



Leadership for Learning

Year 1 2013

Evaluation Report



Leadership for learning

Evaluation of Year 1 Programme

1. Background

The University of Oxford, Oxford Brookes University and Education Excellence in Oxfordshire (now the Oxfordshire Teaching Schools Alliance) were commissioned by the Oxford City Council to develop a programme to improve the quality of leadership in Oxford City schools and in so doing improve pupil outcomes. The programme that was developed was the Leadership for Learning programme and the first cohort of leaders completed the programme in November 2013. The second year of the programme is now under way with another cohort.

The core team providing the programme is led by Prof Ian Menter of Oxford as Director with Prof Deb McGregor from Brookes as Deputy Director. The Programme Co-ordinator is Linda Rowe. Other core team members are Dr Linet Arthur, Dr Liz Browne, Dr Nigel Fancourt and Linda Squire. OTSA involvement is led by Paul James, Head of The Cherwell School.

A programme advisory group was established at the outset and meets once each term to review progress and to advise on developments. This group is chaired by the lead City Councillor with responsibility in this area (initially Steve Curran, now Pat Kennedy). The programme providers are all represented on the group as well as senior and middle leader programme participants. The Council's education adviser, Anna Wright, also attends and a representative of the County Council is a member.

In Year 1 there were 37 participants from 11 schools across Oxford City taking part in the programme and a group of leaders from Leicester also contributed to the programme. Governors were also offered the opportunity to attend public seminars and core workshops. During the programme 5 governors representing 4 schools engaged in various aspects of the programme, such as the public seminars and the core workshops.

2. Evidence base

The findings below result from:

- interviews at the interim stage of the programme with head teachers whose schools are involved in the programme and governors whose schools are part of the programme and who have attended some core workshops and public seminars
- the presentation of impact session held at the end of the programme.

3. What heads expected from the programme when enrolling their leaders

Heads' reasons for sending leaders onto the programme included:

- wanting them to develop an understanding of the different levels of leadership;
- strengthening middle leadership to be more effective in role, resulting in having a greater impact on pupil outcomes; and
- providing an opportunity for a head to work alongside their senior leaders and develop their strategic thinking in relation to school improvement.

4. Opportunities for leadership learning on the programme

The range of opportunities for learning on the programme included:

- 3 core workshops
- 6 action learning set meetings
- 5 public seminars

These have provided opportunities for leaders to learn from:

- experts in leadership
- leaders outside of the City
- other leaders on the programme
- trying out new ways of working in their own schools

It has provided opportunities to engage with the theory and learn from experience.

Details of core workshops, public seminars, action learning sets and coaching expectations can be found in Annex B.

4.1 Coreworkshops:

Core workshops provided leaders with an opportunity to engage with leadership theory and then explore the implications for them as leaders in their schools. There were 3 full day workshops that enabled them to engage with a wider group of leaders from across the City as well as engage with international experts in leadership such as John West-Burnham, Geoff Southworth and Pam Sammons.

4.2 Public seminars

Public seminars, each lasting 1 ½ to 2 hours, provided opportunities for leaders to deepen and extend their understanding of leadership through presentations on specific aspects of leadership from experts. Participants attended as school teams – and in some cases including governors - to hear current thinking on leadership and consider the implications for leadership across their schools. Run as twilight sessions they were open to a wider audience but offered participants on the programme opportunity to engage in the wider debate on leadership that extended their learning from the core workshops and informed their working in action learning sets.

Both the core workshops and the public seminars provided participants with a 'call to action' in terms of developing their leadership.

4.3 Action learning sets

The action learning sets provided yet another opportunity to work with other leaders from across the city, share ideas and visit each other's schools. However the purpose of these action learning sets was for them to take what they had learnt from the core workshop days and the public seminars and together use this learning to address some of their key leadership challenges. Working in small facilitated groups, each leader tried out ways of addressing a specific leadership challenge in their own school and then shared their learning with others in their group. This provided them not only with opportunities to learn from each other but developed a way of working together that could be used in the future to support each other in finding solutions to their challenges as leaders.

4.4 Coaching

Coaching was provided by secondary heads from Oxfordshire Teaching School Alliance. The offer of coaching was made available to one leader in each school – with 8 schools taking up the offer. Coaches met with their leaders for four face to face sessions and also provide coaching support

through the use of email and telephone. In addition, other participants were encouraged to support each other through peer coaching, using skills they developed during the programme.

4.5 Leadership Diagnostic

Each leader on the programme carried out a diagnostic activity that focused on their leadership competencies. It gave them an indication of their strengths and areas for development and provided a basis for their discussions with their coach and for planning their learning on the programme.

4.6 Working with other leaders from across Oxfordshire

In addition to leaders from Oxford City schools the programme provided opportunities to work with leaders from Leicester Primary Schools. These heads joined in a range of activities and provided opportunities for Oxford leaders to visit their schools in Leicester.

5. Impact of the programme on leadership development at the interim stage of the programme

There was a range of indicators that demonstrated that the programme was beginning to have impact. One head stated that it was developing his leaders' ability to ask questions to find out more about how to improve teaching and learning – and was giving them the confidence as leaders. This had been made evident in an inset session they had set up for teachers in the school. Other heads echoed that the programme was increasing the confidence of their leaders.

Another head said that her leaders had focused on improving marking in their school as a result of engaging with the programme and had been working with staff to address the issue. The head said that this *would not have been done without the stimulus from their Action Learning Set¹*. There was already evidence of improvements across the school, as well in them engaging in focused professional dialogue to address an issue. There was also evidence that leaders were understanding *'more about team building'* and as a result becoming better leaders.

One head at the interim stage said that the programme was resulting in them having *'a lot more conversations with two of their leaders about leadership'* and an opportunity to coach the other leader who was on the programme. This head felt more confident to delegate to them and was involving them in interviewing applicants for vacant posts.

Another head said that the impact on leaders in her school had been: *'Greater understanding of working across teams. Good knowledge building from core workshops and public seminars. Developing networking across the city - this has led to people developing areas together in smaller teams (e.g. SEN policy).*

A governor reported that the programme had prompted leaders in their school to look more closely at community involvement and set up a programme of interventions to engage with the local community.

One of the challenges in determining impact at this interim stage was that many of these schools are receiving a range of support to develop leadership and it was difficult to tease out whether the impact was as a result of the Leadership for Learning programme or another initiative that the school is involved in.

¹ Throughout the report participants' verbatim written or spoken statements have been italicised.

6 The impact of the programme on leadership development at the end of the programme

The fundamental purpose of the programme was to develop leadership to improve the quality of teaching and learning in our city schools – resulting in improvements in pupil outcomes. To measure immediate direct impact on pupil outcome from a project that leaders have just engaged in is virtually impossible as it takes time to embed changes to practices both of the leaders and those they are leading. However what we can look at are changes in behaviours – performance indicators - that will lead to improved leadership and result in improved outcomes for pupils.

6.1 Improved ability to lead change

A challenge for any middle leader is being 'caught in the middle' between accountability and responsibility: accountable to senior leaders for outcomes in the key stage or phase they lead while being responsible for improving practice in that Key stage or phase.

One middle leader in the action learning set focused on the teaching of phonics because the outcomes of their KS1 reading test were poor. Through observation she determined that the teachers and TAs were not using the correct methods and structures in their teaching of phonics. As a result, this middle leader had to work with teachers in the classrooms, modelling practice, as well as observing and giving feedback. This gave her teachers clear direction as to how to improve their teaching of phonics. In addition she ran insets for all staff on the teaching of phonics. The impact was that the number of children passing the KS1 phonics test rose from 27% to 79%. This middle leader was learning how to lead change in order to improve teachers' practice – and outcomes for pupils.

Another challenge that this middle leader faced was the churn of staff in her key stage – 4 different teachers in one class during one term. For her change was '*hard to manage*' but she worked with the present teacher in the class to support and gain commitment to staying and hence establish continuity in teaching and learning for the children. For the Deputy in the school her key leadership task was to manage this staff turnover in terms of its impact on other staff, while ensuring that the rapid progress the school had been making continued. The action learning set discussions were important to her as they provided opportunities to: '*discuss strategies to use...to draw on each other's experiences of what worked*'. From that she learnt and implemented as a leader a number of strategies to continue to improve teaching and learning and sustain progress – including supporting and training for staff and provide where needed one to one support. Another key learning point for her as a leader was: *to be presentout there with the staff...seeing what was going on*. She was demonstrating to the staff that she wanted and needed to know what was happening and that she was there to support them. The overall impact was that: *morale was good...we were working together..leaders were working with them*. Much of this change in her practice she has put down to her learning on the programme because she said that like others she became: *acutely aware that as leaders we need to support our staff*. For this senior leader the programme was developing her ability to both lead and manage and her understanding of the difference between each activity.

For another middle leader the programme has helped her improve her leadership in two ways. The first has been through the support she gained from talking to others in the action learning set as she tried to lead and embed the new KRM initiative in her school. Discussions with other leaders provided her with an opportunity to: *talk through the common issues we are facing and to gain support* as to how to address them. In addition she felt that being part of the programme, alongside other colleagues from her school, gave them a '*common language*' that enabled them to continue conversations and address challenges back in school.

For a third middle leader the programme had provided her with the opportunity to develop her coaching and mentoring skills to up skill staff in terms of their teaching. She felt that making the most of the skills she had learnt *helped her staff to feel supported*. In addition the programme prompted her to work on engaging parents by running workshops to engage them in their children's learning. The outcome for her *has all been positive*.

6.2 Improved leadership of teaching and learning

A strength of leaders learning together how to improve teaching and learning was that it provided the opportunity to share ways of supporting staff to improve their practice. The starting point for one leader, who had been part of an action set focusing on improving the quality of teaching, was on how to spread good teaching throughout their school – and gain consistency. Speaking to other leaders in her action learning set prompted her to reflect and think about how she needed to do things differently - communicate more clearly with people, model practice for others, embed the use of a learning study model.

Another leader found that the action learning set provided the opportunity to share certain practices and try them out in different schools. An example was the use of filming to provide a focus for a teacher's reflection and subsequent discussion on their practice: *giving them time and a tool like filming helped my teachers to reflect and decide how they could improve*. Equally working as a group supported them as leaders in understanding what to focus on and develop further in their school.

Wider curriculum development was the focus of one leader, who looked at the emotional literacy of children across the school to enable them to overcome barriers and learn. She shared her learning and challenges with others in her action learning set and learnt from them. She used the opportunity to develop the coaching skills the programme had introduced to her. As a result she felt that she had: *become more confident as a leaderusing coaching to enable staff to move forward*. It has led her on a leadership journey as she has led her team in tracking and making correlations between children's learning and their emotional literacy.

6.3 Improved leadership of the school

One action learning set has been effective in bringing leaders together to address the challenges facing leaders in schools. For one new leadership team the programme gave time for them to come together and reflect on the actions they needed to take to improve their failing school – and to be supported by others. The outcome was that: *our teaching and learning has moved from 50% inadequate to no teaching judged as inadequate and 80% judge good. This has led to better outcomes for our children*. Their effectiveness as leaders has been verified by both by Ofsted and a review team.

Another head felt that the programme and particularly the action learning set: *provided head teachers time to be more strategic – always with the focus to improve attainment of children in our schools*. He had used the support of the action learning set to help plan for sustainability in his school with his imminent retirement. He felt that his school had had a top down model of leadership and he *was not using the enthusiasm and skills of his staff effectively*. His challenge was to empower leaders to involve the staff in changes that the school needed to make. From the discussion and support with colleagues in his action learning set, he created change teams – in English, Maths, the new Primary Curriculum and Early Years. Every member of staff was put into a change team and he empowered his leaders in each of these areas to: *lead their teams. They took responsibility for identifying the issues, what changes were needed and how to bring about those changes*. The impact has been that: *staff meetings have been more interactive, more interesting... and teachers are understanding the changes that need to be made and why and how these relate to raising standards*.

In this case the programme has impacted on a leader to change his practice and distribute leadership.

For one head returning to school following a time on maternity leave the programme helped her to focus on what was needed in her own school – which included the challenge of accountability in middle leaders and the support structure in the school for SEN children. The action learning set provided her with the opportunity to talk through and test out some of the strategies she was thinking of implementing with others in the group and get their feedback as to the potential impact. Having implemented the changes she was now able to see the impact on: *children's learning ...and for colleagues to seeing that change can be a good thing and lead to positive outcomes.*

The opportunity to be coached by a secondary head teacher colleague proved a positive experience for those leaders who took up the offer. For one head in particular it provided the opportunity to focus on leadership rather than the challenges of a particular school phase. It has given the opportunity, for example, *to rehearse those difficult conversations with staff.* She has spent a total of six hours working with her coach but *those six hours have possibly had the biggest impact on developing my skills and my leadership development in general since I became a head teacher six years ago.* Now she is looking to use what she has learnt from being coached to develop the staff in my school – and begin to build a coaching model.

Another head used the programme to look at how to sustain leadership in the school structure – and maintain the school's improving results as staff change. She knew the challenges in recruiting to her school and used the opportunity to be part of the Leadership for Learning programme to attract leaders to apply for a post in her school. This head on reflecting on the impact of the programme on the her team said that she felt that: *the biggest single impact has been confidence.... it has empowered them... the gift of the course – input from the core workshops, the seminars, the speakers - has allowed my leaders to develop their own philosophy around what makes good education and how to sustain and develop themselves as leaders and to see themselves the leaders in the team. I saw that leadership unfolding before my eyes as we went through the year. The programme has given my leaders confidence to lead change...a voice...confidence to support colleagues and develop their teams...and work out their non-negotiables.*

In Annex A are the posters developed by participants to present the impact of the programme on their leadership development.

7. Challenges faced during the implementation of the programme

Staff turnover between the end of the summer term and the start of the autumn term had an impact on some schools in the project. One group of schools experienced 75% turnover during the summer break. There was a change of head in 3 of the schools and changes of heads of school in the 3 schools in the academy chain. The particular challenge of newly appointed heads joining part way through the programme had an impact on continuity in terms of the work of the action learning sets.

Whether heads 'bought into' the programme or not had a significant impact on the participants being able to extend their learning back in their schools. Where heads were actively involved in the programme they were able to provide opportunities to engage their leaders in continued professional dialogue following a programme event when they were back in their schools. Heads championing the programme in their schools was a significant feature of successful completion.

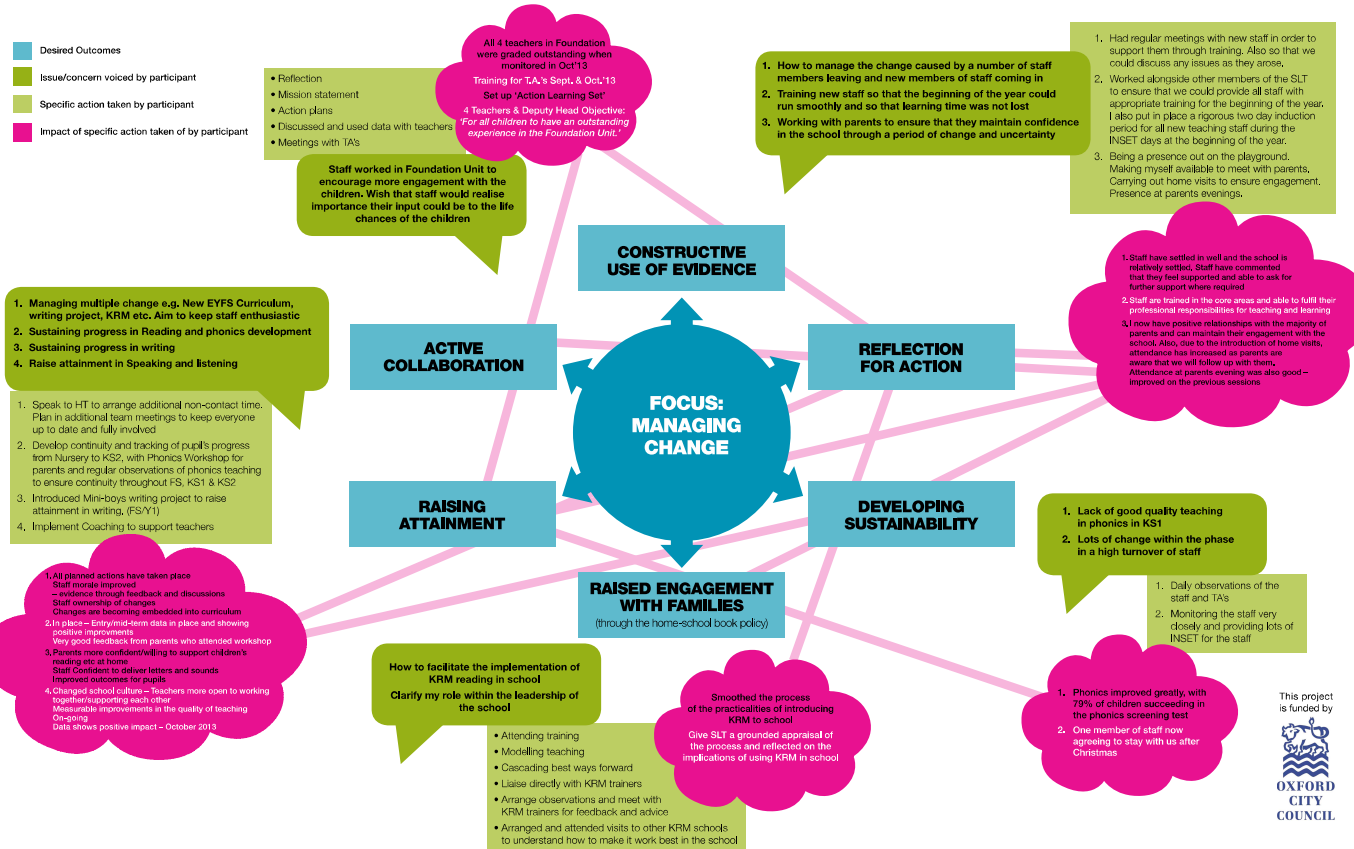
8. Conclusion: The importance of the programme in developing a more collaborative and supportive culture across schools in Oxford City – and a self-sustaining system

Many middle leaders in the City are relatively early in their careers and new to leadership. The programme has not only been important in meeting their needs but also in helping to set up a network of middle leaders across City schools that without the project might not have existed.

Equally, heads in the City work in two different partnerships, based on the old extended schools projects. The Leadership for Learning programme has enabled the heads of these City primary schools to meet as one group and discuss the challenges they are facing while supporting each other to find solutions. The programme has provided these heads and their colleagues with a framework and structure for learning and development that had not previously been available. Peer support and collaboration has been an important feature of the programme. Working in this way has laid the foundations for a collaborative leadership learning culture that has the potential for continuing beyond the life of the programme.

Annex A : Posters presented at the final session on programme impact in November 2013.

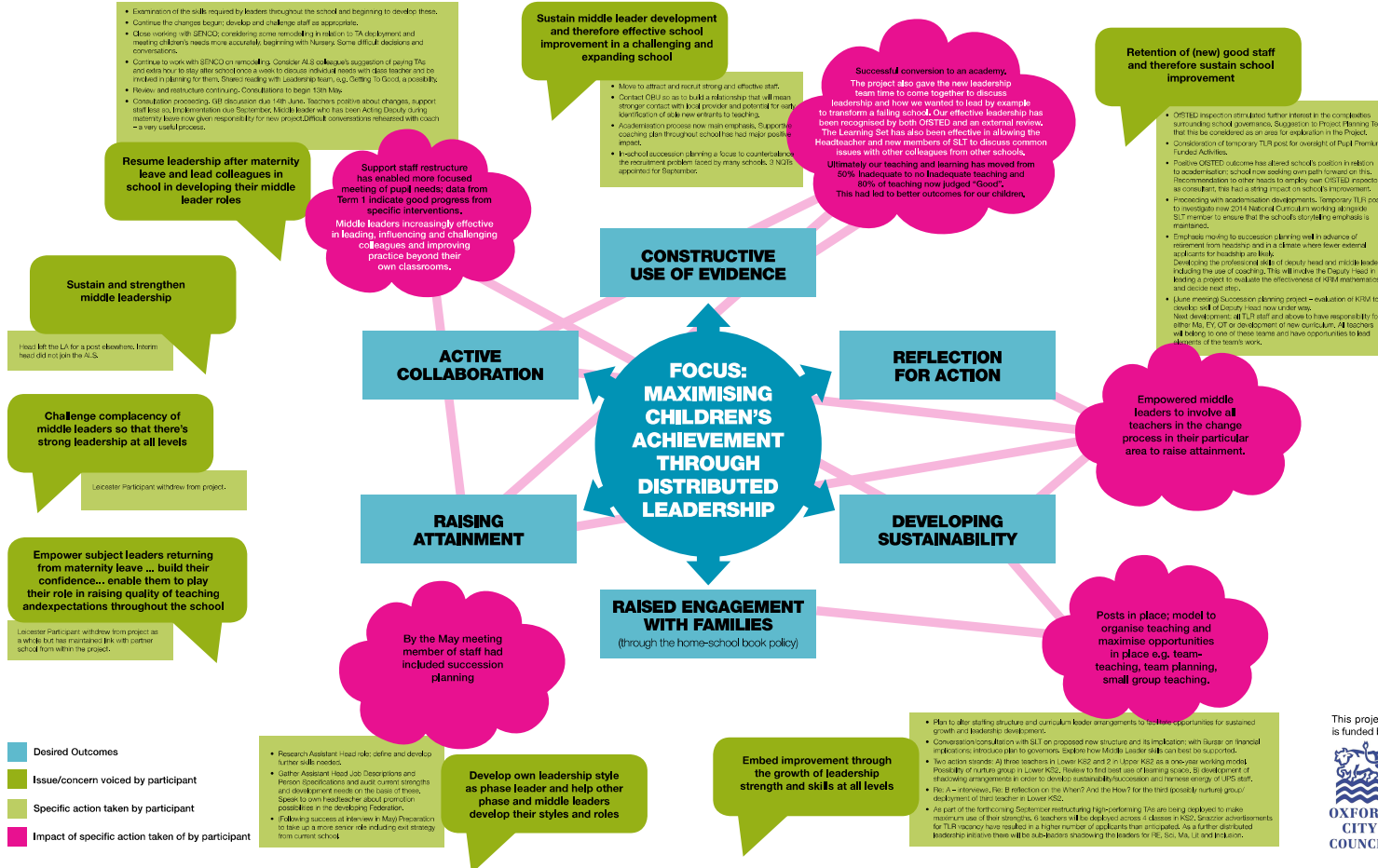
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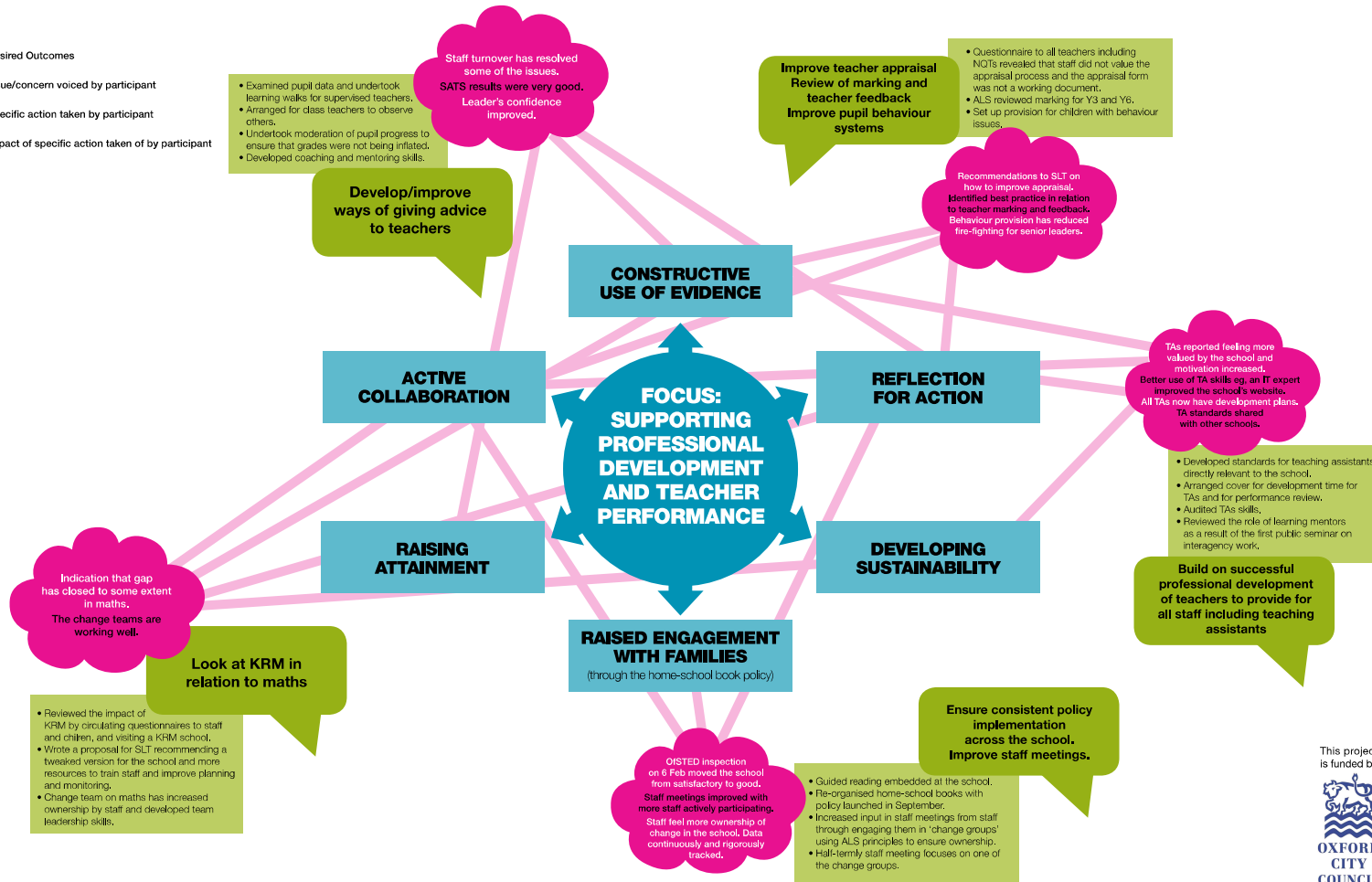


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- Desired Outcomes
- Issue/concern voiced by participant
- Specific action taken by participant
- Impact of specific action taken of by participant

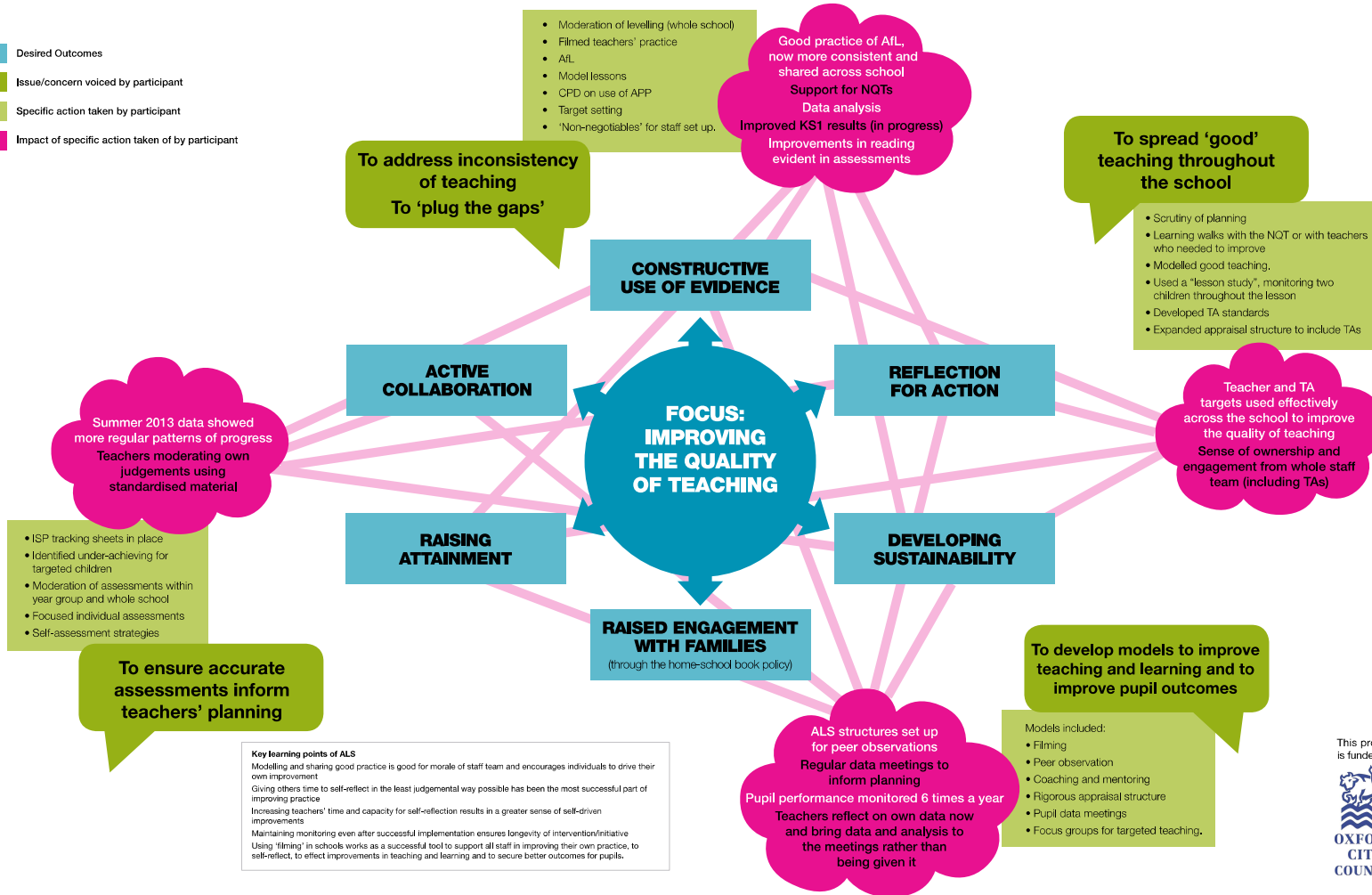


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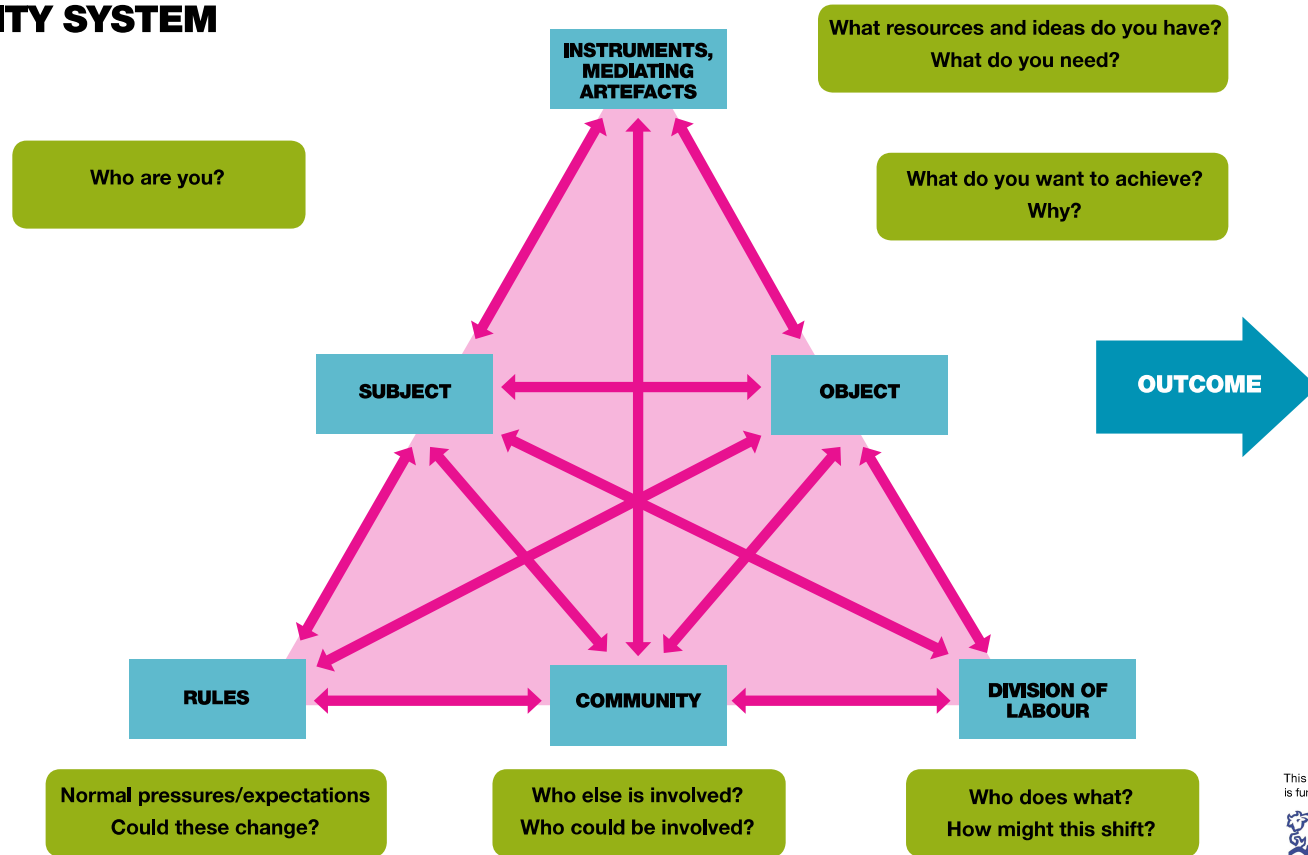


- Desired Outcomes
- Issue/concern voiced by participant
- Specific action taken by participant
- Impact of specific action taken by participant



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ACTIVITY SYSTEM



EXPLANATORY NOTE

This model of an "activity system" is intended to help you conceptualise the different processes involved in carrying out any activity. It has been used to diagnose changes to, for example, Swedish postal workers jobs, or training for ship's navigators.

It is based on a simpler model, which is just the top triangle, in which you (subject), uses ideas or objects (instruments, mediating artefacts) to achieve an objective, for a general outcome: a carpenter uses a saw to make a table, or a judge uses the law to make a decision.

In this model however, the three elements in the bottom layer are added, to recognise that what we do and how we do it is situated within a network of other people, with habits and ways of working.

I hope that it is helpful as a tool for developing leadership, since the tricky aspect of leadership is often the "bottom row stuff" - e.g. changing the ways that TA work (rules), or that teachers work with TAs (division of labour), or that schools work with the wider community (community). Thus the "problem" may not be with "your" basic plans, but with who and how they are implemented, but the solution may also be in changing something else - the usual ways of working - who to ask to help etc.

Annex B

Leadership for Learning - Year 1 Schedule of meetings

2013	Events/meetings
17 January 9. 30 am – 4 pm	Core workshop 1: Launch of programme for all participants and their Chair of Governors – or a representative from their school’s governing body Pam Salmons
	Coaching: Telephone conversation between participant and coach to introduce themselves*
19 February 4 – 6pm	Public seminar: Inter-professional Working in Schools Professor Anne Edwards
21 March 4 – 6pm	Public seminar: Closing the Gap Dr. Peter Kent
	Coaching: Face to face meeting participant and coach prior to Core Workshop 2 to focus on enquiry and starting points
24 April 9. 30 am – 4 pm	Core Workshop 2: Coaching and leadership John West Burnham
	Coaching: Face to face meeting between participant and coach following Core Workshop 2 to focus on the outcomes of the leadership diagnostic
15 May 4 – 6pm	Public seminar: Leadership and Context John West Burnham
20 June 4 – 6pm	Public seminar: What we know about school leadership Professor Geoff Southworth
	Coaching: Face to face meeting between participant and coach following Core Workshop either at end of term 6 or start of term 1 to meet participant’s needs
23 September 9. 30 am – 4 pm	Core Workshop 3:

	Making effective use of data
22 October 4 – 6pm	Public seminar: Leadership for Learning: Achievement for All Professor Sonia Blandford
28 November 4 – 6pm	Public seminar: Presentation of impact
	Coaching: Face to face meeting between participant and coach following Core Workshop either at end of programme to focus on next steps in terms of leadership
Action learning set meetings	Each facilitator arranges twice termly meetings to suit the members of their learning set.

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