introductory remarks from Mr W Bancroft: SLF Chair 2016-17

The world of education continues to develop and the South Lakes Federation maintains its determination to maintain the highest possible standards. I have very much enjoyed my year as chair and have gained an admiration for those who have occupied the role before me!

The last year was our first full year with a reduced number of schools which has meant that we have had to 'cut our cloth' accordingly with a reduction in the revenue that comes into the Federation from schools. Consequently, the number of days that Helen Gaunt was working was reduced significantly. There was also a feeling that the partnership is competent at recognising where improvements need to be made; the diagnostic aspect, but that now there is a need to focus on how to implement the necessary support and therefore prioritise resources appropriately. Part of the conversation during the trio reviews is now about what help a school needs in a particular area and how this can be brokered.

Several of our schools have received visits from Ofsted in the last twelve months and without exception have been grateful for the support of the Federation. It is usually Steve Houghton who attends the school during the inspection to report on how the SLF supports the schools. This is recognised favourably by Ofsted and without fail, is

recorded in their reports. Further proof, if it is needed, that the SLF is an invaluable entity.

Our secondary schools have now experienced the new specification GCSEs in English Language, English Literature and Mathematics; the results reflect the tremendous amount of work that our school staff, working with each other, have contributed to ensuring that, as far as possible there was no detriment to the standards achieved in previous years. The new measure now focuses around progress; because our schools have worked collaboratively, there is a constant drive to maintain high levels of progress and how that is achieved is something that everyone understands.

We are charged with a great responsibility as leaders in educating our young people and I would like to thank the SLF officers, governors of our schools and staff for their work in helping to achieve the best education for the students in our care.

School to School support / School Improvement: Reports Steve Houghton

Congratulations to the governors, staff and students of KSGS for their successful OFSTED outcome of September 2017. A one-day HMI monitoring visit was rolled into a full two-day inspection which judged the school to be good across all areas of their work. Quite a start for newly appointed Headteacher Gary Hartley!

Congratulations also to Sandgate School for their very successful OFSTED inspection of October 2017 and to Dan Hinton who succeeded to the Headship of Sandgate in Easter 2017. Thanks, and congratulations to Ruth Houston (KSGS) and Joyce Fletcher (Sandgate) who as the outgoing Heads of the two schools did much of the foundation work for these two good inspections.

At the time of writing we are in the midst of our Autumn Term peer review cycle. Schools are grouped into trios and a professional discussion is facilitated by an SLF colleague. The discussion focusses on historic GCSE and A level performance, the performance of current students and any support a school might require going into the new academic year. At the end of the meeting the school's most recent self-evaluation in relation to OFSTED grading is discussed. This year, in the majority of cases, the peer review, or a portion of

the review, has been attended by a representative from the governing body. As always, we welcome feedback from Heads and governors as to how the process might be improved further.

Naturally there is a variation between schools as to areas for development or further improvement but we are always trying to gauge if there are common issues across our partnership. Although the reviews are not yet complete there are a number of emerging issues that are affecting two or more schools within our partnership.

1. The achievement of boys in comparison to girls is a national issue and this is mirrored in our partnership. Of course, the vast majority of our boys achieve very well but we are always on the look-out for ways in which we can improve further. In partnership with Lancaster University we are exploring the potential to work with our primary colleagues to develop a project which focuses on strategies to improve extended writing across the curriculum. There is some research evidence to suggest that certain groups of boys perform less well in extended writing tasks than girls. To help support us with this work we have been fortunate to secure the services of Ian Walker (Deputy Head John Ruskin) for one day a week to work with targeted schools in our partnership. Ian has a proven track record of developing and implementing successful literacy across the curriculum strategies.
2. In comparison to many areas in the county and indeed nationally we have fewer disadvantaged students in our schools. Small numbers often lead to statistical variations in how particular groups of students perform each year and this is certainly the case in our partnership. However, a number of our schools are keen to explore ways in which they can ensure that year on year disadvantaged students are effectively supported so that they can achieve the very best of which they are capable.
3. 2017 marked the first year of the new 1-9 grading system for GCSE English and Maths and in 2018, with the exception of Technology, other subject areas will follow suit. Through our subject networks we have spent much time preparing for the new GCSE specifications and moderating grading of students' work between schools and this level of collaboration has been praised by inspectors when they visit our schools. As with everything in education the bar has been raised and over time the new grade 5 (broadly equivalent to low grade B top

grade C) will only be classed as a good pass. A number of our schools are considering ways in which more students can convert from grade 4 to 5. In addition, there remains a need to continue to share student assessments between schools so that we can be secure that they are making good progress as they move through the school from the start of year 7.

As a partnership we have always been concerned to provide a broad and balanced curriculum which best meets the needs of individual students rather than focus on chasing exam outcomes for school status in league tables. However, there is a fine balance in this area and many of our schools are striving to maintain an exciting, broad and imaginative curriculum whilst simultaneously ensuring good levels of achievement for all groups.

Governor Training: Reports Steve Houghton

20 governors attended a training session in the summer term. Contributions were made by Rob Surtees, Assistant Head at Dallam School, on Mental Health and Wellbeing of students. He gave an outline of the systems and procedures in place at Dallam School to support students in these areas. Steve also provided questions that might be asked of governors by Ofsted inspectors and governors were able to discuss their responses.

Discussions have raised the possibility of doing some training on ASP, which is the successor of Raise onLine, although the information is not yet available but will be considered for future training in due course.

Initial Teacher Education (ITE): Reports Jane Henderson

We continue to work closely with the University of Cumbria core PGCE trainees and supporting the West Coast SCITT despite the closure of the South Cumbria SCITT. The resulting loss of one of the ITE projects from all our schools is disappointing. Nonetheless, all the PGCE trainees from the SC SCITT completed with QTS and six of the cohort obtained teaching posts (1 within an SLF school).

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all the SC SCITT Board members for their work in developing what many external visitors, including HMI and Ofsted inspectors, regarded during the year, as a first-rate programme for our current trainees. The programme, designed and delivered in consultation

with Federation schools, enabled a range of colleagues to contribute to many aspects of training and delivery. Trainees had the opportunity to work with these experienced colleagues and engage with a wide range of additional experiences whilst on selected placements. All involved encouraged the trainees to focus on what really matters - pupil progress.

The developing mentor training and QMS recognition linked with this year's ITE developments by the University of Cumbria has resulted in the development of its Mentor Training Award. Initial mentor training was received positively by SLF mentors who hope they will be able to continue the programme in the light of future developments in ITE.

This coming year, many of us feel, might be a 'fallow year' as a reaction to the somewhat difficult situation. However, the SC SCITT's external examiner, Susan Slater from Sheffield Hallam, stated in her external report, that she would "very much like to congratulate colleagues on the strong contribution to initial teacher education made by them in the last two years ... and for the high quality of professional dialogue" (she had with staff during her visits) ... "Given the high quality of ITE I have observed over the last two years it is disappointing that the SCITT will close at the end of the 16-17 academic year. My best wishes to all colleagues from South Cumbria." We echo Sue's words and look forward to a future when we can deliver just as successful a programme for new members into the profession in SLF schools once again.

Provision for Newly Qualified and Recently Qualified Teachers (NQT/RQT):

Reports Jane Henderson

The development of the SLF NQTs induction and support programme has become one of the most useful professional development tools for new staff in our schools entering into the profession. In SLF schools, the lead personnel for induction this year has changed. We say good bye to Alison Hooper from QES who, over the years, has offered her skills and expertise to support and help many of the SLF's once 'new' and now established staff. We welcome Hayley Gray from QES to take over Alison's role and wish her well in her new position.

The induction period is a new phase of learning and development for anyone new to the profession and this term, 15 NQTs have newly registered with us as

an appropriate body. Once again in November, we will be holding a Conference event designed to support the NQTs' school induction. Lead staff from primary and secondary schools will use a cross-phase delivery to work with our newest recruits to SLF schools. Ian Walker will be delivering a session on marking and book scrutiny. We will also be looking at strategies in dealing with workload issues, something very daunting for those new to the profession.

The SLF Induction programme follows the principle that a formal structure is vital in ensuring that the support needed is available for all NQTs during their school induction. SLF mentors and NQT induction staff are aiming to ensure that SLF schools have structures in place for the benefit of all involved and during our half termly meetings we have introduced an inset opportunity for staff to focus more closely on those skills needed to make induction effective for all involved.

It is hoped that most of our Professional Mentors will be accredited with QMS – Qualified Mentor Standards – for the next academic year to further strengthen our partnership with the University of Cumbria in developing good practice.

As our NQTs take responsibility for their own professional development as RQTs, we are hoping to focus, once again, on our bespoke professional development programme designed to enable RQTs to work across SLF schools and for them to gain a flavour of how each school's ethos supports and enhances some of the most effective professional development activities we can offer in the SLF. This will begin this academic year with learning walks in SLF schools focusing on differentiation and critical thinking skills.

Subject Networks / Training Day:

Reports Steve Houghton

We continue to support the development of subject and thematic networks through termly meetings and agreed release time negotiated with Headteachers. We are extremely grateful to subject leads for giving time to facilitate these cross-partnership meetings all of whom already have a demanding work load within their home schools. In total we currently have 14 subject networks with requests for additional areas to be incorporated within the meeting schedule.

All subject networks met on our annual training day to which were added a number of additional training opportunities facilitated by external agencies, such as inputs on supporting the emotional health and well-being of young people, literacy across the curriculum and training for Teaching Assistants. Officially about 250 colleagues attended our area wide events with many others taking advantage of the day to meet informally.

Inclusion Advocates: Reports Miriam Bailey

The Inclusion Advocates group is comprised mainly of deputy and assistant head teachers, school based education welfare staff, representatives from Cumbria LA and our local Pupil Referral Unit in Barrow. Inclusion Advocates meet at least once a half term, usually monthly.

The main purpose of the group is to:

1. Agree school places for 'hard to place' pupils such as the permanently excluded or those who have been out of education for some time.
2. Consider applications from schools for a student placement at the Pupil Referral Unit, (PRU), in Barrow.
3. Consider strategies for managing those at risk of exclusion.
4. Agree managed moves of students at risk of permanent exclusion between the Federation schools.
5. Disseminate best practice in inclusion.

This group plays an active role in ensuring that young people can access their educational entitlement. There is very little funding for alternative provision (there is only one alternative provision course running which is an Art course) for a small group of young people which schools pay for if they use it.

In the last academic year (2016 – 17), twenty young people (of which seven were reintegrated from the PRU) from both the local area and outside the county, were accommodated in South Lakes schools through the Fair Access Protocol. A further four had a supported transition from one local school to another through a managed move.

A considerable success has been achieved in the use of places at the Pupil Referral Unit. At the beginning of the last academic year South Lakes schools were above their allocation of nine full-time equivalent

(fte) places at the PRU as there had been a number of permanent exclusions. The majority of these young people were reintegrated into our schools so that by the end of 2016-17 only 4.4 fte places were in use. This means that schools have the opportunity to use the PRU for its intended purpose of short-term intervention to enable students to be school-ready.

Pastoral and Safeguarding Group:

Reports Miriam Bailey

This group meets regularly after the Inclusion Advocates' meeting. The purpose of the group is to disseminate best practice and strategic planning in the SLF relating to pastoral support.

Schools carry a range of responsibilities regarding child protection and pastoral issues which include the Prevent agenda, child sexual exploitation and a vast range of safeguarding matters. This group provides an opportunity to share feedback from courses and conferences, new and developing information that schools must be aware of and ready to action as well as good practice. Every opportunity is taken to invite colleagues from other agencies to share their knowledge and experience with the group. In 2016 – 17 there were visits from LA colleagues to talk about attendance matters, Home and Hospital Tuition and the Operation Compass pilot (domestic abuse initiative). Colleagues who have attended conferences and training have also reported back to the group.

One of our Inclusion Advocates, Rob Surtees from Dallam, also made a presentation to SLF governors about how his school looks after the mental health and well-being of their students which he has previously shared with school colleagues. The information he shared received a positive response and governors gained an understanding of how good practice aids the support of vulnerable young people.

SENCo Group:

Reports Pete Weston

Time seems to be an even rarer commodity than ever before. Nevertheless, the SENCo group still manage to find a few hours each term to meet, pool our ideas, talk about common concerns, reflect and share practice.

Curriculum, or should I say the narrowing curriculum, seems to be a subject which crops up

more often than not. Over recent years we have seen the curriculum in most of our schools become compressed and streamlined. At the same time, exams have become more demanding. School is now a whole lot harder for pupils with SEND. There is a strong feeling amongst SENCOs that the weakest pupils are increasingly being required to follow a curriculum that does not suit and sit exams that are not relevant to them. For students who are not able to access new style GCSEs there seems to be very few accredited courses and qualifications. Several SLF schools are exploring how Functional Skills (Maths, English and IT) might plug the gap.

Many SEND colleagues spent a very lively and informative day in the presence of Andrew Whitehouse at the SLF training day in October. Andrew shared his thoughts, experience and the latest developments on the topic of Social and Emotional Difficulties and Mental Health. As always, he was very entertaining and incredibly relevant.

Concluding remarks from Miriam Bailey:

I hope you have enjoyed reading this annual report and newsletter and that it has given you an informed view of the work of the Federation. Please contact us if you need more details or have contributions to make to the next newsletter.

The central team continues its aim of offering an excellent service. Our pivotal administration and finance officer is Sarah Platt who keeps a close eye on our finances, ensures that October Training Day places are allocated efficiently, drives a host of administrative matters and is usually the voice on the end of the telephone. We appreciate and recognise her patience and professionalism.

Many thanks too to our colleague, Jane Henderson, who, in addition to aiding the co-ordination of the October Training Day, works with such interest and dedication in training and development, PGCE and university links, NQT and RQT induction and support. She plays a significant role in ensuring that the forthcoming generations of new teachers have access to the best possible training.

A recent recruit, Ian Walker, Deputy Head at John Ruskin School has been seconded for one day per week to assist school-to-school support work. He started his work in June 2017 and will be part of the team for the forthcoming academic year. Ian's reputation and credentials in teaching and learning and leadership will further support Steve's work as

he has started to reduce the time allocation of his role.

Steve Houghton, the longest-serving member of the SLF team whose tireless efforts in school support and improvement, his ability to broker extra provision, his broad yet in-depth knowledge of the SLF schools as well as his relentless good humour, make him an invaluable and pivotal associate. He has announced his decision to step down from his role in Spring 2018 but in the meantime, he maintains undiminished support for our schools.

As the South Lakes Federation enters a new era, with personnel changes afoot, its longevity will stand it in good stead. Its success lies in no small measure with the colleagues who not only work tirelessly in their own schools, but who are so enthusiastic about making a contribution to the SLF as a whole; these include network leads who ensure that the momentum of support across subjects and other aspects of school life is maintained. We are grateful for their valuable contribution to the work of the Federation.

