

# Leading the change

Implementing the new secondary curriculum

Resource



A joint initiative

**The National College would like to thank the following schools for their contribution to this project:**

Birches Head High School, Stoke-on-Trent

The Coventry Blue Coat Church of England School  
and Music College, Coventry

Brighouse High School, Calderdale

Haybridge High School, Worcester

Lawrence Sheriff School, Rugby

Leasowes Community College, Dudley

New Brompton College, Kent

Notre Dame High School, Norwich

South Dartmoor Community College, Devon

Stratford upon Avon High School, Stratford  
upon Avon

Swavesey Village College, Cambridge

Thorns Community College, Dudley

Tonbridge Grammar School, Kent

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# Introduction

Probably the hardest challenge facing any school leader is the leadership of change. Like it or not, school leaders have a huge impact upon their schools. As Hall & George have pointed out: 'No matter what the leader does (and does not do) the effects are detectable throughout the school' (1999:165)

School leaders are able to call on a range of models to help guide them through the complex and shifting landscape of change. Popular models include the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) workforce remodelling change model, the Bridge change model and of course the work of Michael Fullan. For this project we drew upon the work of Kotter (1996) who developed a well-established change model used by many school leaders.

In the light of this, redesigning the 11-19 curriculum has to begin with the leadership of the school. Before any curriculum plans are put in place or timetables are rewritten, there is a job to be done in leading a process of change. For some time, writers such as Michael Fullan have argued that this is actually the main job of all school leaders:

*The moral imperative of the principal involves leading deep cultural change that mobilizes the passion and commitment of teachers, parents and others to improve the learning of all students.*

*Fullan, 2003:41*

Whilst Fullan's vision is inspirational, a rather earlier writer on the subject reminds us that leading change is not an easy thing to do:

*And it ought to be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things. Because the innovator has for enemies all those who have done well under the old conditions, and lukewarm defenders in those who may do well under the new.*

*Machiavelli, 1515*

John Kotter (1996) argues that there are eight steps to successfully leading change:

## **Creating a climate for change**

- 1 Establishing a sense of urgency
- 2 Forming a powerful guiding coalition

## **Engaging and enabling the whole organisation**

- 3 Creating a vision
- 4 Communicating the vision
- 5 Empowering others to act on the vision
- 6 Planning and creating short-term wins

## **Implementing and sustaining change**

- 7 Institutionalising new approaches
- 8 Consolidating improvements and producing more change

However, it would be naïve to think that simply following each of these steps will ensure that change is successfully introduced. Edgar Schein (1997) reminds us that there are several reasons why change is resisted. As he comments: 'People don't resist change, they resist being changed' (p9)

Schein suggests the following reasons why change might be resisted:

- people believe it is **unnecessary** or will make a situation worse
- people fear it will mean **personal loss**
- people **had no** input into it
- people are **not confident** it will succeed
- people believe that **they will not be up for it**
- people like the **status quo**
- people believe that **prior initiatives** were badly implemented
- people **lack faith** in their leaders



In response to this, he suggests that those leading change should remember the following conditions that promote a climate within which change is supported:

- people expect it to result in **personal gain**
- people can **relate** to the vision behind it
- people **believe** it makes sense
- people can **input** into the change
- people **respect and believe** those who are championing it
- people believe it is the **right time**

Kotter (1996 pp3-16) draws this together with some detailed advice to school leaders about the reasons why change initiatives can be unsuccessful.

- 1 Allowing too much complacency. It is a natural mistake to think that problems can be assessed and dealt with later.
- 2 Failing to build a substantial coalition. Countervailing forces, when not properly dealt with, will undermine the initiative sooner or later (most likely between cost incurred and objective achieved).
- 3 Underestimating the need for a clear vision. Without a clear vision of the desired end result, a change effort can easily turn into a list of confusing, incompatible and time-consuming projects going nowhere.
- 4 Failing to clearly communicate the vision. Even if management has a clear vision of the end result and the way to get there, it will not happen unless that vision is shared by all of those involved in its realisation.
- 5 Permitting roadblocks against the vision. If organisational structures or old procedures remain intact, then this can be interpreted as poor commitment by subordinates.

- 6 A failure to achieve 'short-term wins'. Without continuous reinforcement of the belief that the effort will be successful, complex change efforts risk losing momentum. Employees may give up early, or worse, join the resistance.
- 7 Declaring victory too soon. It is ok to celebrate a battle that is won, but the war may not be over. Until changes sink down deeply into the culture and systems, it is too early to declare victory.
- 8 Not anchoring changes in corporate culture. Change sticks only when it becomes 'the way we do things around here'.

A number of schools have demonstrated how Kotter's advice on the leadership of change can be put into practice. Their experiences will hopefully prove useful to other schools as they continue the process of reshaping their 11-19 curriculum.

# Creating a climate for change

## Creating a sense of urgency

For any change programme to be successful, there must first be an acceptance of the existence of the problem to be addressed. Effective leaders are able to help others within the organisation to develop a shared view of the issues and from this grows the inevitable recognition of and commitment for the need to change. Reasons for change must be established and should be readily acceptable to those who will be directly or indirectly affected. Changes that can be demonstrated to be relevant to an organisation's environment (eg external policy shifts, differing cohorts needs) rather than generated purely internally will be viewed with a much greater attention.

For **Birches Head High School in Stoke-on-Trent**, a sense of urgency came from being placed in special measures. The newly appointed headteacher worked with her leadership team to create cultural change by recognising that:

- institutions are collaborations
- collaborations need shared values, principles, language and levers of change
- to act collaboratively we all need to act as leaders with a common moral purpose
- clear indicators and measures are required to celebrate success and focus energy

Key to the success of their change programme was the creation of a shared sense of moral purpose between staff, students and parents.

All those consulted agreed to sign up to values of respect, inspiration, honesty and challenge. Two key principles for change were also agreed:

- leadership at all levels
- participation through partnership

In this way a whole-school programme of change was developed, implemented and monitored. Without acceptance of the need for change and the urgency with which it had to be delivered, such a cultural shift would have been unlikely to succeed.

Pressure for change can also come from success. In fact, those organisations that achieve most highly do so as a result of recognising the risks associated with staying still and by creating a constant culture of change. **Lawrence Sheriff School in Rugby** developed a whole-school change programme as a result of an Ofsted inspection in 2005 that deemed the school to be 'very good with excellent features'. The leadership team immediately held an awayday with the theme 'From very good to excellent'. The sense of urgency in this case arose from the desire to move the school significantly forward by the next inspection.

The resulting change included:

- a two-year Key Stage 3 with complex personalised curriculum pathways at Key Stages 4 and 5
- mixed-age teaching groups
- vertical tutor groups
- a significantly different shape to the school day

Whatever an organisation's circumstances, skilful leadership of change can bring about far-reaching outcomes.

The drive for change need not come from external pressures or internal leadership, but from the staff themselves. At **The Coventry Blue Coat Church of England School and Music College in Coventry**, subject leaders and pastoral heads expressed to a new leadership team their growing dissatisfaction with the curriculum model of extensive acceleration for the most able students which resulted in staff being overloaded by the demands of examinations. The remaining students had limited access to a personalised curriculum and were not always reaching their full potential. These concerns provided the impetus behind the leadership team's comprehensive review of the curriculum from Key Stages 3 to 5.

In this case of bottom-up change, it was the staff who had to work at establishing the need for change with the school leadership. Having agreed on the problem, the sense of urgency came from the desire to improve the life-chances of existing and not just future students. The resulting review, curriculum development, consultation process and implementation took place within a single academic year.

These three very different case studies all have one common element underpinning their success and that is the establishment of a need for change. How this can be achieved will depend partly upon the circumstances leading to the need for change, but it is widely accepted that change will be unsuccessful when organisations become complacent. It is a natural mistake to think that problems can be assessed and dealt with later. If a problem has been widely diagnosed, a natural sense of urgency will develop and with it the acceptance of change in whatever form it takes.

## Forming a powerful guiding coalition

Dynamic, charismatic leaders can, by sheer strength of personality, push through organisational change but such methods rarely produce embedded, sustainable change. Instead, when that leader moves on to pastures new or shifts his or her attention elsewhere, the default settings soon return and momentum is lost. For any change programme to be really successful in the long term, it is essential to get real commitment from a group of key staff who will then act as change ambassadors. Where planned change is far-reaching, staff need to be more than just accountable, and the identification of appropriate champions who will shape the programme to make it more acceptable to others is vital.

Identifying those who will make up such coalitions is a skill in itself. Clearly they must have the respect of those within the wider organisation if they are to be successful in their role. It is important, however, to include some of those who are likely to prove resistant. Getting them onside early will facilitate the process greatly.

At **Lawrence Sheriff School in Rugby**, the school's deputy headteacher brought together coalition of subject leaders following earlier unrest at a proposed curriculum change. The group agreed that a two-year Key Stage 3 would be implemented and discussion then focused upon what use could be made of the additional time with Key Stage 4. Earlier attempts to begin Key Stage 4 teaching in May, after the completion of the Year 9 SATs, had met with staff hostility and as a result had been abandoned. This coalition of opinion-formers from within the staff succeeded where the school's senior leadership team, working on its own, had failed.

Setting up the coalition allowed staff to participate and gave them the opportunity to shape the proposed outcomes and develop their commitment to the change. They were then able to sell the concept to other staff within their departments, giving them the opportunity to shape things further. The resulting change was far more innovative and far-reaching than the original proposal and is unlikely to have even been conceived let alone implemented under the original methodology.

A similar approach was taken at **Tonbridge Grammar School in Kent**. The school started a curriculum review by looking at what needed immediate attention, what needed researching for a full review and what aspects of the curriculum needed to be retained. A task group was formed to do this and to develop a vision for the school. This coalition group then went on to seek the wider views and support of peers to allow participation and, in doing so generate commitment to the newly developed skills-based curriculum.

The new curriculum offered students the chance to take GCSE subjects in half the normal time with exceptionally able students being allowed to take an exam as soon as they were ready. All subjects now deliver Key Stage 3 in two years, including several weeks of enquiry-based learning followed by a three-year Key Stage 4 that combines GCSEs, AS levels and vocational programmes as well as a range of non-certificated in-house elective courses. The school believes that its three-year Key Stage 4 will allow the time to go beyond specific exam criteria and explore other areas.

Again, such profound curriculum changes and whole-school cultural shift would have been much harder to achieve without first gaining the support of a smaller, highly respected group of people who then went on to shape, develop and champion the change programme.

When the headteacher of **South Dartmoor Community College in Devon** wanted to increase the impact of student voice, he worked to establish a coalition to ease through a potentially contentious innovation. Following detailed discussion with key subject leaders, it was agreed that student teams would be set up to undertake departmental reviews (including lesson observations), student perception surveys and reviews of departmental teaching environments. Feedback was given directly to departments by the students involved, including a summary of findings and recommendations for improvements.

The concern expressed by many about student observation has been widely publicised and this case study, along with the others above, illustrates how prudent use of ambassadors who are fully committed to change enables delivery of even the most innovative and potentially contentious approaches to change.

When building commitment to change programmes, there is a risk that leaders subconsciously elect to surround themselves with like-minded people who provide a buffer against alternative views. Effective leaders recognise this and build coalitions with a constantly changing group of staff in order to maintain momentum.

# Engaging and enabling the whole organisation

## Creating a vision

Following a study of primary school culture, Staessens and Vandenberghe (1994) pointed out that vision is something that is co-created by everyone within the school community:

*Vision is created by the principal, but only to some extent... Teachers are also creators and communicators of a vision. In other words, a vision is not created by leaders, but is developed collectively through action and reflection (1994: 193)*

The challenge facing all school leaders is how to work with these different stakeholders to create a vision for which everyone can feel ownership. The following case study from **Notre Dame High School in Norwich** shows one successful strategy, which was to involve as many people as possible in the construction of the vision.

*The school has been developing a shared vision and engaging all stakeholder groups. All members of staff, governors, students and parents have been spoken to. Staff were asked to reflect on what their subject contributes to the curriculum and what they could do with no boundaries. Students were asked to reflect on where they wanted to be and what the school does well and what it could do better. The school's vision was developed as a shared document – owned by all – and expresses one vision of where the school is going, providing a roadmap of change. The vision was shared at a special meeting of the governing body and to staff in whole-school meetings.*

Below is a case study from **Swavesey Village College in Cambridge**, which describes the establishment by the school's leadership team of a vision for the future, based on a far-reaching programme of consultation involving 100 staff and visits to 37 different establishments.

*The school felt that that it was 'waking from a slumber' in 2003. While 70 per cent of students were high-performing there was a growing number of students with poor standards and about 20 per cent who were not engaged in their learning. The school's aim was to banish the culture of 'Well, what can you do with them?' The school's five value statements summarised the difference the school wanted to make:*

- 1 The College is committed to the pursuit of excellence.*
- 2 The College values people.*
- 3 The College delivers achievement for all.*
- 4 The College provides a high-quality learning environment.*
- 5 The College extends the boundaries of learning.*

*Following agreement to the five vision statements, benchmarking visits were carried out involving over 100 staff including three governors, administrative staff, teaching assistants, the site team and community staff. In total 37 establishments were visited including 27 secondary schools, 2 special schools, 3 primary schools, 1 university, 1 FE college, 1 pupil referral unit, 2 private schools and 1 prison.*

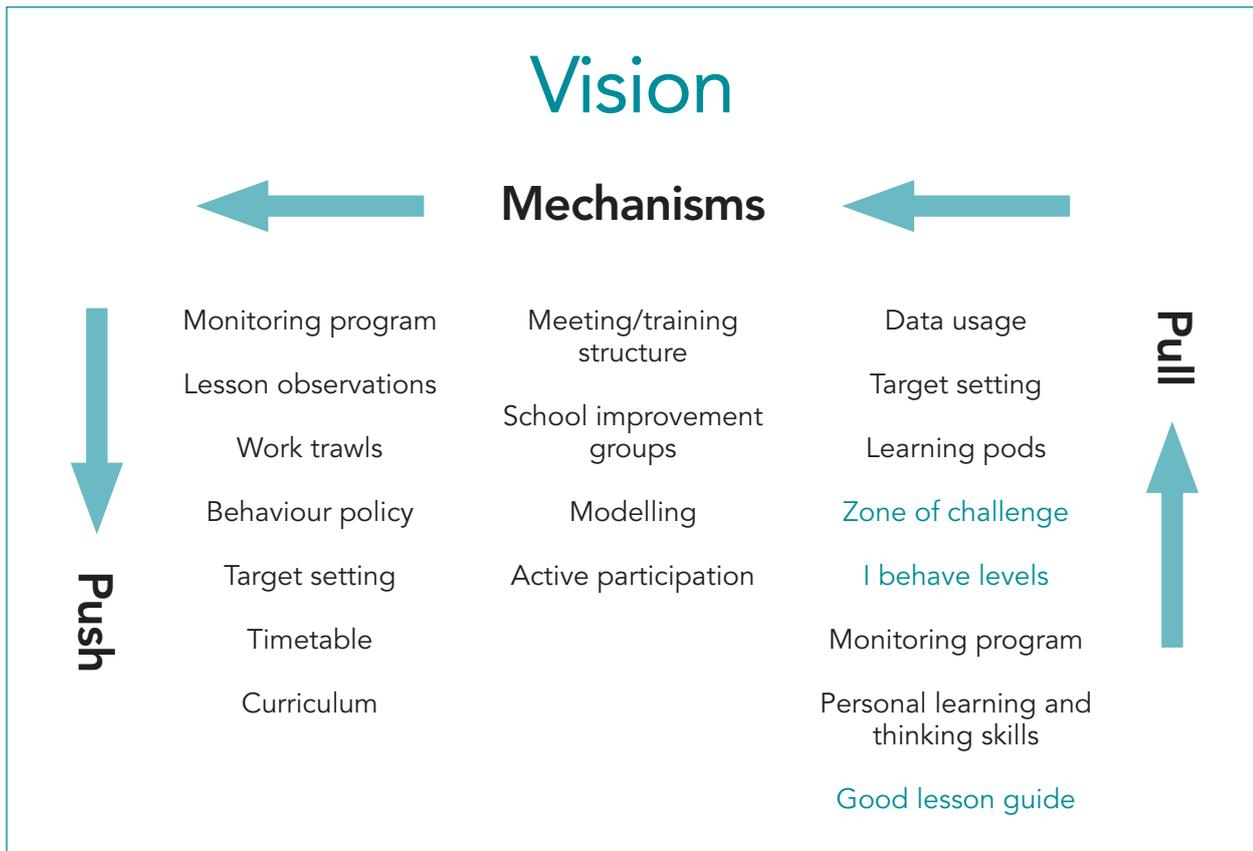
Perhaps the reason that so many curriculum initiatives fail to take root is that there is a rush to the operational stage before a vision has been constructed and clearly understood by everyone within the school community. If we wish curriculum change to take root, it needs to be accompanied by a compelling vision.



**Communicating the vision**

The leadership team at Stratford upon Avon High School in Stratford upon Avon used a push-pull technique (Figure 1) to capture the centrality of the school’s vision. The team felt that unless the vision was clearly understood and communicated to everyone within the school community, there was no prospect of serious curriculum change taking place.

**Figure 1: Vision statement used by Stratford upon Avon High School**



Whilst its strategy was underpinned by a variety of practical steps everything depended on establishing a clear vision that could be communicated to everyone within the school.

Haybridge High School in Worcester provides a further example of this point. Its leadership team communicated the vision behind extensive 11-19 curriculum reform through a series of clearly argued statements (Figures 2 and 3).

**Figure 2: Curriculum reform at Haybridge High School for KS4 and KS5**

## KS4 and KS5

### Reasons for change

- A broader, more personalised curriculum
- Avoid curriculum overload
- Ensure that **no** student misses core curriculum time
- Enable learners to take examinations when they are ready and not a fixed time
- Create opportunities for learning to take place in the community
- Improve the skills required to succeed at KS5

**Haybridge High School**

**Figure 3: Curriculum reform at Haybridge High School for KS3**

# KS3

## Reasons for change

- Opportunity to invigorate the KS3 curriculum
- Resist the urge to cram for KS3 tests
- Avoid repetition from improved standards at KS2
- 3 year KS4 – gives the necessary time to enable students to follow appropriate courses in the core
- Increasing concern over the quality of SATs marking

**Haybridge High School**

The experience of all those involved in implementing new curriculum structures is that it is far easier to proceed with change when the issues that are driving new ideas have been communicated in a clear and open manner to all of those affected by the change.

## Empowering others to act

Having ensured that a vision for the future is clearly understood by all concerned, there is clearly the opportunity to take some exciting steps towards an innovative and creative new curriculum. The case study below from **Leasowes Community College in Dudley** shows how a compelling vision for the future can act as a driver for immediate curriculum change.

*The changes introduced by the headteacher and senior team members at Leasowes were focused upon learning how to learn and enabling all students, regardless of their capability, to achieve good results and fulfil their potential. The school has been experimenting with flexible timetabling for 14 years with a five-hour learning block for all students on Fridays. The school wanted to further develop these learning blocks to promote a deep learning model and to encourage a dialogue of learning throughout the school. The school felt that the one-hour lesson was not necessarily the best time unit for encouraging students to complete work. They were concerned that this fragmented approach to learning would become the norm. The school also wanted to integrate assessment for learning more deeply within the school and felt that it was hard to achieve this with 25 students in a one-hour lesson. The school recognised that the time constraints of one hour meant that feedback could come too late to affect the final product and teachers rarely got the chance to intervene and make an impact on the quality of the work.*

*In addition to the five-hour blocks every Friday, the school has introduced longer blocks of learning three times a year. These longer blocks range between two and six days on a single subject. There is also a fast-track programme for all Year 10 students offering five-day learning blocks and early entry to GCSEs at the end of Year 10. This enables the school to open up the timetable in Year 11 and allow students to personalise and customise their curriculum.*

The case study from Leasowes Community College shows how a vision can quickly be transferred into a series of very practical steps. **New Brompton College in Kent** also used a powerful vision for change to lead curriculum reform, but wisely combined this with a willingness to pilot new ideas in order to evaluate their impact before they were rolled out to the whole school:

*The school introduced a pilot to assess its proposed curriculum change before rolling it out across a whole year group. A group of students was selected and grouped on ability decided on Cognitive Ability Test results. This group was then split into two equal groups of mixed ages. The first group followed the existing curriculum while the second group followed the new thinking skills curriculum. Baseline testing was carried out at the start and end of the pilot.*

*The new scheme of work covers Key Stage 3 for Years 7 and 8. Lessons are thematic with the starting point being the skill. A range of learning skills is catered for and students choose how they will demonstrate their skills. Students learn about a specific skill such as 'independent enquirer' through a theme such as the Renaissance. Specialist lessons are all linked to the current theme with specialist input brought in, such as guest speakers.*

*Initial issues arising were that parents and carers were wary of change and of the vertical banding. Students were initially bemused by the very different styles of learning on offer and the new curriculum was very dependent on the skills and confidence of staff.*

Haybridge High School put in place the curriculum model in Figure 4 in order to enable the teaching of a new KS3 course which encouraged a number of subject teams to work together.

**Figure 4: Curriculum model for Haybridge High School**

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Year 8	Unlocking learning	Unlocking learning			

- Unlocking learning encompasses ICT, history, geography, religious studies, personal development, art and music. It also includes part of the English and science curricula.
- It is taught by a specialist team of teachers who work together to assess the skills of students as well as deliver their own specialist subjects.
- In addition to an emphasis on skills, the school wanted students to see the links between subjects and to see the coherence and relevance to their overall curriculum.

This creative timetabling model established a format that made it possible for the creativity of the school’s original vision to find practical expression through the curriculum offered to students. However, the school is very clear in stating that these practical steps in timetabling only arose once the earlier steps outlined here had been followed.

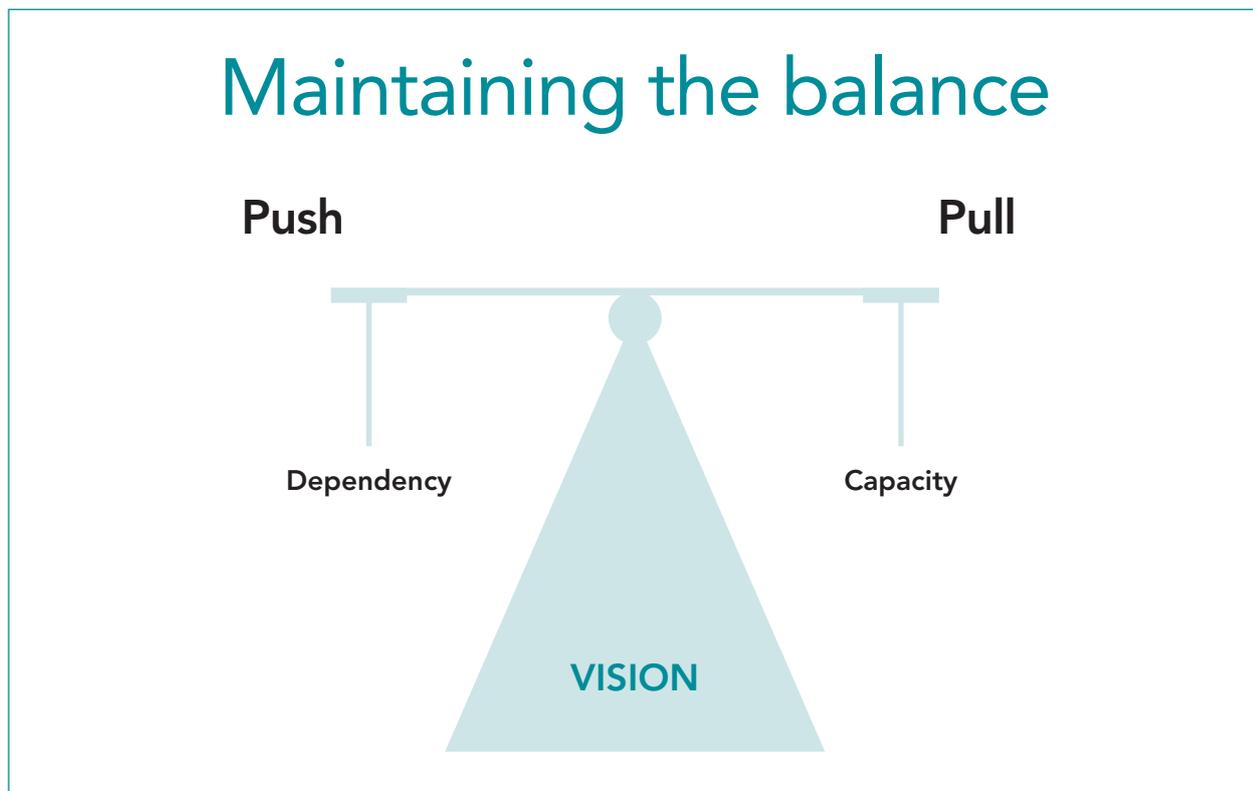


### Planning and creating short-term wins

Whilst a vision is essential, it can often take a long time before it is fully realised. Staff at **Leasowes Community College in Dudley** make it very clear that it has taken over 10 years to construct the curriculum model that they now successfully use. Human nature being what it is, leaders need to provide a series of short-term wins that demonstrate to everyone in the school the benefits of the new model that is being introduced. The leadership team at **Stratford upon Avon High**

**School in Stratford upon Avon** produced the model in Figure 5 to show that a long term vision for change has to be balanced and supported by a series of short term strategies. Each of these strategies are designed to move the school away from a dependency upon centrally led initiatives and towards a greater emphasis upon developing the leadership capacity of a range of staff within the school.

**Figure 5: Change model used by Stratford upon Avon High School**





The National College publication *Narrowing the gap* (2006) describes how schools in the process of curriculum change have used standard operating procedures, ie ideas that have been shown to work in one part of the school and so can be transferred to other curriculum areas. **Brighouse High School in Calderdale** offered one example of an innovative standard operating procedure in its production of a coursework guide:

*In phase 1 of the project, a working group from four departmental areas, encompassing a range of subjects, was established to develop a coursework guide for parents, pupils and staff. This outlined common approaches to be used across all departments in relation to issues such as deadlines and strategies for coursework completion. This exemplar booklet was presented to all curriculum leaders so that they could ensure it was used consistently within their departments.*

*National College, 2006:24*

**Stratford upon Avon High School in Stratford upon Avon** used a similar approach. Senior leaders worked with subject leaders and other members of staff to develop a good lesson guide (Figure 6) which would be used to underpin the new curriculum the school planned to deliver. The consistency of practice offered by this standard operating procedure enabled all staff in the school to approach the new curriculum model with much greater confidence and assurance.

**Figure 6: Good lesson guide produced by Stratford upon Avon High School**

	Must include	Could include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good classroom &amp; behaviour management in line with behaviour policy</li> <li>- Use of praise and reward</li> <li>- Pace and challenge</li> <li>- Minimum of 1 opportunity to use each of VAK learning styles at least once every 3 lessons</li> <li>- Homework set                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- relevant to learning objective at most relevant part of the lesson. Taken in at most relevant point</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Assessment for learning (AFL) to be used at appropriate points to check learning. Types can include, self, peer, spoken, written, Q&amp;A, observation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clear lesson objectives</li> <li>- Knowledge of pupil prior attainment &amp; preferred learning styles</li> <li>- Follow scheme of work</li> <li>- Thorough planning of activities, assessment opportunities &amp; homework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resources</li> <li>- Brief TA on lesson role</li> <li>- Literacy, numeracy, + ICTAC opportunities (Information communication technology across the curriculum)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quiet, orderly entrance to lesson with clear expectations – students greeted at the door</li> <li>- Starter activity for immediate engagement in learning, relevant to learning objectives</li> <li>- Learning objectives – shared, explained (including context) displayed throughout the lesson</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Differentiated learning outcomes</li> <li>- VAK opportunities</li> <li>- Register taken whilst students engaged</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learning activities/tasks relevant to learning objectives</li> <li>- Differentiation &amp; knowledge of prior attainment</li> <li>- Student active engagement in learning/guided learning</li> <li>- Variety of activity types within lesson and from lesson to lesson</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Modelling</li> <li>- Thinking skills</li> <li>- Variety of whole group, paired, small group + independent work</li> <li>- VAK opportunities</li> <li>- Mid-session plenary</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Summarise/solidify learning</li> <li>- Check progress against learning objectives (AFL)</li> <li>- Orderly dismissal from lesson</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- VAK opportunities</li> <li>- Next steps</li> <li>- Return to context of lesson</li> </ul>

The short-term wins described in this section are very powerful since they convince everyone within the organisation that change is working and that further change is both possible and desirable.

# Implementing and sustaining change

## Institutionalising new approaches

Schools are complex places with their own distinct culture. Deal & Kennedy (1982) define organisational culture as 'the way we do things around here'. The challenge for any leader of change is to ensure that 'the way we do things around here' accommodates the new structures that have been put in place. Hence there is always bound to be a period of adjustment during which the school adapts to the new curriculum that has been introduced.

Many schools have shown considerable imagination in pursuing this process of embedding new curriculum structures. An interesting example comes from **Thorns Community College in Dudley**, which introduced a new curriculum structure for its performing arts faculty. In order to embed the change, the school's head of performing arts used the standard operating procedure of an agreed bottom-line expectation for all lessons within the faculty. This was embedded in the school's culture through the use of student observation to quality-assure the new system:

## Standard operating procedures

*The performing arts faculty has adopted a model of teaching based upon the Teacher Effectiveness Enhancement Programme (TEEP). This has provided a set of standard operating procedures based on fundamental elements of strong teaching such as:*

- use of starter
- objectives integral to lesson
- big picture – the key learning points
- review of what has been learnt

*This model has been shared with the faculty, providing at best a model of excellent practice and at the very least, a bottom-line expectation.*

*In order to monitor the effectiveness of these new procedures, Thorns has developed a sophisticated system of student observation. An agreed model of observation has been developed with staff, using the following headings:*

- start of lesson
- try to make some observations about the way in which students are learning
- try to make some observations about the way in which the teacher is organising the learning
- the end of the lesson
- in what ways does the lesson differ from those you were taught in KS3?

*Three KS4 students have been trained as observers and have visited 10 lessons in all, some in performing arts and some in science or mathematics. At the same time as students carry out their observations, a teacher is in the room carrying out an observation of their own in order to provide a point of comparison against which student observations can be measured. Students are encouraged to record what they see rather than to make judgements.*

*Thorns has drawn up a list of student comments to date. These observations show clear evidence of the impact of standard operating procedures. Performing arts lessons are perceived as significantly improved by students, and significantly changed from the students' earlier experience of KS3 lessons. Student observations of maths and science point to a need for these subjects to adopt the model of teaching that is being followed by the performing arts faculty.*

Notre Dame High School in Norwich has used a phased, step-by-step model to establish new structures within the culture of the school:

*The school is now exploring how to consolidate improvements and produce more changes. It is looking to embed the KS3 changes and review these changes before continuing with its evolutions. The school sees change as a disciplined process, with constant questioning and evolving. The school is keen not to overload staff and to establish clear evaluation strategies. If staff see the benefits then this will ensure that the momentum is sustained. The school feels it is vital that all staff are enabled to come up with ideas, and contribute and own the curriculum. Students have also been central to driving the school's vision.*

South Dartmoor Community College in Devon has used staff Inset days to ensure that these changes take root. The leadership team established a system of staff-led learning hubs in place of training days, giving teachers at the school opportunities to pass on their own good practice in a series of agreed areas which reinforced curriculum changes that had already been introduced within the school:

#### **How learning hubs work:**

- staff attend five hubs a year (90 minutes twilight)
- choice from a dozen or more topics each time
- learning conversations rather than presentations
- groups small to allow discussion
- chair and leader, with formal evaluations
- registers of attendance
- guidelines on how best to run a learning hub, using time effectively to draw everyone in
- learning hubs are part of the performance management process within the school

#### **List of topics**

##### **ICT**

- ICT as a teaching resource in fostering student creativity
- Sound beams
- Manipulating digital video images

##### **Personalising learning**

- Coaching and mentoring
- Numeracy – how we do it
- Cross-curricular work with the arts
- Use of warm-ups and introductions to establish team ethos / focus
- Guided reading

##### **Continuing professional development (CPD) and research**

- International global
- The role of advanced skills teachers (ASTs) and CPD opportunities
- Trust developments and research

##### **Special educational needs (SEN)**

- Repeat workshops if required
- Behaviour management forum
- SEN forum (working group)

The examples above show that there is no one way to embed curriculum change within the institution. However, regardless of how it is done, it is clear that the process of allowing change to take root within 'the way we do things around here' is essential if change is to have a lasting impact.

## Consolidating improvements and producing more change

As stakeholders become committed to a vision, they also become willing to accept new patterns of working that demand changes in their behaviour. As staff discover that the new approach is more effective, they take on changes that they might have resisted previously. Thus, change in itself results in even more commitment to further change. Organisations can, therefore, develop a mutually beneficial 'virtual circle' of ongoing change.

It should also be recognised that there is a need to build stability into change. Individuals can only stand so much uncertainty. Overloading change can be dysfunctional, creating resistance to both existing and further change opportunities. To deal with this effectively, sources of stability and consolidation need to be built into the change strategy. These may include certain structures, people, or physical locations that act as an anchor. It is equally important to communicate what these anchors will be so that people may take comfort in their very stability.

In the light of this, it is vital that stability and consolidation are interwoven into any organisation's strategic planning for change. Recognition of the benefits of such an integrated approach enabled **Tonbridge Grammar School in Kent** to build on its existing curriculum change programme. After the school had reviewed and significantly modified the curriculum offer made to students, consolidation came through a curriculum task group composed of staff from across the school. The task group conducted rigorous research with all stakeholders to monitor the effects of the changes implemented. In this way, all stakeholders were able to draw breath and get used to the new ways of working. Through this process, the school allowed staff the freedom to learn with the organisation as a whole.

Having undertaken this highly reflective approach, the school's leadership team was able to drive the change agenda further. The school is now in the process of introducing a curriculum programme in personal and social development to accredit and nurture the school's existing enrichment work. Hence, the identification of what was already highly successful became the underpinning element of stability. That the school would have been able to undertake an ongoing and extensive programme of change without allowing for valuable consolidation time seems unlikely. Furthermore, signposting to staff which elements would not be affected by the proposed changes was just as, if not more, important as outlining what would.



A similar recognition allowed **Lawrence Sheriff School in Rugby** to make further developments to its assessment activities and the use of student voice, after previously having made extensive changes across many elements of the school. When embarking on the initial changes, staff were assured by the headteacher and deputy that there would follow a fixed period of stability and consolidation. As with Tonbridge Grammar School, an important cycle of monitoring and review was also undertaken during that time. This afforded time for the foundations of the next cycle of change to be laid. These changes included the development of assessment pathways in line with the recently introduced curriculum pathways. This meant that the timings of key assessments were driven by subject-specific need rather than through the calendar. The starting point for this review was existing good practice, which provided both stability and sample material upon which departments could build their plans.

Such has been the success of the ongoing cycle of change, consolidation and stability at Lawrence Sheriff School, change is now fully embedded within the culture and new staff join the school with the expectation of joining an organisation that is ever moving forward. Staff at **Birches Head High School in Stoke-on-Trent** now have a similar level of expectation. Following the widespread implementation of its bespoke competency curriculum for KS3, the school's leadership team's monitoring of progress has indicated the need for further developments. These were shaped by the answers to these questions:

- What does the learner look like in practice in relation to the skill?
- How can assessment become ongoing and learner led?
- How will staff judgements be quality-assured?
- How will evidence of skill achievement be captured?
- How will the creation of a sustainable ICT structure to meet demand in school and at home be developed?

By working together on these questions, staff were able to further embed their commitment to change. Time to reflect on success was also built into the process so that a clear view of what would remain stable could emerge. Thus, through sensitive leadership and careful planning, change became reflective, appropriate and innovative rather than a knee-jerk reaction. As a result, staff were able to see the benefits of the changes brought in and developed a broad acceptance that further change was central to the school's future.

From these three examples, it is clear that change begets change. Equally, for this to be the case, change for change's sake must be avoided. Time to reflect and review is vital, along with the recognition that not everything needs to change. Whatever an organisation's circumstances, there will always be elements that are highly successful and their retention will offer the foundation on which to build necessary change.

# Conclusion

This set of case studies has attempted to identify a methodology for change that has proved successful in a range of schools. It suggests a number of steps that can be taken. Clearly each of these steps will be more or less appropriate in differing contexts. Each situation faced by organisations, whilst still reflecting the general patterns outlined above, will be unique based on its own individuals, culture, environment and history. Thus each school will require different strategies to meet the challenges of its own specific context.

It is also important to note that change cannot be viewed simply as a set of analytical, rational exercises. Instead it is a complex mix of cultural and cognitive elements. Failure to take this into account can result in resistance instead of willingness. Where leaders artfully blend together a wide range of strategies, change implementation has to be both acceptable to those involved and fitted to 'the way we do things around here'.



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