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# Two Heads Better than One?

## Building a cross-phase school of the future

This report records and analyses a unique situation – the appointment of two headteachers to a innovative 'future school' operating from one building which incorporates a public library, and adult education and community facilities, as well as a nursery, a primary and a secondary school.

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## Building a school of the future

Bulldozers moved onto the site of the Chafford Hundred Campus, in Grays, Essex, in June 2000. In early July, Estelle Morris presided at a turf-cutting ceremony and announced that Chafford Hundred Campus would be the Stantonbury or Countesthorpe of 2001. Quite a challenge for Alison Banks, as headteacher designate of the secondary school, and Catherine Finn, as headteacher designate of the primary school! Appointed from September 2000, we had the exciting prospect of working with the design team, building contractors and shadow governing bodies to create and complete the Campus by September 2001.

Chafford Hundred Campus is innovative in many respects of its organisational design. Serving the new town of Chafford Hundred, it is a Thurrock Local Education Authority (LEA) project. The building incorporates a public library, adult education and community facilities, as well as a nursery, primary and secondary school: a 'neighbourhood learning centre', to repeat Tom Bentley's phrase (in *Learning Beyond the Classroom)*. The building design incorporates a central block of shared facilities, including the public library, administration, staff room, halls, cybercafe and specialist accommodation, with separate classroom wings for the primary and secondary schools.

As far as practicable, the two heads are working to create one institution, with shared staffing and resources. A major aim is to develop a primary-secondary fusion, rather than liaison or co-location. Another is to maximise the learning opportunities arising from portable technologies. The Campus also seeks to offer services to business, other schools and the local community, to develop its role as a community enterprise centre.

The task of involving the community at an early stage, when the schools and most of the houses around it were not yet built and the intake numbers were therefore unpredictable, set the heads on the path of alternative approaches: a small flat became an information centre, surgeries and coffee mornings were held, family site visits with hard hats organised, a web site launched, and pupils and parents invited to individual interviews. In an area of educational underachievement, the heads discovered a tremendous enthusiasm for learning and for different approaches.

Tim McMullen, the first principal of Countesthorpe, wrote in 1969:

> We have a chance to rethink the total process of learning within a school…This does not mean that everything we do will be different from what has been done before, but it should mean that we do not automatically repeat an established practice without considering why. (McMullen, 1977)

Thirty years on, there is all the more reason for the validity of this approach. Catherine and Alison frequently asked "why?" and investigated new methodologies and systems. Fundamental was the philosophy that each pupil is an individual with a unique portfolio of abilities, competences and intelligences.

Alison, having taught for over thirty years and held two previous headships, had a lot of ideas about what a school of the future should, and should not be like. Catherine's

background of youth work, nursing, community worker, early year's primary teacher, along with leadership, complemented Alison's skills to develop the innovative project. Setting up the Campus has been an amazing opportunity to put these ideas into practice. Starting with a blank canvas and a mandate to be innovative, these are some of the practicalities they grappled with:

- a shared management structure between the two schools – to slim down the hierarchy and put as much resource as possible into teaching time

- a shared budget – to smooth the inequalities of primary and secondary funding and minimise bureaucracy

- opening up the Campus – from 8.00am–10.00pm, including weekends and holidays, to community users

- joint approaches to managing family learning, adult education and a branch library

- designing community spaces, such as the atrium and cybercafe, to create a welcoming public building, with CCTV and swipe cards to ensure pupil security

- swipe card technology for ease of administration, such as registration, cashless vending and print control

- a wireless broadband network, providing laptops for all staff and secondary pupils, with trolleyed laptops for primary and community use

- a culture of research and innovation, working jointly with educational institutions and businesses and currently applying for specialist Business and Enterprise status

## Year 7 structure and curriculum

For the Year 7 structure and curriculum, Alison proposed:

- a flat staffing structure, with no separation of pastoral and academic, no house, year or departmental structure, maximising preparation time for individual teachers

- one-to-one personal tutoring, from 8.30–9.00am before lessons, providing each child with a weekly review

- a high ratio of support staff and teaching assistants, so as to involve them in one-to-one sessions, all classes and administration

- the principle of a learning plan for every pupil, recognising individual and additional needs

- the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) 21st Century Curriculum (see Bayliss, 1999), with competence-based half-term units designed to achieve cross-curricular coherence

- flexible timetabling, with varied groupings and timings appropriate for different curriculum areas

- information and communications technology (ICT) independence for pupils, with a wireless network and swipe-operated lockers for the security and re-charging of laptops

- a centralised resources centre and ICT helpdesk, complementing the public library, to meet all pupils' learning needs

- a positive approach to good behaviour, based on pupil responsibilities, privileges and a highly motivating reward system

## Primary structure

Catherine designed a primary structure which:

- takes advantage of the specialist teaching facilities, eg sports hall, art rooms, food technology

- strengthens the liaison between primary and secondary by using staff who work across the Campus

- reinforces learning through the daily use of ICT, with the support of a network manager, ICT technician and central Campus resources area

- welcomes strong parental partnerships

- utilises the home/school lending library for literacy and numeracy, to support active learning linked to pupils' individual targets

- uses sports coaches to reinforce a healthy lifestyle, along with positive behaviour at lunchtime

Still at the design stage is the Campus 21$^{st}$ century learning intranet, with individual and differentiated pathways. This is a joint project with Monsoon Malabar Limited and other interested schools are welcome to get involved. Although the Campus opened as planned in September 2001, the building and ICT infrastructure were still incomplete in February 2002, so there is much yet to do.

Partners in the Campus building project were Thurrock Council, Chafford Hundred Development Ltd, Jackson's Builders and Nicholas Hare Architects. As the implementation continues, Campus staff are working in partnership with Thurrock Adult Community College, Thurrock Library Services, the RSA, Toshiba and Easytrace.

The Campus is already building international links, being involved in an EC m-learning bid with Toshiba Germany, the Poznan Supercomputing and Networking Centre and the Foundation for Economic Education in Poland. We have hosted a visit from Toshiba's European managers, from ten countries, and the Campus has been the main feature of a major schools' conference in Spain.

As the Campus develops, there will be many opportunities for workshops and visits, as Catherine and Alison hope that their work will stimulate educational debate for many years to come. Working with the National College for School Leadership (NCSL),

Campus staff want to develop their ideas and learn from others. Please contribute to this debate.

"As to entering the age of imagination, we're just barely sniffing at the doorway." (Peters,1994)

"Leadership exists when people are no longer victims of circumstances but participate in creating new circumstances… creating new realities." (Senge, 1990)

## Positive outcomes and successes

### The team

Looking back over the summer term's preparations for the opening of the Campus and the first term of our existence as two schools, the team has reflected on a number of significant occasions when we have worked successfully as a team and achieved considerable success. In order to reach this judgement, we have drawn not only on our collective experience and individual journals but also on feedback from pupils, parents, staff and governors.

**Three examples which give a flavour of such occasions include:**

1. Family site visits in July 2001

During several evenings and throughout a weekend, we hosted groups of pupils and parents on a site tour. The notable success of this included evidence that:

- our joint planning was thorough – we handled a complex set of arrangements in a largely unknown context without any unforeseen difficulties or setbacks arising

- the operation was highly professional – the team worked collaboratively yet individually, each with our own role and responsibility

- communication was excellent – each member, although working apart, fell into a rhythm, anticipating others' actions and needs and keeping within a tight timescale

- the partnership between the team and others, notably the governors and the builders, enhanced the occasion – health and safety procedures were transformed into both a learning opportunity and a fun event for families

- the outcome was highly enjoyable and a positive experience for all involved – even those pupils and parents who arrived anxious or nervous departed happy and reassured. Little details such as small souvenirs marked the occasion as special in the life of the community

- the team was smiling and confident – hiding our own anxieties about the progress of the building and putting on a brave PR face has developed into one of the team's strengths

2. The first staff conference

Indicators of success here include:

- 100 per cent voluntary attendance, including two overnight stays

- the realisation of an ambitious, fast-paced and varied programme

- every team member contributing to presentation, organisation, practical and social arrangements

- drawing on particular individual strengths, such as display or hospitality skills

- delegating successfully to develop high profile roles for administrative and ICT staff

- maintaining consistent ethos-building while integrating governors, the director of education and external trainers dropping in

- providing thorough documentation, to a high standard of content and presentation

- everyone arriving apprehensive and leaving tired but happier

- extremely positive evaluation by all participants

3. A crisis

When the secondary headteacher had a car accident and was off school for two weeks, some of the benefits of our unique team came into play. One might imagine, in another context, this event causing huge difficulties for an LEA, with a new school in its third week of existence.

At Chafford Hundred Campus, despite this event coinciding with a second accident (our business manager suffered concussion), the leadership team was able to pull together and maintain the confidence of staff, pupils and parents. Indeed, some parents commented how fortunate the Campus was to have two heads.

Notable evidence of success during this crisis included the fact that very few events or arrangements had to be cancelled or postponed. Planned trips to France and a local environmental centre for the whole of Year 7 went ahead. Deliveries of furniture and equipment continued unabated. Curriculum planning and even NCSL filming were unaffected. The strength of prior communication meant that there were no surprises or eventualities which could not be dealt with. What could have, elsewhere, have been a crisis proved not to be one.

**Work with NCSL**

Throughout the summer and autumn terms of 2001, team members attended training and action set days at Nottingham. Most of the team have been involved in these events, participating in sessions on research methodology, creative thinking, action set work and public relations in regard to research dissemination, as well as sharing experiences and approaches with other NCSL research associates.

We also benefited from visits from NCSL staff, including those working on a video which has already been used extensively for National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) training. This featured interviews with four members of the team and was

supported by documentation which we prepared about our aims, ethos, staffing structure and public relations.

Following the success of that first video, video crews have visited the Campus on two further occasions during the autumn term to film our move into the Campus and early impressions of staff and pupils. Several interviews with team members formed a substantial part of this footage, which focused on leadership issues.

NCSL also proposed for us an e-mentor, Michael Fielding of Sussex University, who has supported us in a variety of ways. Currently we are setting up a person-centred schools network project with him.

# Research links

## Thurrock Research Group

During the summer term of 2001, the Thurrock Research Group added a dimension to our action learning set.

The group was founded about two years ago by Thurrock's former director of education. It consisted of education officers, headteachers and teachers, all of whom are carrying out their own research in pursuance of higher degrees. The group had the benefit of support from several staff of Anglia Polytechnic University, as well as staff of Canterbury Christ Church University College.

We were fortunate to be able to use the expertise of this group, as a support and sounding board, especially as they are so experienced in action research methodology and we were able to meet locally on a regular basis. In addition, following our contribution to *The Enquirer* (the Cantarnet Journal, Canterbury Action Research Network), we accessed a broader range of expertise, through email correspondence with school leaders as far afield as Singapore.

This experience proved a significant motivator in evidencing for us the applicability of our research and the international as well as local interest in it.

We have also been able to maintain our contact with the former director of education, now an independent consultant, who is using our case study for his own research on the leadership of learning communities, coincidentally providing us with the benefit of an external viewpoint.

## Toshiba

From the many available options in terms of ICT sponsorship, our decision to partner with Toshiba was largely based on Toshiba's interest in, and commitment to, educational research. At an early stage in the project, through links with MirandaNet, we came into contact with Richard Lomer, the UK director of Toshiba. He has supported our research through several personal visits, and his own enthusiasm for the work we are doing resulted in a visit of senior international Toshiba staff to the Campus in November 2001. Following the success of that visit, a member of our team was also invited to Tenerife, to address a conference of Spanish headteachers.

One of our membership team became a Toshiba international fellow and subsequently passed on that opportunity to another member of staff. Toshiba has offered a consultant to mentor the assistant heads. Research fellowships with Leeds Metropolitan University are available to a further two staff. These opportunities enable us to develop the notion of teachers as researchers, spreading the good practice from the leadership team to others.

Through Toshiba as well as through the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), we have had many visits from local authorities and private-public partnerships who are embarking on new school or refurbishment projects. They have all been keen to learn from our management of the project and our management structure, rather than building-specific issues. This has provided us with many opportunities to test our ideas, forge partnerships and build a potential audience which will ultimately make the task of project dissemination much easier. Already we have received many requests to speak at conferences and have hosted conferences at the Campus. Our first visitors' day proved very successful and further events are planned on a half-termly basis.

## RSA

Specifically relating to our introduction of innovative curriculum approaches and one-to-one tutoring, the RSA has been actively involved in our research, through Valerie Bayliss, the author of the RSA report, *Opening Minds* and Lesley James, their director of education.

Lesley has visited us on two occasions and four members of the team have been involved in curriculum development meetings at the RSA and at a community school in Marlborough. In November 2002, some of our pupils as well as members of staff will be making a presentation at a national conference to be held at the RSA. Barrie Wyse, an RSA consultant, has visited us regularly to assess the impact of our work on pupils.

## External evaluation

We commissioned an independent consultant, Diane Drury, to carry out an analysis of the impact of our work on pupils. By the end of October 2001 she had already done three days' work, interviewing pupils and staff, preparing a report and presenting her findings.

The initial results were extremely encouraging, indicating a great deal had been achieved in our first six weeks.

At the end of the autumn term an extensive questionnaire was conducted with the whole of Year 7.

## Setbacks and difficulties

The team has been operating under enormous pressure from a number of points of view and this has made our situation both a fruitful opportunity for investigation as well as a very tense one.

As with any new team coming together, it was inevitable that there would be the tensions of different personalities, expectations and ways of working. Our team consists of five women and a whole thesis could no doubt be written on gender differences in management styles. Our team is not only rare in being all female but unique in being cross-phase. The team members therefore came from a much broader range of prior experiences than would be the case in most teams. We also came into a situation with a huge amount of unknowns and very few givens.

To compound these difficulties, the team came together in phases: first the two heads, then the assistants, then the business manager. Had we had some control over this process, or indeed could start over, we would see great benefits from starting together. The pace and pressure of our situation left little time for induction or recap, which caused frustration on all sides.

The team came into being in a context of limited support and even hostility in some quarters. This undoubtedly added a degree of insecurity to our situation. During several months, the senior personnel at Thurrock Council changed so dramatically that by the end of the project very few of the people we had started working with were still around. In the broader local context, some 'friends' were found, particularly in the research group and among council advisers and junior officers, but there was also opposition from those who felt that investment was needed in existing schools, rather than new build. Any team working on a major project has to take into account its political context.

The journals of team members evidence considerable stress owing to the constant flux of the situation and the huge burden of responsibility in managing this £11m project. Moreover, in the absence of LEA management in an interregnum of directors of education, we were not empowered to resolve many issues, particularly financial ones, and when the project slipped dramatically behind its deadlines, there was no intervention to get it back on track.

August 2001 onwards was a nightmare for us, as in the end we had four days to move into the building and induct our staff before term started. Moreover, we had to do all of this with builders working around us and amid the uncertainty of whether we would be able to open, on health and safety grounds. Very little was as planned or expected, owing to major communication failures which had little to do with the team but put us under huge pressure.

It is worth recording that as a team of five we were tasked to open two schools, a public library and community education provision with an expectation of setting new, high standards in a context of low educational achievement. We were also determined to create a school of the future and so were setting up ICT and other systems which in

many cases had not been trialled anywhere before. It is small wonder we were overworked, missed holidays and experienced numerous problems and difficulties.

Even at the end of the autumn term, we were still living in a quarter of the building, without the benefits of a hall, staff room, school office, dining or specialist teaching facilities. We had an incomplete network, no access to the internet or email. We were operating in the midst of a building site, with all the frustrations of interruptions, malfunctions, daily changes to routine and dirt which anyone who has been in a similar situation will empathise with.

Ironically, even our 'raison d'etre' of existing as one learning community and one management team was undermined by the separation of our schools into two, as the central area designed to unite us was the very area which was unavailable. This forced us to function as two separate units, however hard we struggled to be one team.

A further pressure arose, ironically, from our success, when secondary school numbers went 10 per cent over limit following appeals and primary school numbers went over estimate following out of catchment transfers. This put our curriculum and staffing planning under great strain, resulting in the two assistant teachers having to spend most of their time teaching. This, in turn, put pressure on the leadership team, with a dramatic cut in the time available for managing.

This led to a major review of ourselves as a team, which is still underway and is likely to result in a new structure. Given the huge project we have undertaken, two terms is a very short timescale for research. All we can do is report on the point we have reached at December 2001 and hope there will be future opportunities to provide updates for interested readers.

## Disadvantages of a cross-phase team

- Communication dangers – different interpretations and misunderstandings. At a simplistic level, we found that primary and secondary staff use a different language: reception, foundation, key skills, parents' evening are examples of standard terms which had a wealth of different interpretations.

- Lack of shared understanding, eg behaviour policy expectations in different age groups and with different contexts (class based, as in primary, or peripatetic, as in most secondaries).

- Different priorities, pressures and practical requirements, eg communication with parents is much more face-to-face in primary and paper-based in secondary.

- Length of time needed for discussion and debate, in order to reach a shared understanding.

- Shortage of quality time with the whole team – because of the different demands within and beyond the school day, it was rare that everyone could meet together.

- Experienced members can feel overburdened – there is a huge amount of explanation involved, when a colleague has never worked in your phase and situations you take for granted are unknown to them.

- Less experienced members can feel unsupported, inadequately trained or prepared – walking into a Year 1 class from a Year 7 class, and vice versa, can be extremely challenging.

- Equality in principle is hard to achieve in practice, given inequalities of pay and traditional expectations of heads, deputies and assistants – primary heads are generally much less well paid, owing to the smaller size of the school. However, they take the full range of duties and functions.

- Serious question mark over whether any team can function effectively with two leaders – the rarity of such situations probably says much about the drawbacks.

- Lack of clarity for staff in knowing who to go to, sometimes getting varying responses from members of the team – this can happen in any team, but it is particularly difficult for all members of a cross-phase team to keep up to date on all issues and decisions across both schools.

- Conventional difference of pay – staffing structure, preparation time, daily routines, ethos and expectations between primary and secondary staff which are impossible for a single institution to resolve on its own. In many ways, these are different worlds and even generosity of staffing and funding cannot solve the problem of staff preparation time for a reception class teacher whose children are very unsettled in her absence.

## Advantages of a cross-phase team

- Lots of strengths to draw on and play to, eg display work is a traditional strength of primary teachers which secondary staff can learn from; secondary specialist knowledge in areas such as music and PE may benefit primary colleagues.

- Everyone can develop their own specialism and expertise – a larger staff obviously provides more opportunities, eg the development of innovative ICT, such that both primary and secondary colleagues have attended international events.

- Team members can call on a range of others for support, eg we held a book week, where the range of events was more impressive than could be achieved by a single school; reception children visited a zoo accompanied by the Year 7 Art Club, who assisted them in producing art work on their return.

- Different approaches can be tried – such as different formats for parents' evenings or borrowing teaching materials from one school to the other.

- Lots of divergent thinking and new approaches to problem-solving – our working together inspired the development of an integrated Year 7 curriculum, based on good practice in Key Stage 2.

- Creativity in decision-making – from either perspective or fusion into compromise.

- Broad appeal to involve the community – from parents and toddlers to adult education.

- Many opportunities for personal and professional development – each of us has taken on new roles and learned far more than we believe we would have done in a conventional situation.

- The team can develop and change structure as needed, eg a matrix structure which is totally flexible.

- Research becomes a way of life for all staff and pupils, learning being central to all – the team making its own commitment to personal learning set an excellent role model for other staff and pupils.

- Adaptability to futures thinking – we have learned to challenge all conventions and this has meant trialling many new ideas.

- Experimentation and change are accepted as a natural part of learning and development, not viewed as personal failure – the more risks one takes, the more likely it is that mistakes will be made, but we have accepted that a learning organisation needs to take risks in order to learn.

## Cross-phase schools: The future

Chafford Hundred Campus has pioneered cross-phase team management in Thurrock and on the basis of this experiment the director of education, Steve Beynon, has already proposed a similar solution for the structure of another joint school at Tilbury. Likewise a number of LEAs and private finance initiative (PFI) schemes are currently planning cross-phase schools and many have visited the Campus to learn from our experiences.

Our essential message, however, is one of caution, as many of the difficulties we have experienced arise from the fact that the structures and legal frameworks do not exist to support the type of management structure we have. Indeed at the time of writing (February 2002) we are being forced to consider alternative structures in order to move forward. The new cross-phase campus at Tilbury, for instance, will be one institution under one principal, with three directors of learning spanning ages 5–8, 9–12 and 13–16. The Chafford Hundred Campus structure, with two headteachers, met a number of difficulties which proved impossible to resolve and ultimately undermined our intentions of creating primary-secondary fusion.

### Twin headship

There is no legal framework to support two headteachers of separate institutions working as co-heads. As far as we know, job-share headship has been tried in other single-school situations, but not in the context of two schools. In all our innovation, the Campus has been hampered by the fact that, legally, the Campus consists of two separate schools and the heads, while trying to plan and manage jointly, have been forced apart by different legal frameworks and expectations.

### Governors

As two separate schools, the Campus was obliged to have two separate governing bodies. In the autumn term of 2001, the schools separately underwent the processes of parent governor elections. We then met as one body and used the co-option process to create more cohesion by co-opting primary parents to secondary and secondary parents to primary. We also co-opted the headteachers to each other's governing body, although the legality of this remains questionable given our cross-phase employment. This is one of a number of grey areas which has created anxiety. Another is the roles of staff governors, as we had one primary staff governor and one secondary staff governor, both serving on both bodies.

We proposed a structure with joint sub-committees, so that in practice the two bodies acted as one. However, the main governing body meetings large gatherings, meetings have tended to be lengthy, and the setting of agendas is complex. The minuting has to be done as if this were two separate bodies, although in practice it is one meeting. This can lead to a lack of clarity and there are a number of 'fudged' issues which we are aware could be subject to legal challenge if there were to be an unresolved dispute.

## Staffing

Staff have been appointed to the Campus and by the Campus governing body. This has been essential in order to allow cross-phase working and encourage staff to feel that they are part of one institution but, again, legally this is open to challenge and does not leave the heads feeling confident in our legal position. It has also meant that whereas staff feel a commitment to their major role, cross-phase deployment can be seen as voluntary or optional. At busy times, a possible solution for staff is to revert to their main role and it is impossible in practice for managers to enforce responsibilities in the other school.

A further complication has arisen in the deployment of support staff, particularly technicians and administrative staff. Functioning as one school seems logical and certainly advantageous in terms of flexibility, back-up and staff development. It was also a means of added efficiency and intended to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy such as re-charging or formulae allocations.

However, there has inevitably been a lack of clarity of roles and tensions when workload pressures threaten to pull staff in two directions. Prioritising is difficult when the demands are from two separate organisations, and two headteachers. Some staff have been honest about feeling under pressure to meet the demands of two 'bosses'. Sharing an ICT network, for example, seems obvious, but simple issues of cost are potential sources of major conflict, if the primary school cannot afford an upgrading which is essential for the secondary or if priorities clash at certain times of the year.

## Budget

One of the greatest potential areas for innovation and flexibility, in our view when embarking on this project, has proved in practice the most fraught and problematic. In order to manage efficiently, we felt it was essential to manage the budget as a single Campus budget. As staffing and building costs are shared, the bureaucracy of separating out the two budgets for separate reporting procedures seems unnecessary and time-wasting. However, the bureaucracy represents more than an inconvenience; it is an immovable legal framework.

So, although one of our aims was to redress the inequality of primary-secondary funding, we are not legally permitted to subsidise the primary budget from the secondary. Our primary staffing, if viewed separately, is too costly for a one-form entry primary school, which is arguably an uneconomic standalone unit in any case. A major aspect of our provision has been to service the primary school with the same standard of ICT, resources and administrative support as the secondary school. Whereas flexible budgeting makes this possible, conventional separate budgets do not.

Apart from the legal aspects, there are several logistical problems which have created additional difficulties, such as the incompatibility of software systems and LEA/DfES requirements with the notion of creative budgeting. At the end of the financial year 2001–02, for reporting purposes and budget planning 2002–03, these pressures are leading us to separate out the two school budgets, practicalities driving us contrary to our ethos.

## Administration

The way LEAs and the DfES are structured, separate primary and secondary administration is not only bureaucratic but has underlying different cultural expectations. Using existing structures, meetings and reporting mechanisms is difficult when all the surroundings systems are structured contrary to your ethos and are therefore undermining. A simple example would be advisory staff working in separate departments; another would be statutory in-service days which are secondary, nor primary, or vice versa.

Using existing administrative software is also problematic, when LEA and DfES require reports which in a cross-phase school cannot be produced without separating systems and creating a huge additional workload. Existing systems such as SIMS are also inflexible when it comes to schools with separate DfES numbers trying to work as one.

## The DfES Innovation Unit

The Campus has been consulted on the setting up of this new unit and we are hopeful that it can resolve some of the above issues, as well as others which at present threaten to obstruct or hinder innovative schools. Through the work of this unit, we hope in the future it will be easier for schools to experiment with new structures and be creative. This would require the relaxation of particular legislation in certain circumstances, eg allowing staff governors to serve on the governing bodies of federated schools, or permitting funding from one school to be reallocated to another.

## Chafford Hundred Campus: Innovation now

The Department of Trade and Industry's Foresight 2000 report described the need for "re-engineering the learning process to focus on individual learners' wants and needs".

At the Campus, we are trying to realise this ambition through the following areas.

**Focus on the learner**

- one-to-one personal tutoring
- individual learning plans
- learning to learn, learning styles work
- learners managing personal data
- flexible setting and grouping
- modular timetable, with lots of variety, fresh starts, special events
- a structured curriculum, competence-based half-term units
- coherence through the RSA 21st Century Curriculum

**New roles for staff**

- personal tutors given time (no separate pastoral system)
- teachers moving from subject specialism to cross-curricular teams
- culture of teachers and pupils as learners and researchers
- high ratio of adults (rather than just teachers) to learners
- specialised roles for support staff
- centralised library and resources, professionally managed
- responsible role for teaching assistants
- swipe technology, email, plasma screens reducing workload

**Centrality of ICT**

- intranet as personal managed learning environment
- wireless laptops serving learners' needs
- swipe operated recharging lockers
- swipe managed print and resources control
- R&D relationship with Toshiba (wireless laptops), EasyTrace (swipe cards), Monsoon Malabar Limited (intranet for personal learning management)
- preparation for the future: handhelds, m-learning, portable technology

**Learning beyond the classroom**

- family as support for the learner
- nursery, primary and secondary fusion
- hotdesks for community liaison agencies – venue for health visitors
- family learning and adult education – all ages, all year round
- the Campus as a community resource and business centre
- learning mall, cybercafe – the place to be
- public library and information services
- focal point for a new town community
- m-learning BUZZ – our ambition to have a ICT-equipped bus for field trips, vocational and community activities
- working towards the paperless school

# Methodology

## Action research

The greatest strength of our proposal had always rested on the notion of simultaneous research on a team by a team. This is an action research proposal, with all that implies of the need for objectivity and academic discipline. Initially, it was essential that we received training in action research methodology and all members of our team have done this, either through NCSL, the Institute of Education, London University, Manchester Metropolitan University, Anglia Polytechnic University, Canterbury Christ Church University College and other academic links, team discussions and personal reading.

It was an early decision, supported by NCSL training, that all members of the team would keep a learning journal. Following key meetings, team members have made learning journal entries and these have then been analysed by one of the team, in conjunction with other evidence, such as video recordings of meetings.  Keeping our journals is good practice which has widened to other staff and pupils.  We have a wealth of journal evidence on which to draw. More importantly, the process of learning about learning is becoming embedded in the life of the Campus.

## Pentagulation

This has been one method by which we have achieved objectivity. Having five team members, pentagulation is a development of the tried and tested action research methodology of triangulation. In investigating the effectiveness of our meetings, for example, we have used video analysis, five journals and wherever possible external feedback on which to draw our conclusions, rather than any single piece of evidence. While the difficulty and complexity of this methodology should not be underestimated, it has given us confidence in the validity, reliability and replicability of our findings.

## Use of new technology

Central to our research has been the notion that, if our research is to be useful to a wide future audience, we should be experimenting with new technology which is increasingly becoming available to school leaders. This supports NCSL in projects such as Talking Heads based on the concept of networked learning communities and we have already trialled a hotseat debate (an online feature with a facility for questions, comments and feedback) (see www.ncsl.org.uk). It also enables us to maximise the benefits of an institution with the advantages of a wireless and broadband network, developing a learning intranet with access via laptops for all.

In terms of communication, this means more extensive use of email and web links. In terms of our research, it also means using dictaphones for audio recording, video cameras, digital cameras and editing suites for event evidence, PowerPoint and web formats for sharing information.

Throughout our research, we have used a wide range of methods and built up our evidence bank of video clips, digital camera shots and audio tapes. The format of this report is therefore unlike a conventional academic report but rather a web resource, linked to the Chafford Hundred Campus web site (see www.chaffordhundredcampus.thurrock.sch.uk) and other NCSL research (see www.ncsl.org.uk/research).

The irony was that we had to embark upon this research with no technical equipment or support whatsoever. Moreover, as the building project slipped dramatically behind its projected timescale, when we did eventually move into the building at the end of August 2001 we had no telephones, let alone a network. Even at the beginning of November, we had no internet or external email facility, the broadband was not yet installed and our wireless network was only operational in the wings of the building.

## Academic approaches

We have maintained from the outset our goal of producing a case study. The outcome is this web site feature.

However, that is not to say that our work lacks academic rigour. We have undertaken substantial reading and used our links with several academic institutions, as well as with NCSL, to provide the necessary background understanding to enable us to build on.

## The context and research proposal

In September 2000 Catherine Finn (Primary) and Alison Banks (Secondary) were appointed heads of two new schools which were under construction and being designed to work collaboratively, in one building. Ideas about a joint management team seemed a logical starting point and we put together a structure which would bring the two schools together, through our acting as joint heads and deputising for each other. We complemented these roles with two assistant headteachers who would be cross-phase, and a business manager. This team came together in Spring 2001 and when we first met we discussed the notion of an action research project to record and analyse our experiences of this unique situation.

The two heads had already gained some experience of action research through the Thurrock Research Group and had written an article about our experience of joint working.

So it was that our proposal submitted to NCSL in January 2001 was:

> A study of strategies for team leadership appropriate to a 21st century institution encompassing ages 3–16, families and other community members. We seek to forge a new type of cross-phase and inclusive leadership team appropriate to Bentley's[1] notion of a 'neighbourhood learning centre'.

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[1] Bentley, T., 1998. *Learning beyond the Classroom: Education for a changing world*. London and New York: Routledge.

Pupils in the Campus are encouraged to be independent thinkers capable of managing their own learning (using, for example at Key Stage 3, different learning styles, individual laptop computers, 1:1 mentoring and an integrated curriculum based on the competences model of the RSA Curriculum of the 21st Century and presented via a hypertext intranet). Staff in the Campus are similarly encouraged to progress independently in their learning, through a culture of practitioner research and supported peer review.

Previous research[2] had identified five key roles for leaders of the school of the future: head learner, strategist, designer, team builder and partner. As a team we would like to investigate ways of acquiring and honing these skills by supporting each other, as well as junior staff who might aspire to leadership roles in the future. Having identified and implemented strategies, we intend to document our development as a team, writing up our experiences as a case study.

Following the acceptance of this proposal, there was lengthy period of negotiation about the nature and methodology of the study between NCSL and the Chafford Hundred Campus team. This became complex because at that stage the team was incomplete and new members coming on board inevitably had their different perspectives. That variance was compounded by the newness of NCSL itself, which equally had personnel joining a new research programme with different ideas of how it might work and what the expected outcomes might be. A third element of complexity was our previous close relationship with the London Leadership Centre and the emerging new relationship between the London Leadership Centre and NCSL; we spent many weeks exploring how a tripartite relationship might work, eventually concluding that this was a collegial, supportive relationship rather than a contractual one.

One of the major issues on all sides centred around the replicability of our research given the unique cross-phase nature of our institution. There were opposing views and tensions here, both within our team and at NCSL, which had to be worked through. One view was that the cross-phase issue should become paramount, as a concern of great national significance in terms of primary-secondary transition and raising standards, particularly at Key Stage 3. The Campus was uniquely situated in relation to investigating this national problem, as well as pioneering an all-age Campus which a number of other LEAs and PFI schemes are currently investigating or implementing. However, our unique strength in terms of cross-phase research was also a perceived weakness, in that any outcomes of our research might not appear relevant or replicable to other leadership teams across the country who did not have the cross-phase scope we were privileged to have. A similar issue was the fact that we were setting up two new schools, a rare event, which might lead other school leaders to interpret our context as irrelevant to their own.

The Chafford Hundred Campus team recognised that, from the perspective of NCSL, replicability is a crucial aspect, as their investment in research must represent value for money in terms of what other school leaders can learn from it. In the end, this led to a balance of focus on cross-phase, new school and team-building, drawing out those

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[2] Banks, A.., forthcoming. *Leadership.com – leading the school of the future*. Leadership Centre/Unilever publication

issues and strategies which may be seen as relevant to leadership teams in a wide range of school contexts.

So it was that, after many weeks of analysis and discussions involving David Jackson, Martin Coles and others at NCSL as well as Pat Collarbone and Howard Kennedy at the London Leadership Centre, we in fact came full circle to our original proposal and began to consider in more detail the methodology.

The research began in the summer term of 2001 and continued into the autumn term, finishing in December 2001. Our commitment was to complete our report by Easter 2002. It was revised and updated over the summer, for publication in November 2002.

## The role of the critical friend

"In order to become learning communities, schools need to develop talk about learning, and young people need to become fluent in the language of learning. In such a community, tutoring for learning is integrated into the school, not an add-on. Tutoring for learning cannot fix a culture which does not encourage learning or learning conversations. In a learning community, all members are involved in such learning conversations." (Gray et al, 1999)

When Catherine Finn and Alison Banks were appointed as headteachers of the Chafford Hundred Campus in September 2000, we were awarded the rare privilege of a year working together to set up a unique and innovative learning centre which would open in September 2001. Immediately we were plunged into a vast array of urgent decisions about the building, budget, equipment and staffing. Meetings with governors and prospective pupils and their parents demanded urgent answers to pressing questions: on discipline, routines, expectations, standards and uniform. The issue of the blazer forged its subversive path to the top of our agenda. What happened to conversations about learning?

We quickly got a grip. We began to talk about learning.

It helped that we were both experienced heads. To an even greater extent, our complementarity proved an asset. Catherine's early career background was in nursing and early years; she is an art specialist and a lively, outgoing personality, drawn to the post by this opportunity to create family learning networks in a new community. As an English teacher and senior manager in comprehensive schools and a tertiary college, Alison's experience and research into innovative applications of ICT attracted her to the vision of a 21st century school. We therefore came to the discussion about learning with very different viewpoints, indeed from opposite ends of the educational spectrum. It soon became clear, however, that we shared an enthusiasm for lifelong learning and respect for each learner as an individual with talents, needs and entitlement to success.

As we talked, we learned from each other and our ideas about learning began to take shape. Our unique experience of having time to talk together, to reflect, to share and to plan brought sharply into focus the damning realisation that teachers, and especially headteachers, rarely enjoy this opportunity. In our experience, school routines often overlook the need for conversations about learning, fuelling the excuse that there is no

time for what should be one of our most important activities. We resolved to create the learning community Gray et al describe, for our own sake, as well as for our staff and pupils. Every member of our community would be a learner. Action research, based on learning about learning, would be a focus of the work of the Campus.

The context was encouraging. Thurrock Council has a research group and we were able to meet other teachers and officers working on their own research, feeding into and supporting each other. Having a blank sheet of paper to begin planning a school is liberating but also very daunting. We were glad of opportunities to discuss our work with others, but importantly we were reassured by working with each other, rather than in isolation.

In September and October 2000, Alison kept a learning log, as a means of focusing on what helps and hinders learning, identifying what learning is and becoming more aware of herself as a learner. Although initiated as an intellectual exercise, it grew into an emotional revelation, as she experienced the frustrations felt daily by many school pupils. In 20,000 words she documented her attendance at courses, meetings and lectures. The emotions evidenced were mostly in the negative range: boredom, annoyance, anger, disappointment, although there were happier experiences of pride, achievement and enjoyment too. Most telling were the déjà vu experiences evoked of some forty years before, as a school pupil; being caned, feeling rejected, humiliated, sick. The subjectivity of the learning log was powerful, but it needed an objective look at the lessons which could be learned if the 21$^{st}$ century school is to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.

Catherine took on this analytical role, drawing out the emerging threads of relevance. From the evidence of the log, she noted:

- the importance of the learner's motivation and understanding of the purpose of learning
- the need to match teaching to the learner's need, taking into account prior learning (especially at the point of school transfer) and having clear objectives
- the key role of feedback in learning
- the influence of an environment which is fit for purpose and appropriate resources
- the match, or lack of it, between expectations and outcomes
- the vital aspect of pre-lesson preparation, by teacher and pupil
- the value and drawbacks of independent learning, with success requiring structure, deadlines and feedback
- the maintenance of motivation through a 'feel good factor'
- the centrality of emotions and attitudes in learning, especially self-worth, self-image and pride
- the fact that the learning process is two-way

- the need for a variety of teaching styles, approaches and activities

- ICT, when used, must be fit for purpose and appropriate to the learning need

- the importance of questioning and listening, to extend learning not just reinforce it, on the part of pupils and teachers

- the need to sustain and develop the momentum of high expectations

This analysis helped both of us recognise that the key issue was the need for the learner to feel valued and recognised as an individual, which did not surprise us. Nonetheless, what did surprise both of us was our realisation that we learned in very different ways. What excited or motivated one of us could well bore or frustrate the other. Our schooling years ago had fundamentally failed because it had not treated us as individuals, nor recognised our very different needs. Even today, in-service training sessions or meetings often generate the same frustrations through this same failure. We turned our attention to the strategies we might adopt at Chafford Hundred Campus to provide our staff and pupils with a more positive experience of learning.

Conversations about learning seem to be the key. Pupils and staff at Chafford Hundred Campus will have regular one-to-one review sessions with a critical friend, to discuss their personal learning plans, learning journals, portfolios of evidence and performance data. The curriculum will be structured in an integrated format, to promote clear, shared purposes and aid dialogue. Each unit of work will focus on key competences within the framework of the RSA's Curriculum for the 21$^{st}$ Century, providing a common language for discussing and monitoring learning. Teaching methods will embrace the latest insights into the functioning of the brain and the development of emotional intelligence, providing varied activities and methods of assessment which recognise learners as individuals. Seamless transition from Year 6 to Year 7 will ensure pupils are treated as individuals and build on their prior learning. The Campus intranet, wireless network and laptop computers will serve the purpose of matching teaching resources to individuals' needs. Both pupils and staff will learn to learn, learn about learning and contribute to the growing body of action research and effective practice evidence about metacognition.

John West-Burnham has identified three modes of learning, which he describes as shallow, deep and profound, and has linked with the notions of dependent, independent and interdependent learning. It is our belief that conversations about learning will help our staff and pupils move beyond the first two levels of learning. Whereas even the best of teachers can inadvertently create a glass ceiling of dependence in their pupils, and even the most independent learners are limited by their own perceptions, through dialogue about learning with a critical friend, the learner can reach a profound level of awareness of self and others which cannot be achieved solely through academic study. Through learning about learning we truly learn.

At any rate, that is our thesis which will become the focus of our action research over the coming months and years. We have already had numerous opportunities to present our ideas to others who, acting as critical friends, have challenged our thinking, thus enabling us to explore our ideas more deeply. At the London Leadership Centre, for example, the deputy director, Howard Kennedy, leading an expert audience, recently conducted a searching interview with us for over two hours, captured on video. This will now not only be written up and analysed for our benefit, but video clips will be used to

stimulate conversations about learning with others, particularly those following the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (LPSH) and NPQH programmes. Feedback from all of this will add important insights for us, as will the longitudinal study which will be pursued through similar video interviews next year and beyond, charting the implementation and development of our ideas. What is interesting is the process by which these experiences are shaping our ideas, as well as documenting them. Through presentation, explanation and discussion of our ideas, we are developing them and progressing in our thinking. We hope to offer the same experience to our staff and pupils, and ultimately provide positive evidence in answer to MacBeath's question about the role of the critical friend:

> Will this help to develop independence, the capacity to learn and to apply learning more effectively over time? (MacBeath, 1998)

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## Appendix 1: Chafford Hundred Campus diary 2000–2001

When NCSL commissioned our research, it was said that we should do more than "tell a story" but it was also acknowledged that the story was a significant one. This diary tells the story of the year we spent setting up Chafford Hundred Campus, prior to its opening. We hope it gives readers a feel for the context of our research. The first point to stress is the unusual nature of the Campus: it is a community learning centre which brings together a nursery, a primary and a secondary school, a public library, adult education and community facilities, all in a purpose-designed building which opened in September 2001.

Catherine Finn was appointed primary headteacher from a background of nursing, primary teaching, youth work and infant school headship. Alison Banks came to the post of secondary headteacher from secondary teaching and headships in comprehensive and community schools.

We first met at an architects' presentation to Thurrock Council, following our appointments but before we came into post. Our initial curiosity quickly led to a realisation that we were very different personalities viewing the project from diverse perspectives. We recognised immediately that our relationship would be crucial to the success of the project. Looking back a year later, we feel certain the project would have taken a very different shape had we not forged our unique partnership based on breadth of experience and complementarity of skills.

The more involved we became in this design and build project, the more we appreciated the skill of the architects Nicholas Hare in using light, energy efficiency and interrelating spaces around a central atrium to realise a 21$^{st}$ century building.

We were inspired by the fact that the Campus was not like a school but then we also quickly got into intense discussion about the practical details of managing a school – the size of the nursery, the location of primary coathooks and design of secondary lockers – and many, many more practical considerations over the months to come. Fortunately our involvement in this design and build project from September 2000 onwards gave us the opportunity to input, but also to develop our own ideas.

### So how did we begin?

**September 2000**

September was largely taken up with meeting the education management team at Thurrock Council, as well as all the staff in the education department and other departments of the council who had been involved in the project since its early design days. We also established our own routines, although we found working from a desk in the social services department (the education department being very overcrowded) somewhat bizarre. We also started with nothing, so by the end of the month having laptop computers and a part-time, shared PA seemed real luxury. We had also written action plans for the year – later to be torn up, rewritten and finally abandoned as the year went on. But little did we know!

**October**

Taking time out to visit other schools, whether our feeder primary schools or innovative schools in other parts of the country, such as Thomas Telford, gave us lots of ideas to share and discuss.

We were becoming confident in our ideas about innovation and community learning and in numerous discussions challenged each other's thinking on how the Campus should be structured. Successful integration of the two schools became, for us, the key to our financial planning and staffing structure.

An essential first step in this was to re-write our own job descriptions, which meant that Catherine became primary headteacher and secondary deputy and Alison became secondary headteacher and primary deputy. From this point on, we were one school and one staff – except legally and in the eyes of the DfES, of course (although governors are pressing for that to change and new legislation will permit us to become one school in the future). Certainly, for practical purposes, this fusion shaped our plans and decisions from here on.

**November**

By November, tendering had been completed for major items of Campus equipment, such as science laboratories and catering. Our curriculum plans were also in place, at least in concept and broad outline. Following several meetings with staff at the RSA, our preferred option for Key Stage 3 was the Curriculum of the 21$^{st}$ Century, where we saw the competence approach as being a consistent one from the age of three, right through lifelong learning.

Our first prospective parents' meeting took place and for us reality took shape with the arrival of real people that morning.

For the audience, we hope that the reality of a non-existent school community was conveyed through our enthusiasm, backed up by photographic and PowerPoint displays, laptops for hands-on access to our web site, sample uniforms and the presence of governors. The feedback suggested it was.

Another Saturday morning was an information session for prospective assistant headteachers. Being such a new concept, we felt we owed them more than could be conveyed through our advertisement and information pack. We believe the strategy worked and, looking back after their successful appointment, Karen Lees and Smita Bora feel that this opportunity to learn more about the Campus inspired their applications.

**December**

A *Times Educational Supplement* (TES) article about us boosted our morale at a time when we were deep in problem-solving relating to the management of youth, adult, library and community provision at the Campus and the equipping of specialist areas.

**January 2001**

Two days at the BETT exhibition and we are only scratching the surface of ICT equipment issues like the wireless network, hardware and software selection and choice of interactive whiteboards.

The selection of major equipment items for the technology areas was important, but so too was the detail of choosing classroom resources and teaching materials. Numerous visits from representatives and to resources centres helped narrow the vast choice.

**February**

We said our goodbyes to the social services department and moved into our caretaker's flat, opposite the building site that is to be our Campus. Three small rooms but at least we now had some storage space and a base for meetings.

We left Thurrock Council at a significant time. The director of education, Raphael Wilkins, whose brainchild the project had been, had left the authority abruptly at Christmas and a critical OFSTED report was imminent. Our Chair of Governors, Cllr Margaret Jones, stepped down both as cabinet member for lifelong learning and as our Chair. An interim director of education was appointed. She was very supportive of our situation but had many pressing issues to address, not least the OFSTED action plan. We realised at this point that the Campus project was very much down to us and were immensely relieved and grateful when Cllr Richard Price stepped in as the vital Thurrock link and took over as Chair.

**March**

Budget-setting time caused considerable anxiety, as it seemed formula funding would not be adequate and the capital budget had been considerably underestimated. Slowly we put together budget plans which satisfied governors that the funding would work. A headline in the local press about the Campus opening with no equipment caused a political stir but in the end probably focussed a few politicians' minds.

Most of March was taken up with interviewing and appointing nineteen teaching staff and our business manager. Once appointed, individual meetings began to involve staff in the design of their areas and the choice of equipment and resources.

The governors held a site visit and were delighted to see the inside of the building taking shape. Still very much a shell, but impressive in scale and design. Catherine, being art-trained, worked with the architects on colour schemes, choosing carpets and fitments. Our visit to the Education Show focussed on furniture and the tender process got underway.

**April**

The focus shifted from staff to pupils and their parents, at least for the secondary school. Alison was able to arrange interviews with all the pupils who had been offered a Year 7 place, to find out about them but also to reassure families and answer their questions. Catherine did not have this advantage, as the primary admissions process was lengthier and the catchment was problematic because the houses were not yet built. Primary pupil

number projections were at best an educated guess, which made budgeting and staffing somewhat risky.

After Easter our two assistant headteachers joined our staff and were plunged straight into the deep end, being interviewed for a video destined for NPQH training. Their emphasis was to be on curriculum planning and policy writing, although their roles were diverse and all of us found ourselves doing the typing, cleaning the flat and making tea for visitors.

**May**

Smita began to concentrate on our teaching and learning policy and the development of our ICT. Our network manager joined us, a joint appointment with EasyTrace, the company developing our swipe card system and our customised lockers. There were a huge number of decisions to make, as we began to implement wireless technology and laptops for all.

Meanwhile, Karen worked on our positive behaviour policy and put policy into practice from the beginning, as she visited our partner primary schools and attended review meetings for pupils with special needs.

Together as a team we attended a Key Stage 3 National Strategy launch conference, feeling by that time confident that the range of skills and experiences we brought had prepared us well to develop this initiative, as part of our developing curriculum from foundation through to Key Stage 4. Integrated in our learning to work as a team was our action research philosophy, which was put into practice immediately as we embarked on this research for NCSL, on ourselves as a team. For this, we subjected ourselves to video filming of our meetings, as well as all keeping journals, following this up with comparing perceptions. When our business manager, Carol Watson, joined the team, one of her first tasks was to analyse all this material and give us a considered and objective view of what was working and what was not, in our team work. Some hard lessons were learned.

**June**

With Carol now on board as well as our office manager, Julie Greenane, the considerable task of appointing all our support staff began.

Our view is that the support staff in a 21$^{st}$ century school have a key role to play and we therefore appointed more support than teaching staff. A block advertisement described the wide range of posts available, which must have had a wide appeal because we received an avalanche of applications. The calibre and experience of the applicants was thrilling.

By early June all the tendering and procurement of furniture and major equipment items was complete. Interviewing support staff occupied most of our time, but proved very rewarding. Carol and Julie worked hard at setting up all our systems – administrative, personnel and financial. We began to feel more organised and efficient, as the Campus systems and staff took shape.

**July**

With the site opening for evening and weekend family visits for our prospective pupils, the Campus began to feel like a real school. As they donned hard hats and listened to the safety briefing, the families, who included babies and grandparents, were strangely hushed. We awaited with bated breath their reactions to the interior of the building – rather anxiously, as they whispered and looked in awe. The silence was weird, as one of the builders remarked, as the groups toured the building. But when they emerged, the smiles told us what we needed to know – they were "well impressed".

Most of the staff had been able to join in these visits but their first opportunity to socialise and get to know each other was the staff conference the following weekend. As the staff were mostly still employed elsewhere, this was voluntary, but everyone came for the whole weekend.

The leadership team's early successes, in managing family visits and the staff conference, taught us a lot about the benefits of successful teamwork.

At the conference, sessions about the Campus ethos, the ICT and the curriculum were important. More so were the practicalities like issuing handbooks and laptops, the team-building activities and the opportunity to chat over dinner or take part in the quiz in the bar. The feedback was extremely positive; the conference had succeeded in breaking the ice and building everyone's confidence.

Having talked about curriculum needs with the staff, there was now a flurry of ordering books and equipment, left deliberately until late so as to involve everyone but now a daunting and very rushed task. Staggered, short breaks replaced the long holiday we felt we all needed.

**August**

A time for steady nerves, as we implemented contingency plans. The building would not be ready in its entirety, we had known for a few weeks, and so the process of detailed planning for the running of the schools in the wings of the building was now underway.

Most of our time seemed to be taken up with the planning of details, such as deliveries and health and safety. Timetables were rewritten, orders rescheduled and special arrangements made for teaching without specialist facilities. The staff conference arrangements for the beginning of September were finalised and daily routines redefined.

Voluntary working groups of staff met on issues such as the implementation of the behaviour policy and for social events. Everyone took a break at the end of August for the bank holiday weekend, as there was little else which could be done without a building.

On 28 August we were handed the keys and began to move into the wings

There followed four frantic days of deliveries of furniture and equipment, all of which had to be unpacked and sorted before the staff conference on Monday 3 September. With pupils starting on the 6 September, this had to be termed a 'challenge'.

Looking back some months later, the leadership team reflected on the many stresses and tensions this situation presented. In many ways it was an intensification, in a compressed timescale, of many of the crises and difficulties most teams face. We achieved our goal, of opening the Campus on time, but at considerable cost to individuals and the team itself.

We invite readers' responses and thoughts on this question via email to
abanks@chaffordhundredcampus.thurrock.sch.uk

## Other Research Associate reports

Patricia Brown  *The first 100 days: An enquiry into the first 100 days of headship in a failing school*

Moyra Evans  *Open windows: Becoming an e-learning school*

Trish Franey  *Working smarter together: The development of an enquiry team across twelve schools*

Alison Kelly  *Team talk: Sharing leadership in primary schools*

Steve Kenning  *The intelligent gaze: Leadership, lead learners and the concept of individual growth – a reflective enquiry*

Richard Parker  *Passion and intuition: The impact of life history on leadership*

Peter Smith  *Leading from the classroom: The impact of the assistant headteacher in primary schools*

These reports are available on the NCSL web site [www.ncsl.org.uk/researchassociates](www.ncsl.org.uk/researchassociates)