

The Ideas I Took From Good Schools to Make an Outstanding School

***By Mark Unwin, Headteacher, Wilmslow Grange Community
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Good morning. My name is Mark Unwin. I'm the Executive Headteacher of Wilmslow Grange Primary School. Wilmslow Grange is in Handforth which is close to Stockport, is probably the easiest way for you to understand, about ten miles away from Manchester, but in Cheshire East and I'll talk about that little bit later.

I'm also the Chief Operating Officer of Frank Fields Education Trust; Frank Fields is the M.P. for Birkenhead for 40 years. I'm the Chief Operating Officer of his Trust which works across Cheshire, Merseyside and into Liverpool, supporting some of the most disadvantaged communities and most disadvantaged schools in those areas through delivering world class education.

My Twitter handle is Mr Unwin. I'm obsessed with Twitter. Please like; say hello and please feel free to contact me afterwards on Twitter. I'm happy to chat about anything and invite you to come see my school if you want to come and see my school.

I normally talk about something completely different. I normally talk about curriculum design and particularly the value of inspiration in learning and we will touch a little bit on curriculum.

In terms of what we'll be talking about I'll briefly look at our background and the background of Wilmslow Grange, but I think more importantly is to look at our shared background as a group of people in the room.

One of the great strengths that we've had, I think, at Wilmslow Grange and previous schools has been working as a corporate whole and to draw on the experience of people in the room and I thought it would be interesting to try and do that here.

Sonia and I have picked out five lessons that I think are central to the journey that we've gone on for a nominally good - and I'll talk about that in a minute - to outstanding, whatever that means and how those five lessons fit together and draw on the experiences that I've had previously and draw on your previous experiences also, I'm sure, and how those common factors come together and trying to draw together in some sort of conclusion within an hour.

[02:24] I'm not going to read my background to you. I remember at school, I remember being fourteen at school and sitting in parents' evening at secondary school and I remember being castigated by the history teacher, Mr Ward, in front of my parents for having a butterfly mind.

I distinctly remember the phrase "He's got butterfly mind; he can't settle to anything. He's a flitter, he doesn't stick with things. He's not the sort of person that can get into something in any great amount of detail". I distinctly remember the entirety of this ten minute tearing me to bits for my butterfly mind.

Yet I stand here and I suspect that my butterfly mind and the fact that I'm a flitter and the fact that I can't stick to anything for any great amount of time is possibly the reason I'm stood here in the first place, so a big shock to you, Mr Ward.

I've worked at five schools as Sonia said in eight years. I've actually been teaching now for ten years and I've been a teacher - I think in the last couple of months I've been a teacher longer than I've not been a teacher which is quite an interesting situation to be in because you sort or start to change in your mind what you are and what you construct yourself as.

For the first few years of being a teacher I didn't feel like a teacher and I think that's starting to change which is quite interesting.

I was in the mobile phone industry at its very inception so I joined the mobile phone industry in 1994. I remember selling my first mobile phone in 1994, which was pretty much the first six months that Orange existed, if you remember.

We were Orange's biggest mobile phone dealer despite the fact that we only sold about 800 phones and we became Orange's because distributor. I worked my way through the mobile phone industry, a very exciting, very dynamic time.

Everybody always asked what I did. I didn't really have a job title. Nobody in the mobile phone industry settled to anything long enough. It was a perfect thing for me. Nobody settled to anything long enough to actually generate a proper job title.

I think I was Product Director at one point but it didn't really mean anything. It was just as close as we could get it. I used to buy pallet loads of mobile phones; that was pretty much my job. Me and my mate used to trade mobile phones around Europe so we'd buy some in in one of the Russian States that was specced for the State that it was supposed to go in at low value and move it to Spain and change it in a warehouse to a Spanish spec phone and resell it in Spain at a profit and move stuff around Europe and move myself around Europe at the same time.

[04:54] It was incredibly exciting. I loved it, I absolutely loved it. I'm not stood here because I hated it; I absolutely loved it and I'm really clear about that but I walked. I used to live in Central Manchester and used to drink in a pub called Duke's 92 which some of you might know; it's quite a famous pub in Castlefield. It's on the titles for Coronation Street by a big white bridge.

I sat there one Friday night and we were talking about what you'd do if you won the lottery. We went around the table and people talked about buying an island and all sorts of different things that would never happen and I said I'd work. I said I'd have to work. I said I'd have to put my mind to something and I said I want to work but I'd change and I'd do something that had a bit more moral purpose to it and a bit more moral value to it. And I did say that I'd do something with more holidays, if I'm completely honest.

But I take it all back. I didn't use the word "easy". My friend says I use the word "easy"; I didn't use the word "easy" but I did say that I'd do something with more holidays involved in it. The girl sat around the table bet me lunch that I couldn't hack a morning in her class.

She was a Year 3 teacher at a Primary School in Tyneside where I ended up working and she bet me lunch that I couldn't hack a morning in her class. I remember going in, I think it was November. I'd only had 4 days holiday; I'd only taken 4 days holiday since the start of the year and I remember sitting in her class.

I sat down in one of those tiny little chairs that we all love so well and she went out to get her class from the playground. I sat there on my own feeling totally outside my comfort zone. They trooped in and they sat at the tables rather than the carpet.

A little boy called Jordan sat down next to me and he looked at me. I swear to God, like literally at the moment he looked at me I changed career. I can't really explain it; it was like a damascene conversion type thing. It's just a very strange thing to have gone through. I think I retain the passion of a zealot, the passion of a convert as a result of that and I changed pretty much overnight.

I ended up working at Gorse Hall and I've worked at five schools ever since. I came down to work in London because my now wife worked in London and I've worked at five schools.

Five very different schools, four different local authorities, two big, two small, one medium sized, three community schools, two church schools. Three that were very thematic and two that are non-thematic.

We can talk about that in a little while. Big differences between thematic schools and non-thematic schools. Two very disadvantaged, one very very posh and I say that unadvisedly, two sort of middle of the road and three down South and two up North.

So I feel like I've got my feet in two camps today. I feel a little bit like I've come home; Camden Town Hall's round the corner where I used to bring my children for the music festival to sing in front of the great and the good but equally I feel like a Northerner when I was told to sit at the presenters table with Azra Jonathan and all the people from up North. so I feel like I straddle two camps.

Wilmslow Grange, which is why I'm here I suppose, is bang average. That's the best way to describe Wilmslow Grange. I think Ofsted said it was broadly average with significant pockets that are significantly below. That's because we have a resource provision for special educational needs. We are absolute experts in the provision for children with autistic spectrum condition and we've got seven children that are designated to the resource provision and then another five children spread across the school who are also non-designated to the resource provision but supported in the same way as the resource provision at great cost to ourselves.

Average disadvantage but it's a merger school which is quite interesting. So when Sonia came to see us, there's a small community of semi-detached houses on one side of the road which was served by a school called Handforth Hall and then there was a community of social housing on the other side of the road on the Lane Estate which has got the lowest code locally.

It's not particularly disadvantaged but it happens to have the lowest code locally and the North Brookdean which was the school there and merged the two schools together on the 09:10 Handforth Hall site.

What's interesting and we'll talk a little bit about this later in terms of expectations is we then renamed the school Wilmslow Grange. Now anybody that knows up North particularly, or knows Cheshire particularly, Wilmslow's a very aspirational place to live. There's a McLaren dealership, there's a Rolls Royce dealership, there's an Astin Martin dealership. There are about 32 expensive watch shops and the place is crawling with wealth, mainly from the Cheshire stockbroker belt, old landed money and more latterly footballers.

They chose the school - despite the fact that it's 3½ miles away and actually has no relationship whatsoever - they chose the school because the school's Wilmslow Grange. One of the governors at

the time says that they did that because who would want to get educated in Handforth when you could be educated in Wilmslow.

I hope and fingers crossed that it's definitely going to happen, in 2020 we're going to change the name of the school back to Handforth Hall because anybody would want to be educated in Handforth over being educated in Wilmslow and I think that's a really interesting dynamic to change a community and to change a perception of an area based on the name of the school.

It was judged good in 2012. The local authorities were very concerned about it but it did have a good rating. It had been through three head teachers since the Ofsted. It was Ofsted under an Acting Head and then it had had three Headteachers since that by the time that I got there in January 2015, so a period a great change, but good fundamentals I think; great staff, lovely kids, really nice community of people that just needed some help and I think I've been hopefully able to do that.

[10:44] We were judged outstanding. I know everybody says this, I don't really care about Ofsted in the sense that we had an Ofsted swear jar very much for about two years. It cost you £2 every time you mentioned Ofsted outside my office. You're allowed to talk about inside my office but not outside.

It's a very interesting thing to do, yes? (A) you make a load of money for the Christmas Party, not so bad; (B) it really changed the dynamic having a £2 swear jar in my office. And also making it £2. When we did it at £1 it didn't really make any difference. People were alright paying it. £2, people seemed to have a completely different take on things.

We are, more importantly I think, one of the top thousand schools in the country. We're about five hundred in pretty much every measure; the Times measure, the Telegraph measure, the Guardian measure.

I work for the Frank Field Education Trust and the reason for that is Frank did a House of Commons Library search last year to find schools that were out-performing their context in order that he could find schools that could help the most disadvantaged communities, particularly in the Wirral.

There's 17,500 primary schools in the U.K. we're out-performing our context by 12,000 places. Out of that we came top of the list which is how he ended up coming to our school to see us in the first place and the subsequent journey that we've been on, mainly to do with the special needs that we have within the school and the amount of children that we serve in that way.

[12:11] We now work as far South as Kettering, as far North as Thirsk, over as I've said to the Wirral with Frank Field Education Trust. We work in private which is very very interesting. Our curriculum has been mapped over to private and I've loved it. If anybody's from private I'd love to talk about that. I'm now governor of a private school. It's a very interesting space to be in at the moment.

Dame Alison Peacock from the Chartered College of Teaching was at school about three weeks ago and they're sending their film crew so I'm getting used to being on film. They're sending their film crew to sort of spread what we're doing nationally on the curriculum side of things which is what I normally talk about.

One of the things that I did at the first ever staff meeting that we had, the first – actually I'll tell you a little story; it's not on the script, right? So the first staff meeting I did I stood there and talked about research and I talked about Carole Dweck and I talked about a Professor called K. Anders Ericsson who's the professor of psychology at Florida State whom I'm totally obsessed with, yeah? I thought it

went really well. And then now they tell me that the teaching assistants and everybody else at the back of the room were like “What is going on?”. So that was the first staff meeting. I thought it went well. I enjoyed it.

The second staff meeting – it genuinely is rather interesting how you misread a room. The second staff meeting that we did, I started off by saying “We're not paying for any consultants. We're not bringing anybody in. Nobody's going to get told what to do. I don't really care what anybody from outside thinks”, yeah? I want to come up with it largely together with the input that I've got from loads of different places as well.

One of the ways we started was to go around the room and just shout out how many years that we'd been teaching including the amount of time that we've been training because otherwise the NQTs don't have much and it's not really fair.

So how many - right, so let's do it now because it's quite an interesting thing to do within a room, yeah? So how many years you've been in teaching, right? Including new training, okay? Right, I'll start; we'll work our way around. 12, 25, 37, 16. 358 years worth of experience in the room, yeah? My school, we got to 204, yeah? There was a lot of people stood and sat around the room, yeah? What did I just say? 358, yeah? 358 years worth of teaching experience in this room at the same time.

It's mind boggling how much experience that is, yeah? And yet we bring consultants in from outside who've got 4 or 6, yeah? Have we got time? Probably not got time to do - you can do the same thing with local authorities, yeah? How many local authorities you've worked in, how many schools you've worked in.

You'll end up, you know, 13 or 14 local authorities and 60, 70 odd schools worth of experience as well as 358 years worth of experience. We don't need consultant. We don't need people telling us what to do. We need to take the lessons that we know that is true from our experience and then we just need to be develop them a little bit further as groups of people.

These were the lessons that I picked out from my journey of those five schools and it starts for me with high expectations. Now everybody talks about high expectations. Everybody - the Ofsted framework I think references it 7 times. The old Ofsted framework references it 7 times specifically, but what does it mean?

First question, right. Hands up who thinks SATs will ever stop. Maybe. Sort of maybe, 1. Who'd like them to stop, yeah? There's an interesting contradiction in itself, isn't it? Almost certainly we all accept that we probably live within a system that probably isn't going to change in any great shape or form.

I did the same thing with the staff and got pretty much the same result, yeah? And the conclusion that we drew from that was that data was the first KPI that we'd look at; not the most important KPI and not the only KPI by any stretch of the imagination. It was just the first that we'd look at because of the dichotomy that I've just talked about.

So I took high expectations from different places. Hampstead Parochial was the very posh school and actually in some respects I'm really glad she's not, but in some respects I really wish she had. In the other room is Rebecca Harris who is the Headteacher of Hampstead Parochial when I was there, yeah? She's basically God, yeah? She is the most inspirational, most amazing person I've ever worked for and she's sat on the other side of that wall. So later on if you get a chance to meet her

go and say hello because she is absolutely unbelievable in what he can do to support schools and she's taken schools from all sorts of situations and created amazing schools from them and she did that at Hampstead Parochial.

The interesting thing that I took from Hampstead Parochial was the expectations were high, incredibly high from every single person involved in the school. Part of that was to do with the circumstances that the school found itself in. Top of Hampstead High Street, attached to St John's the Parish Church in Hampstead. I taught Year 6. 22 of my class went on to private school. We used to charge £30 for a reference for private school and make an absolute bomb out of it because I did 84 references one year for private school. Each of those 22 children had took at least four entrance exams. They were pretty much all tutored either by family members or by individual private tutors coming in to help them pass the exams and that stopped in December just at the point when you want to ramp up.

[18:11] The two years I taught Year 6 there we were 40th the contrary in the first year and 21st in the country the second year. If you remember the old CVA. We were 104.2 the first year, 103.9 the second year. We were 100% Level 4 combined and 91% Level 5 combined, yeah? The cleaners and the cleaning team assumed that the kids would get Level 5. The office staff assumed all the kids would get level 5, all the teachers assumed, all the parents assumed, all the kids assumed it. I had to assume it as the teacher and Rebecca and Rebecca, who were the Deputy Head and the Head had to take on those expectations.

Now what's really interesting is later I went to St. Gabriel's. St. Gabriel's is on the Churchill Gardens Estate just behind Millbank on the Thames, 19 high rise tower blocks, 11 low rise tower blocks around a Victorian school. I saw the opposite of that, where children weren't expected to achieve at the same level, just by virtue of the fact that they lived a couple of miles down the road, you know, 3 or 4 miles down the road. And yet those children, it turned out, were just as capable of achieving at those sort of levels as the children at Hampstead Parochial, once the cleaner and the office staff and all the teachers and everybody else had the similar high expectations that the children would be able to achieve it.

So I think the whole how do you shift the culture from the cleaner upwards is a really, really interesting question, yeah? And can we change that culture from the cleaner upwards? One of the reasons for that is these factors to mitigate. Now the factors to mitigate at St. Gabriel's weren't necessarily just around disadvantaged. The factors to mitigate were very much around SEND.

So the school considered itself doing a good job and if a child therefore didn't achieve it was considered that therefore they probably had some sort of special educational needs or some sort of English as an additional language problem that meant that they couldn't achieve because the school was doing a good job so therefore it was put on the child or the family. They ended up with 42% on the Special Educational Needs Register for lower level SENK which then we reduced to 14% because of misdiagnosis at SEN. And similarly 80% of the school was disadvantaged and there was always a feeling that that was a barrier in some way to the children then achieving it.

Hands up who's got staff that feel that family input is a barrier to achievement. Still, yeah? And yet we've proved that actually it's not because I've got kids coming out with 150 scale scores, quite a lot coming out at average 150 scale scores that don't get read to at home every night that haven't had exposure to 2,000 positive and pieces of vocabulary up to the age of 2 and all the rest of it that the research shows, yeah? And yet we've all got those members of staff and I think from my side of things challenging that constantly and consistently to the point of being incredibly annoying to everybody involved and challenging it from the cleaner upwards which is what I've done at

Wilmslow Grange and actually getting the cleaners on side is actually a really good way of doing this, to be honest, because they are from the communities that have been badly served, people who have been written off has been one of the lessons that I've taken because actually I don't think in micro level family support and family involvement is as important at primary level as it's possibly made out to be.

Second thing we looked at was what high expectations are for what. So high expectations of data, sure, yeah? But high expectations of what else? Now we said high expectations of academic success. We actually said the very highest expectations of academic success – I'll talk about that in a minute.

Academic success, very high expectations of behaviour. Very high expectation of excitement. Very high expectation of form; that's it, okay? So on your tables, right, three things that you have the very highest expectations of and two things that you do not care about and I'll put my hand up, right? ICT, yeah, absolutely couldn't give a scoobies, yeah? We do it, we do the computing curriculum, okay, but will not say that I have the very highest expectation of ICT. I said it to the Ofsted inspector and she was completely fine with that. I said I'd concentrate on this, this, this and this to the exclusion of that, that, that and that and she was completely fine with that in April 2017, yeah?

Mine, ICT and – close your ears if you're a geographer – I don't think geography is a subject, right? It's science outside. Now as it happens we're very thematic and the thematic team disagree with me and take that on board, yeah? But as my own personal – that's possibly here my own personal ignorance.

On your tables three things that you can all agree on but two things that you are brave - or one thing that you're brave enough to say that actually you don't have the very highest expectations of. Go.

[23:47-24:19] audience participation.

So segregating groupings. Somebody brave enough to say that segregation, there's an interesting one, the segregation, constant segregation of groupings one against the next, yeah? Because everybody needs to achieve and therefore a rising tide rises all ships. The constant segregation of grouping.

Any advance on that? Somebody at the back.

[24:41] audience participation

Gender. Lovely. Do you want to just explain in terms of gender what –

[24:52] audience participation

Okay, yeah.

[24:55-25:05] audience participation

The gender. Yeah, yeah, yeah, of course, yeah.

[25:08-25:09] audience participation

Right, okay, so the actual separation between girls and boys, yeah?

[25:13-25:17] audience participation

And Graham Andre. Have you seen Graham Andre speak? He was the Headteacher from Oldam, the guy that *No More Boys and Girls* in Channel 4 was based on. He's amazing. He's on Twitter. He's absolutely the most lovely man, seriously. He'll be more than happy to talk to you.

This table? Anything?

[25:33-25:39] audience participation

Okay, yeah, yeah.

[25:40-25:43] audience participation

And anything from that table?

[25:45-25:47] audience participation

French and – yeah.

It's interesting, isn't it, right? Isn't that hard, right? Isn't it hard to put your finger on something and say actually that isn't my focus, yeah? And that's a tiny piece of the pie isn't it, yeah? And yet what is our biggest problem as Headteachers and school leaders? Our biggest problems as Headteachers and school leaders is time, isn't it? Our biggest problem is how do you take this national curriculum that was made in committee by a geographer sat next to a science teacher, sat next to a mathematician, sat next to somebody else and everybody wanting to get their piece of the pie and get a decent slice of that pie. How do we square the circle of the tension between the time and all those things that we're supposed to have the very highest expectations of, yeah?

And maybe one of the things I wouldn't mind you taking away from this is to think with your team and to help yourselves and to give yourself the space to do everything to the very highest level is what bits are you going to step away from and not address – maybe not address initially or maybe put at a lower level in order to prioritise things.

And as I say, I said to the HMI pretty much what I just said to you. I actually said geography's not a proper subject, it's a science outside and she laughed and she said "I get that". She said "You taking your concentration in that area and that's what's making a massive difference to the children, the community and the school". And I said "At some point we'll hope to get something else but you can only do one thing at a time, can't you" and she was completely on board with that, totally realistic about the amount of time and the pressure on time.

[27:28] Okay, let's move on. So - questions to think about, or things to think about. We found low expectations, particularly low expectations of SEN at Wilmslow Grange, low expectations of disadvantaged. I only put this up because hopefully some of you will think now we've got that, we've got that. Particularly low expectations of the amount of work that children produce, unbelievably low expectations in the amount of work children that produce, a study set up for Year 1s on their fourth writing exercise book as we sit here now. Most of the Year 1s are actually on their fourth exercise book when Ofsted came in April of 2017. All the children were on at least their third writing exercise book and all the children were at the end of at least their second maths exercise book because we value practice. That's what I talk about in curriculum, we value practice.

So overcoming that was a big thing. I wanted to copy HP's results and in the end I wanted to copy the disadvantaged results from St. Gabriel's because it proves that you can - there are schools out there doing this and you can improve this.

What I'd like you to think about is data. I'd like you to think about pride in work and pride in the school itself. Thinking about vision, right, okay? Hampstead Parochial had no vision that I was aware of. It had no written vision, okay?

We need to think, as Headteachers about whether our vision is vanilla as in can't be disagreed with, or arguable as in can be disagreed with. And we made ours deliberately argumentative. The very highest expectations of academic success. We put academic success in there because some people disagree with that malarkey with us about it.

[29:15] On your tables now, just have a think, yeah, about your own mission statements in schools or vision statements in school, yeah and see if you can find a common theme in your table now, just for like a minute, the common themes out of your visions. If you just tell each other what they are I bet you one common theme comes out of it. Go for it.

Is there anything that's coming out that's a shared theme on the table? This table?

[29:40-29:41] audience participation

Can't remember what it is? That's a shame for you, isn't it?

This table?

[29:45-29:47] audience participation

Success.

[29:48-29:54] audience participation

I think that's interesting.

[29:55-29:57] audience participation

This table? Anything sort of shared around that?

[30:00-30:04] audience participation

Aspiration

[30:05 -30:10] audience participation

This table here?

[30:11-30:23] audience participation

Anything from the back?

[30:24-30:35] audience participation

Okay, yeah.

[30:36-30:42] audience participation

So sort of universal, yeah?

[30:45-30:48] audience participation

Okay. My only pushback on that, yeah, is we set it. Because the Ofsted letter is written to you, not to the community any more: "Dear Mr. Unwin. Thank you for your time when I visited your school. I rate your school as this" yeah? If it's not a vision and some of us inherit vision, some of us implant a vision, some of us develop a vision, yeah? Who inherited one? Who has developed one?

[31:28] audience participation

Done a bit of both. Okay, yeah, over time, yeah.

[31:31] audience participation

And then you've developed it over time, right? Okay, interestingly if you've already inherited one and you can't change it how do you put a mission statement or something tangible in terms of targets in place in order to make it personal to you because my argument would be if it's not important to you and it's not something you can get behind and stand behind – and let's face it, we all go for job interviews and not all necessarily unpick exactly what that vision statement means in practice in the communities that we serve then putting some sort of mission statement or some sort of target that makes it personal that you can get yourself behind is a really, really important thing.

If you're starting a new Headship I would seriously think about putting your own vision statement in place. That's what we did, yeah, and it means that can be something that I absolutely stand behind 150%, yeah? It's not for everybody by any stretch of the imagination, but I can stand behind it so that's something to think about.

[32:27] I talk about curriculum design a lot, right? I'm not going to talk about it now because Azra Butt is talking later and Azra's got the most amazing school and her vision and her curriculum design is very very similar to ours. The one thing I would say is that it's our most important responsibility and it's our greatest opportunity within a school and if it were me starting again, and I'm fortunate because this is where I concentrated, yeah? Right from the very start. But if I was taking over a new Headship or I was trying to change the school culture this is where I would start without an absolute shadow of a doubt. Because doing that exercise that we did before with 358 years worth of experience in the room means that every single one of you can come up with a unique local broad-balanced exciting curriculum for your school in about two months.

It takes about eight staff meetings to do it to go through maths and then go through reading and then go through writing and then spread it out over and over again and maybe stop after you've gone the course, okay, and have a bit of a break because it's pretty like full on and get it implemented.

And then we did foundation subjects, thematic subjects and RE and then we stopped and then we did art and all the other subjects that went with it, yeah. And to really think as a team of 358 years of experience about what curriculum design means to you in your school.

[33:48] To me - I'm going to bang the drum on this - to me curriculum design is based on the work of Professor Anders Ericsson. It's ignition – you've got to get them excited and inspired in the first place and practice and that is the bit often that's missing. Hook days, inspiration days, wow days are all very well and good but if they don't then lead to an insane amount of practice that leverages that ignition and inspiration then you're missing a trick.

And equally, if you're just banging on about practice all the time and not giving them the excitement, fun, inspiring, igniting opportunities in the first place you just running an exam academy and need to stop, yeah? So it for me, ignition and practice are the two things but whatever it is for you should be based on your team's 358 years or whatever it is communal experience in school.

Something that I took from business was to do with distributed leadership, right? How many of you have found a school or find yourself in a school where almost all decisions are run past you in some way, shape or form? Any of you?

[35:00] audience participation

Yeah?

[35:02] audience participation

Right.

[35:05] audience participation

The one thing that, coming from a business background, most businesses don't run like that and most businesses run successfully because they don't run like that. And all I can tell you from my experience at Selstar I had to delegate financial responsibility of £12,000,000. I was 23, right? I'd fallen out of Ralph Lauren's graduate training program and had fallen out of Astra Zeneca's graduate training program, yeah? And I was basically at the Hacienda every night, right, and they gave me a designated - delegate financial responsibility of £12,000,000.

Well (A) knowing you've got to delegate a financial responsibility of £12,000,000 really focuses the mind, yeah, right? But the other thing is having at 23 a delegated financial responsibility of £12,000,000, yeah, makes you feel like the master of the universe and makes you do a good job. So thinking about what you can get down to the shop floor and backing the staff in a real sense of giving them real power as closest to the chalk face as it's possible to do it is the way that a management consultant would run a primary school.

A management consultant would come in and say "Not that, not that, not that, not that. You haven't got time for it give it them and get it as close to the shop floor as humanly possible" yeah? And often in the five primary schools that I've worked at that's been the absolute opposite of the case and that leads to a situation where the Head is hamstrung in not being able to make decisions and take strategic - make strategic change or strategic change takes an insanely longer amount of time to do because of the amount of time it takes to do all the bits in between. And my advice would be get it to the shop floor as soon as humanly possible and it makes a big difference.

And something to think about - how many of you are DSL?

[36:48] Audience participation

I'm not. I'm not the best person to be DSL. My deputy is the best person to be DSL. She is absolutely amazing at it and she's got time to do it. She's out of class and she's got time to do it and she's got time to do it properly and I know if I did it myself I wouldn't have time to do it.

The other thing is if you have got somebody in your organisation that's absolutely brilliant at that sort of thing and fastidious and absolutely punctilious about the way that they process things, isn't it better that that person does the DSL responsibility and frees you up for strategic and wholesale change that you could be making in a different way.

Something to think about. Not everybody agrees with that but that's something that's worked for me and I've seen it work at three of the five different schools and equally at St. Gabriel's all the Head did was her DSL role. That was it and I did absolutely everything because she was in court pretty much all the time sorting out.

[37:46] 45% of the school had an active social care case book, yeah, and all she did was that and I did everything else. That works too, yeah, but if you want to be the person leading the change can you do that with DSL responsibility? That's something to think about, as I've said.

The final thing to talk about is to do with consistency. Now as I said at the very beginning I've had my feet in two camps. I have my feet in the London camp and I have my feet in the Northern camp, yeah? People talk about London challenge and it was great. But we benefited massively from aspirant refugees, aspirant migrant communities who would fight tooth and nail to make sure that their children do well at school or go into a white working class community in the North. That's not the case for many of our parents. We do the fighting as a school community not necessarily outside school. But as I said before that's not an excuse. We can still do that or we have to fight for it rather than the parents necessarily fighting for it.

The one thing that I took from London challenge was the absolute drive for consistency right across the school. Things to look for, in particular, the three things that I look for, and Ofsted too, data consistency between classes, subjects and key stages. I've got a 7% spread at expected standard between the highest and lowest of any subject in any class in any key stage. By ensuring that our curriculum design is consistent and if our curriculum design is consistent and we monitor well then our data aligns so our data is consistent.

Now you might think well what's that make a difference, right? We have a moral responsibility in my mind to make sure that children are taught consistently across the school. Gone are the days in our school where parents sit on the playground, about this time of year and go "I hope I get her. She's dead good". "I hope I don't get her. She's not" and that doesn't happen in our school because as Sonia will tell you, if you go into our school what's going on in Year 1 is the same as what's going on in Year 1-2, is the same as going on in Year 2 and 4 is the same as 3-4 and 5-6 is the same as 6 and everybody gets a fair crack of the whip because there's a consistent delivery that had been planned based on those 38 years worth of experience – 358 years of experience, I should say, that we've got in our staff room and you've got in your staff room.

[40:11] If you plan it and you demand that consistency and crucially – and this is the bit we don't talk about a lot – monitor it a lot, then that consistency can drive moral responsibility. Just as an

indication, how many of you monitor termly? How many of you monitor half-termly? How many of you monitor weekly?

How many of you, as senior leaders, or actually just for the Headteachers in the room, how many of the Headteachers do the monitoring? Weekly. Do you know I mean? Do you see how it filters down, yeah? My absolute number one piece of advice in terms of how we moved our school so quickly was to do with the fact that I sit in that monitoring every single week. It's the only bit of the week that my wife can't get out to take the kids to cricket training and the Multi-Academy Trust can't make me go to the Houses of Parliament and nobody can make me do anything because I sit in that room and I make sure I see the books and I still do it all the time, yeah?

I do think if you're going to effect change rapidly that's a really successful way of affecting change, not because you want to bash people over the head but because, within about four weeks it should become positive affirmation for all your brilliant teachers and because from a workload point of view your teachers that are working the hardest feel that they're getting a fair crack of the whip against the people that are not working as hard as them because that becomes level because there's a consistent approach across the school, alright?

[41:55] In terms of common factors the data between Wilmslow Grange and St. Gabriel's, that's the data for last year, the data for the year before is pretty much exactly the same. There's a commonality between the data of two completely contrasting schools based on those high expectations, based on that consistency, based on that unerring focus towards curriculum design, based on that distributed leadership.

The quality and amount of work in books is consistently better – well, consistently amazing at both schools. The internal data is totally consistent across the two schools. Both schools have had a massive reduction in SENK. As I say, St. Gabriel's went down from 42% to 14%. At Wilmslow Grange we have twelve children with it with the EHPs but we've reduced the SENK level from 26% down to about 18%. That's come down as well.

We've got a myriad of people - we had 65 pupils below national expectation in a subject when we started. We're down to 9 across the entire school and we've got to the point now because of the consistency that three weeks from starting four NQTs last year were teaching within a cigarette paper as well as our best teacher in the school. That because the consistency allows teachers to come in and be supported and understand the expectations and deliver against those expectations, regardless of whether they're three weeks into their career or thirty years into their career because the 358 years worth of experience in the room was the thing that set the expectations in the first place so it's a communal joint vision.

And conclusion. Do you think our collective experience in any room is enough without - and I like Pie Corbett right, I do like Pie Corbett, right. But I swear what I do is better than Pie Corbett stuff. He's just a lot better at self-promotion than me, yeah? And he is lovely and he's a really nice guy and he's definitely got on to something with writing. There's some really good stuff in it, yeah? But there's no reason why your staff room can't create its own writing that's just as effective or more effective for your community because one thing Pie Corbett would admit, is he doesn't know your community and your kids and your staff room and your parents and your areas and you do.

I do think our collective experience is enough. If we rely on the generation of our own ideas then that allows for innovation and creation which is exactly what Ofsted we're looking for. The thing that the HMI liked - we've got a 17 page stupid Ofsted report – it's the longest one I've ever read, right? The thing that she liked is how different everything was and how we thought everything through as

a collective and made it different from the school down the road and we were prepared to back ourselves on that, yeah?

Being innovative and creative is incredibly important. The value of planning that curriculum and that curriculum power being in our hands and in the hands of our teachers is the most powerful thing that we have as a profession because the national curriculum is only a framework and we can take that and develop it and make it absolutely amazing as a result.

[45:15] If your time's not being spent on that it's being spent on pens and being DSL if that's what your time's being spent on then who is doing that curriculum development and that curriculum design?

Get an Ofsted swear jar without a shadow of a doubt. Go home on Monday, nice jar, ribbons around it, £2 in it to start it off with and then make sure that that's not why you're doing things. You're doing it because of your collective experience and that creates a culture of support because everybody generated it in the first place and if everybody generated in the first place then nobody can talk back against it afterwards and nobody can say I don't agree with this person because you are arguing against the collective whole and that's an incredibly difficult thing to do.

I said to Sonia that I believe that we've got a world-class school and I believe that our Multi-Academy Trust can deliver world-class schools and world-class education across the most disadvantaged communities in the North.

I hope that at the end of - not as a result of this today - but as a result of this whole day and the work that you're doing you can create your world-class school and not just your world-class school but the world-class school of the 358 years worth of experience that you've got in your staff rooms.

Thank you so much. You've been lovely. I'm sorry it's been a bit of a whistlestop tour. I've really enjoyed it. If you've got any questions come and see me. Thank you.

Moving to Outstanding 2019

Friday 14th June 2019

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