



Kyra Teaching School Alliance

Summary of our strategic plan 2015 - 17

Introduction: celebrating success; moving forward with ambition

The Kyra Teaching School Alliance is now entering its fourth year as a partnership of schools. During the past year we have seen more schools join and contribute to the work of our alliance – bringing our total number of members to 33.

There is already much to celebrate....

Our capacity for school improvement continues to grow, not least through having recruited and trained a new cadre of Local Leaders of Education and Specialist Leaders of Education. These expert practitioners, based in Lincolnshire schools, are already using their skills and expertise to support improvement across the county. We have also established the Kyra 'Early Years' hub, which – through research and professional development - is having an immediate and positive impact on the work of practitioners serving children under five years old.

Our commitment to research has been further embedded this past year – both through our engagement and influence on the national 'closing the gap' project and through the growth of Professional Learning Communities of teachers and leaders across Lincolnshire. Our trainee teachers continue to receive the highest standard of support and preparation for the classroom, with each trainee being rated as good or outstanding upon graduation. Meanwhile, CPD and networking across the alliance is going from strength to strength, with colleagues from NQTs right through to Head teachers and Governors, receiving valued professional support.

So the basis for the next stage of Kyra's development is strong.

Headteachers and senior leaders across Kyra are now determined to build upon what has been achieved so far, and to create a professional community that ensures every school and pupil in our partnership succeeds – without exception. This requires a commitment to achieving:

- **intelligent and constructive accountability between our schools** – through sharing and welcoming scrutiny of data, a commitment to peer-review, and developing collective KPIs for our success. We are not yet achieving the level of professional openness and challenge between our schools that leads to transformation;
- **deeper partnership**, with schools willing to second key staff to areas of need within the alliance, to share our resources, and to work together to achieve economies of scale in key areas,
- **a more enterprising approach to ensuring our own sustainability** as a partnership in a challenging financial context;
- **maintaining and actively promoting an ambitious vision** for our children’s success.

In this paper, we have outlined a strategy and a range of performance indicators that we believe will make this ambition a reality in the coming two years.

Intelligent Accountability

“He has the right to criticise who has the heart to help” Abraham Lincoln

We believe very strongly in a school-led approach to school improvement, and that peer to peer accountability is key to achieving this. As leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, school business managers, administrators; whatever our role in Kyra’s schools, we must be willing to both receive and provide constructive challenge. To do so encourages better learning and enables us to grow and further improve as professionals – often exceeding the expectations we have of ourselves.

This past year has seen our schools develop their own peer review processes. Peer review enables schools to not only share and validate good practice but also to have an open and honest dialogue with trusted colleagues about areas for development. The peer review process is not a ‘mini Ofsted’ or ‘mocksted’; it is focused on identifying both strengths and weaknesses to inform the next steps for each school’s improvement. Schools across the alliance have experienced a greater ownership of and confidence in their school’s improvement plan.

The process has led to improved collaboration and honest, yet challenging, partnerships between schools. This is positive – however, we now want peer review to inform and mobilise the wider available support across the alliance. Only by doing this will peer review become a true enabler of school improvement across our schools. As a result, **all Kyra schools will publically pledge to share the outcomes of their peer review – most often, a school improvement plan - with the wider alliance.**



Good and outstanding schools across Kyra will take more responsibility for getting all schools across the alliance to at least 'good' in terms of both the peer review process and their individual Ofsted grades. **Any school judged as less than 'good' through their peer review process will become a priority school in terms of support from Kyra. We will hold ourselves to account for the progress and success of these 'priority schools'.**

Additionally, as members of Kyra, we are committed to holding ourselves to account as a partnership. Each year we produce our action plan to describe our successes from the previous year and our aims and aspirations for the next. As an alliance, we will publicly state, within this action plan, a number of 'Kyra commitments'. These will be measures against which we pledge to hold ourselves, and be held, to account.

Kyra Commitments: Accountability

- Every Kyra school will publicly pledge to share its data, at least annually – including areas of strength and weakness – with other Kyra schools.
- Kyra to publish its full set of 'Kyra Commitments' on its website by December 2015. These will be reported against in July 2017.

"I feel proud and grateful to be a part of the Kyra family. I think our vision is clear and I know that all schools and individuals involved strive to be ambitious for children."

Kyra school leader

School to School Support & School Improvement

"The greatest danger is not that our aim is too high – but that it is too low and we reach it."

Michelangelo (Italian artist)

The people who are best placed to lead school improvement are expert practitioners within the system. This has underpinned our focus on building capacity within our partnership – not least through the increase in LLEs and SLEs working across our schools.

In 2014/15, the Kyra teaching school alliance was selected as one of twenty teaching schools nationally to deliver the Local Leaders of Education (LLE) pilot – taking on responsibility for the designation, deployment and quality assurance of Local Leaders of Education. We now have 14 LLEs, 21 Primary and 6 secondary SLE's associated to Kyra.

In the next year, we will seek to identify those schools, or aspects of schools, which may be demonstrating that they are at risk of not delivering the best outcomes for their children. We will enable those schools to seek support from peers within the alliance, broker relationships where this is necessary, or signpost them to additional and more formal

support – through the use of LLEs and SLEs. We will be robust and challenging in holding these schools and school leaders to account for improvements in their schools.

We will also increasingly seek to engage our LLEs and SLEs in support commissioned by external organisations, such as the Local Authority and Multi-Academy Trusts. Where support is focused on ‘whole scale’ improvement of a school, LLEs will take overall responsibility for the deployment, drawing on the expertise of SLEs and other expert practitioners as appropriate. SLEs will also continue to undertake specific deployments – brokered by Kyra - that match their expertise and skills.

We will place more emphasis on marketing the support and expertise that our expert leaders and teachers can provide to others in the system. The work of these expert practitioners will be documented and captured as case studies to ensure that key knowledge and advice is shared within the alliance and beyond.

Kyra commitments

- Every Kyra school will be achieving above national average results on agreed key indicators (identified by February 2016 and reviewed in July 2016) by the end of 2016/17
- Kyra schools will all be achieving above average results for pupil premium children by end of 2016/17
- As a group our ‘at risk’ schools will achieve significant improvements against identified key criteria within each academic year;
- Kyra schools seeking support will be able to demonstrate tangible improvements in provision and data within a year of requesting such support;
- Schools joining Kyra with an Ofsted grade 3 or grade 4 will improve their grade within 3 years of becoming members of the alliance.
- 90% of those receiving support from Kyra’s LLEs will rate their impact on school improvement as being ‘very positive’ or ‘positive’;
- 90% of those receiving support from Kyra’s SLEs will rate their impact on school improvement as ‘very positive’ or ‘positive’.

“We have received support from Literacy, Numeracy and Safeguarding SLEs each of which has been extremely knowledgeable and skilled in working supportively to bring about change in our school. Their impact has been positive.”

Kyra school leader

Continuous Professional Development

*“Tell me, and I will forget,
Show me, and I may remember,
Involve me, and I will understand.”*

Confucius (Chinese philosopher)



The success of our schools depends on the quality of the teachers and leaders within them. It is the very best teachers and leaders themselves who are best placed to lead the training and development of their peers.

Over the past year, we have increased the role that our Specialist and Local Leaders of Education have had in delivering 'expert-led' training, which has enabled colleagues to benefit from high quality CPD. 93% of those respondents whose staff had engaged with Kyra's CPD provision rated its impact on their practice as being very positive or positive.

The onus will remain on Specialist Leaders to design and deliver CPD that is responsive to the needs of their peers across the alliance. This will in part be achieved through the growth of Professional Learning Communities across Kyra. All SLEs have been trained to deliver the PLC model, which enables staff across schools to work in groups to share practice, to discuss the implications of national and local research, and to test out new ideas and strategies with an emphasis on feedback and improvement. **We expect all SLEs to be engaged in leading or supporting the delivery of a PLC (or another Kyra CPD programme or course) by the end of 2015/16.**

Kyra will continue to deliver courses and programmes to build the skills of our staff. **Programmes, such as the NQT programme, the Improving Teacher Programme, the Outstanding Teacher Programme, and the NPQ Leadership programmes will continue to be delivered as part of Kyra's talent management 'pipeline' for teachers and leaders.** We will continue to monitor the impact of these programmes through individual programme data and our annual needs and impact survey.

We know that colleagues strongly value the opportunity to engage and 'network' with their peers, in order to share and develop good practice and consider key challenges as a group. The success of the SENco network, as well as the initial success of the Heads' and Governors' Forums, has encouraged us to extend this approach. **In 2015/16 a School Business Manager network will be established to ensure SBMs are receiving the necessary time and opportunity for peer to peer support – particularly as their roles grow in responsibility and influence.**

To further extend and deepen the culture of networking and support, **we want every professional in our schools to be a coach, mentor and/ or facilitator of professional networks.** Everyone, at all levels within Kyra schools, will be encouraged to develop coaching and mentoring skills in order to support at least one colleague.

Kyra commitments

- 90% of respondents to the Needs & Impact Survey will rate Kyra's CPD offer as 'excellent' or 'very good'.
- Staff from every Kyra school will have engaged in an aspect of CPD by the end of 2016/17



- **We expect all SLEs to be engaged in leading or supporting the delivery of a PLC, another Kyra CPD programme or course, or an aspect of school to school support by the end of 2015/16.**
- At least 80% of teachers and leaders within Kyra schools will receive ‘coaching’ training within two years.
- At least 80% of teachers and leaders will be a designated coach to a colleague in a Kyra school within two years
- At least 80% of teachers and leaders will receive coaching or mentoring support at some stage within an academic year (either 15/16 or 16/17)

“I really enjoy seeing and working with the wider schools network. It helps me to ensure that I have a broad understanding of the system and also helps me to define the good things we’re doing and analyse what more we could do to further improve.” Kyra school leader

Leadership Development

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.”

John Quincy
Adams (6th US
president)

Leadership development has been a core element of Kyra’s work over the past year, and will continue to be so as we aim to become a self-sustaining partnership over the next two years. We are acutely aware that the pace of change and a context of tight finances within the system demand strong and confident leadership if our schools are to succeed.

We will continue to provide opportunities for system leaders, headteachers and senior and middle leaders to engage with ongoing professional development opportunities. **We will continue with our system leadership training events, as well as enabling senior and middle leaders to access high quality leadership programmes such as NPQML, NPQSL, NPQH and Kyra Inspire.** We will also support our leaders at all levels to develop their own professional networking opportunities, so that best leadership practice can be developed and shared and colleagues benefit from the mutual-support these networks provide. The Heads’ and Governors’ Forums are now in their second year and 94% of respondents to our recent needs and impact survey rated these forums as very positive or positive. **This concept will now be extended and a School Business Manager Forum will be established as these leaders increasingly take on more responsibility.**

A key priority is the development of, and support for, new headteachers within our schools. The months following the appointment of a new and inexperienced head teacher are a critical time for a school and for individual head themselves. **Therefore LLEs will play an**



increasing role in mentoring new and inexperienced headteachers and we envisage this role continuing so that new school leaders have the support they need during their first few years of headship.

We will continue to publish our ‘Kyra Journal’, with a focus on the key strategic issues for schools and with an onus on sharing relevant best practice and research from within and beyond the alliance. We want to ensure that leaders are supported with access to high quality information and that great practice can spread efficiently across the alliance and can benefit the wider system.

Kyra leaders will also receive opportunities to engage with our new ‘Kyra Associates’. These internationally recognised experts will provide annual CPD opportunities for our school leaders and regularly share their advice with us on the key leadership and strategic issues of the moment. We are delighted that Sir Tim Brighouse and Maggie Farrar have accepted this role with Kyra. We will recruit at least one more associate, this time from the early years sector.

Kyra commitments

- At least 80% of Kyra heads, school business managers and a governing body representative will attend at least one Kyra network meeting within the next twelve months; 90% of those attending will rate their experience as having a ‘very positive’ or ‘positive’ impact on their practice.
- All new Kyra head teachers will be given access to the New Heads Induction Programme.
- At least 50% of Kyra schools will provide an ‘open morning’ for learning walks within the next two years, which will be open to head teachers, senior and middle leaders, as well as LLEs and SLEs.

“The Heads Forum has galvanised action or discussion when issues have been raised or ‘provoked’ through discussion with other KYRA heads.”

Kyra school leader

Recruitment and retention

“Teachers affect eternity, they can never tell where their influence stops.”

Henry Brook
Adams (US
historian)

Initial Teacher Training

During the past two years, 100% of our School Direct students have gained good or outstanding status upon graduation and each graduate gained employment for the



following academic year. We are delighted to have been able to develop and recruit such high quality new teaching staff. Indeed, all those leaders responding to our needs and impact survey whose schools had engaged with initial teacher training rated its quality as being very positive or positive.

Whilst we will continue to provide the School Direct Programme, we will also be preparing to change our approach for 2016/17. **In 2016/17 the Kyra School Direct Programme will cease, and Kyra will deliver the primary-arm of a new SCITT (School-Centred Initial Teacher Training), in partnership with the Lincolnshire Teaching School Alliance.** This development will allow Kyra and our schools to have much greater ownership of the design and content of the teacher training programme we deliver. **The new programme will be informed by our expert leaders, teachers and former trainee teachers – and will maintain all the benefits of School Direct in that it will predominantly be based on ‘on the job’ learning, blended with academic rigour and the support of both experts and peer networks.** This change will require significant preparation, however, we believe that investing in initial teacher training and ensuring it continues to meet our needs for the future is essential to the success of our schools.

Meanwhile, in 2015/16, we intend to achieve the same success in terms of teacher training as in previous years. We will also work to further increase the number of trainee teacher places we are able to offer in schools across our alliance.

Recruitment

It is clear that the education system currently faces a significant challenge in terms of recruitment. According to ASCL, there will be a steady decline in the population of 21 year olds from 2016 to 2022, meaning the overall pool of graduates is likely to fall. The economic upturn means there are more graduate level vacancies in the jobs market than there have been since 2008, making it harder to attract trainee teachers.

As schools, we fundamentally depend on great teachers in order to give children the very best start in life. We therefore see Kyra as having an important role in promoting teaching as a career choice for some of our best graduates. **We will create a marketing strategy for the primary-arm of the new SCITT that reflects the expectations of this new generation of graduates, promotes the numerous benefits of embarking upon a career within the Kyra alliance, and uses our serving teachers and leaders as advocates for applying to Kyra schools.**

We will also look to pool our resources and ideas to create an ‘alliance-wide’ strategy for recruitment. We will consult on the development of a ‘Kyra Jobs’ platform which will provide a shop window for jobs across the alliance, using our brand and reach to promote both the individual schools and roles as well as the benefits of working within Kyra. The Kyra Jobs model will also be a source both of advice and key recruitment marketing resources (informed by research and best practice).

Retention

The first years of teaching are often the most demanding. Research tells us that significant numbers of RQTs in England do not remain in teaching beyond three years. **Therefore, we will continue to invest in our highly valued NQT programme, developed last year, which includes mentoring from expert practitioners across the alliance and provides the NQTs with ongoing practical support and feedback.**

As an alliance of schools, we are also acutely aware that the experience that existing and long-serving teachers and leaders have within our schools will play a key role in whether those individuals choose to remain within the teaching profession. Even though we face challenging times in terms of resources and the expectations placed on us as a profession, we are determined that, through our actions and investment in our most precious resource – our staff – will remain motivated and excited by the professional opportunities available. **Investing in CPD, professional networks, coaching and mentoring and leadership development opportunities across Kyra is key to ensuring our great teachers and leaders remain in the profession.**

We will also ensure that every teacher and leader with Kyra schools will both receive and provide coaching training within the next two years.

Kyra commitments

- 100% of Kyra's trainee teachers will be 'good' or 'outstanding' upon completion of their training in 2015/16.
- 100% of Kyra's trainee teachers will begin employed teaching roles in 2016/17.
- Delivery of a successful marketing strategy that sees trainee teacher numbers increase during a period of transition;
- Kyra to set up its own 'teacher supply list' for all Kyra schools within the next twelve months.
- Kyra to consult on, and develop, a central approach to recruitment by the end of the spring term 2015/16.

"The NQT programme has been good for my new teacher."

Kyra school leader



Research

“Millions saw the apple fall, but Newton was the one who asked why.”

Bernard Baruch
(US
philanthropist)

As passionate advocates of a school-led system, we strongly believe school-led research to be an essential tool through which we can improve the standards of teaching and learning, not just across our alliance but also through sharing our findings with the wider system. We are delighted that some of our schools are currently engaged with the innovative NCTL closing the gap test and learn project, which is already having an impact on effective teaching and learning practice nationally.

Our work on the Early Years Hub project has helped to develop a regional hub of early years practice and continued professional development within Lincolnshire. This project has involved all elements of the early years sector and triads of early years practitioners have been engaged in research that has now been published by the National College. **This year we are significantly increasing the number of early Years triads working on research projects that respond to the needs of children in a range of settings.**

In 2015/16, our aim is to continue to embed research activity, including joint practice development, across key strands of our work, including the CPD and school to school support led by our SLEs and LLEs. Many of Kyra’s SLEs have now been trained to develop and lead Professional Learning Communities, which provide ongoing professional development for groups of practitioners at all levels. The PLCs are based on practitioners from across schools working together to analyse both national and local research, develop ideas and strategies for better pupil learning, and then testing the success of those strategies as a group. **Our ambition is for every SLE to be engaged with a PLC, and for the majority of SLEs to be leading a PLC, by the end of 2016.**

The Kyra Journal will continue to capture both national and local research of relevance to schools, so that practitioners across our alliance have access to the latest thinking and best practice.

Kyra commitments

- Every Kyra school to be engaged with at least one element of research before the end of the 2016/17 academic year.
- 80% of designated SLE’s to engage with the work of a Professional Learning Community by 2016/17.
- Kyra to arrange at least one ‘research and development day’ before the end of 2015/16, to enable colleagues to network, share their research experiences and, most importantly, to learn from the outcomes of the research.



- At least 65 (number tbc by Jane) of non-school based Early Years settings will be engaged with an element of Kyra or Kyra Early Years work by the end of 15/16.

“The Early Years Hub has provided the opportunity to undertake action research allowing evidence based decisions to support improvement.”

Kyra school leader

Relationship with stakeholders

“Communication to a relationship is like oxygen to life...without it, it dies”

Tony Gaskins
(motivational speaker)

Nationally

As an alliance of schools, we feel a strong responsibility, not just to the pupils in our own schools but also to those across the wider county and nationally. We want to further support research and policy development at a national level, building upon our work on ‘closing the gap’, the early years hubs and the LLE pilot so that our knowledge and experience benefits the wider system. A significant emphasis will be placed on supporting policy development in the early years and the development of school-led research regionally and nationally.

Locally

We believe that the success of our alliance and the success of the system in Lincolnshire depends on strong and productive relationships between all partners who serve children.

Our relationship with our local authority continues to strengthen. **We are keen to support the work of the local authority, wherever possible, through our support to schools in need and through providing areas of expertise where relevant.** Likewise, **we are also committed to developing excellent relationships with the growing number of multi-academy trusts and offices such as the Regional Schools Commissioners. We wish to work in dialogue and ensure our expertise is accessed to improve outcomes for all children in Lincolnshire** (and where possible, beyond). We want our partners to have confidence in the alliance as a source of capacity and expertise to support improvement. Over the coming year, we also aim to further develop our relationships with other teaching schools in the local area, for the benefit of pupils right across the region, but in doing so we commit to remaining true to Kyra’s vision and ethos for our own pupils and we will not compromise on this.

We appreciate that the geography of Lincolnshire poses particular challenges for many of the schools within our partnership. **In the next year we will look to distribute the delivery**



of aspects of our offer to Kyra Hubs – local schools with the capacity and skill sets to deliver the relevant provision. This will ensure that local schools can access provision more easily, including the most isolated schools. The development of local PLCs, through our SLEs, will also contribute to a more localised offer. Kyra will also continue to support the development of local clusters and contribute resources and materials to those clusters that are part of the Kyra alliance.

Communication is key to maintaining a sense of partnership, and we need to make sure that every child and adult within our schools is inspired to contribute to our vision. **We will continue to provide high quality journals, case studies, research reports, online resources and training and development events to schools across the alliance.** 97% of respondents to our recent needs and impact survey stated that they rated Kyra’s newsletters (now journal) and other communications as very positive or positive. The quality of Kyra’s school/setting case studies were also judged as very positive or positive by 89% of respondents.

Children

The Kyra Children’s Council continues to ensure that the children in our schools have a strong voice in how our schools work together, and indeed many of them have benefited from the economies of scale through joining together for cross-alliance sports events, including the Kyra Olympics we held last year. Both the Kids’ Council and the Kyra Ignite Games will continue in 2016/17. **It is our ambition for more schools to access both opportunities in 2016/17.**

The Kyra Kids’ Council will continue to contribute to school improvement (through the learning walks - and subsequent reports to head teachers - at the schools they visit) and through challenging the alliance with feedback on how schools can work together in the best interests of children. **The views of children will be captured through the 2016 needs and impact survey.**

Kyra commitments

- Kyra to implement a system of moving around specialist ‘hub’ activities, to remove the geographical barriers to access for more isolated schools across Lincolnshire.
- Kyra to maintain and enhance its relationship with the local authority and to work in partnership with them to help secure school improvement wherever possible.
- Kyra to develop its relationships with other teaching schools in the local area, for the benefit of pupils right across the region; whilst remaining true to Kyra’s vision and ethos.
- Kyra to engage and work in partnership with growing multi-academy trusts to ensure that all children across Lincolnshire have access to a high quality education.
- Kyra to contribute its expertise to at least two national education inquiries or policy development opportunities within the next two years
- The Kyra journal is published every half term, each with a focus on a particular area of our work months.



- More schools engage with the Kyra Kids' Council, and cluster based working will be enable participation for all those who want to be involved.
- The views of children on Kyra and how our schools work together are also captured through the 2016 Kyra needs and impact survey.

“More regular and consistent communication is a big improvement in giving a bigger picture of the whole of Kyra’s work.”

Kyra school leader

Towards a sustainable future

The future presents us with both an opportunity and a challenge to become more sustainable in approach. Kyra must provide consistency of focus and vision, whilst also being adaptable to the local and national dynamics – including changes in policy, the influence of new research and other influences such as funding.

The current financial context – including envisaged tighter budgets for schools, the anticipated reduction in funding for teaching schools, and the need to ensure our alliance is based on a longer-term view of partnership, all mean that Kyra must adapt and respond to ensure our viability.

Kyra schools are already benefiting from economies of scale in areas such as access to CPD, leadership development, and school improvement expertise. We now need to consider other ways in which we can benefit through pooling our resources and achieving economies of scale.

Within the next year, Kyra will consider two areas within which it can procure or deliver services on behalf of its schools. One option already being considered is the provision of a pool of supply teachers. Kyra will ask its schools to commit financially, beyond the standard membership fee, to membership of a Kyra quality assured supply bank of teachers. In doing so, we will address one of the key costs faced by schools through economies of scale.

Kyra will also look to develop a list of ‘Kyra Hallmarked’ services. These services will not be provided or procured by Kyra directly, but will have been subject to review and quality assurance of Kyra schools and are endorsed by Kyra practitioners.

Kyra will also increasingly draw upon its significant expertise, research and resources to provide CPD programmes and consultancy support to the wider system. We have already developed some bespoke programmes and leadership development support, which have received positive feedback. We are committed to ensuring that such support is of a high quality and also bespoke to the needs of schools so that it has the most positive impact on children’s outcomes.



Finally, Kyra will look to ensure it maintains sufficient capacity for school improvement and delivery across its remit. **We will ensure that we have a pipeline of future LLEs and SLEs through encouraging high potential leaders to shadow school to school support deployments and receive training to develop their specific skills. However, we also need to ensure that the alliance membership has a sufficient number of good and outstanding schools that are able to provide capacity and expertise necessary for school improvement.** As such, a target has been set of ensuring that we have at least 10% more outstanding schools within Kyra than the national average.

Kyra commitments

- Kyra alliance to be self-sustaining by end of 2016/17 academic year, including development of commissioned services to MATs and other clients
- Kyra to have proportionately more schools move to an 'outstanding' Ofsted grade than the rest of Lincolnshire
-
- Kyra to develop a 'peer-rated' bank of resources and CPD.
- At least two aspects of provision will be procured at scale for all Kyra schools to access within the next twelve months.

Conclusion

As an alliance, we will be aiming to achieve the ambitious set of 'Kyra commitments', set out in this document. We will report publically against these measures in July 2017.

Over the coming year, we will continue to also look beyond our alliance, as well as to the expertise within our schools, to inspire and inform our continuing development.

We are excited for our future as an alliance and for the opportunity we have to make a difference to children's lives.

We will be #AmbitiousforChildren