

Kyra Teaching School Alliance: Submission in response to the ‘*World Class Teaching Profession*’ consultation.

1. About Kyra:

The Kyra teaching school alliance is a group of over thirty schools and educational organisations working together to improve children’s lives by building the capacity of schools and leaders for improvement, including through high quality professional development and school-to-school support.

The alliance is based in Lincolnshire, with the lead school – Mount Street Academy – being based in central Lincoln itself.

Our vision statement is as follows:

“We will work together to ensure that all children across our schools benefit from the highest standards of teaching and learning and are inspired, supported and prepared to fulfil their potential. Our ability to achieve this depends on our expertise, skills and capacity as teachers, leaders and support staff. We will draw upon our collective professionalism to create a learning community that enables every adult to make the greatest contribution possible and play their full part in fulfilling this commitment to our children.

We will do this by constantly looking within our schools, across our schools, and beyond our immediate community to the wider system to understand our needs, identify best practice and learn from research. We will work together to ensure everyone who works within our partnership is provided with the support and development opportunities in order to be the very best they can be. We will first consider ‘what can we give?’ as our basis for being part of this alliance, with the knowledge that the more you give, the more you are likely to receive in return. Our alliance will be one based on social capital and the participation of professionals at all levels.

We will set the bar high, we will be ambitious and we will hold ourselves to account for the quality and impact of our partnership. We know this is a unique opportunity to achieve something quite transformational. We won’t let that opportunity pass.

In short, we will harness our collective professionalism, expertise, and moral purpose, to ensure no one is left behind, and every school and individual in our partnership thrives – to the benefit of all children.”

2. Our response to key consultation questions

- What are the greatest impediments teachers and schools face in regularly undertaking high-quality professional development?

Ensuring that sufficient time and professional capacity is devoted to CPD is essential for sustained school improvement. The individuals best placed to deliver high quality professional development are our best teachers and leaders. Practising leaders and teachers are not only accessible to perform ongoing roles for others, such as coaching and mentoring, but they are able to develop others from a position of contemporary knowledge balanced with sufficient experience. Ensuring that the job descriptions and performance targets of leaders and senior teachers reflects their role in developing others can go some way to ensuring that sufficient time and capacity is devoted to CPD. Designations such as SLE and LLE are also key to recognising an individual's responsibility for developing others and **Kyra stipulates that our designated LLEs and SLEs should demonstrate regular involvement in designing and delivering CPD in addition to their deployments for formal school to school support.**

For many, mobilising such individuals in a way that best reflects their talents and reaches those who would most benefit from their support is a key challenge – particularly when seeking to do so across schools. Again, designations that reflect both an individual's specific expertise together with their having the capacity and skills to deliver high quality CPD, are essential. 'Specialist teacher designations', in addition to SLEs and LLEs, would ensure this is the case at all levels.

- To what extent, and how, do teachers currently evaluate their professional development? What would support more rigorous evaluation?

Measuring quality and impact is one of the 'seven hallmarks' of Kyra's provision. **We publish feedback on both our CPD and overall performance annually and we would highly recommend that this practice is adopted across the system both for accountability purposes and informing the ongoing development of provision.** Whilst we believe that recipients of CPD should have a role in rating the impact of CPD on their development (i.e. through post-CPD questionnaires and surveys) we also believe that recipients' line managers and headteachers should also be able to rate the impact of CPD both immediately and a few months after the provision was delivered in order to judge its long term impact.

- Where should the balance of responsibility lie between teachers, schools and government for ensuring that appropriate professional development is undertaken? How, in the longer term, might responsibility sit with a new independent professional body?

The success of a country's education system depends fundamentally on the quality of its school teachers and leaders. Therefore, **Kyra is strongly of the view that professional development of teachers and school leaders should be strongly championed both by the**

profession and government as a key strategy for system improvement. Indeed, we believe that an agreed national ‘mission statement’, together with ambitious ‘guarantees’ for high standards of initial and ongoing teacher development, be adopted. A shared commitment to high quality CPD across government and the profession is a key feature of international high performing education systems.

A professional body should play a central role in developing an evidence-based approach to the design and delivery of teacher development, working closely with successful CPD providers, including teaching schools, in doing so. This evidence-base could then inform such a body’s role in developing national standards for CPD and ensuring national coverage of high quality CPD provision (led and delivered predominately by high performing school partnerships themselves). The Government’s long term commitment to such an approach – including providing the professional body and schools with the necessary independence and support to make this approach achievable – is essential.

- Despite the growing reach of the teaching schools network, are there areas where coverage of schools would remain a concern? How could any gaps be addressed?

Yes, our experience in Lincolnshire is that there is far greater coverage in urban areas than in rural areas both due to the location of designated teaching schools and the practical challenges faced by rural schools in engaging with teaching school alliances and CPD opportunities generally. **Kyra’s recent research into succession planning in rural schools has provided some recommendations for ensuring greater engagement with CPD in rural areas (the focus of the research was leadership development and succession planning).** The report, which can be found here: <http://kyrateachingschool.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Kyra-STPM-Report.pdf> is based on our work with and feedback from rural school teachers and leaders themselves. Whilst advocating the use of technology to overcome the barriers of geography, the evidence collected during the research strongly suggests that collaboration and partnership in rural areas is an essential basis for talent management and succession planning in rural schools: ***“we suggest that it is also up to schools in rural communities to take the initiative and grasp the opportunities offered by the ‘self-improving system’ to form partnerships where appropriate and to collaborate on issues such as talent management and leadership succession...”***. Kyra is pleased to work with a number of rural collaborative groups, many of which are now benefiting from membership of our teaching school alliance whilst continuing to maintain their local networks and capacity.

- What should the funding criteria be for teaching schools wishing to draw on the new funding pot for professional development? Should there, for example, be a requirement for teaching schools to work with a predetermined proportion of schools which are not already ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’?

There should be some form of incentive for working with those schools and professionals in the most need of support. However, overtime, funding should increasingly be based upon the quality of provision as judged by recipients and their line managers/headteachers. In our experience, giving recipients – be they schools or

individuals - a degree of choice in how they access their development needs will ensure they approach these opportunities with high levels of engagement. If such a choice can be based on the quality of provision (as judged by leaders' and teachers' peers) then CPD provision is more likely to ultimately have a greater impact on school improvement.

- Will teachers benefit from an online platform that collates and presents evidence-based practice?

Yes, we believe that a key role of our teaching school is to generate literature and research around best practice and innovations in teaching and leadership. A national platform for sharing and disseminating such resources would be very welcome. **We recommend that all teaching schools develop a research and case studies section on their website to facilitate this process.** We are very encouraged by the initial work of the Teaching Schools Council in disseminating practice across the system.

Annex 1: CPD at Kyra

How CPD works at Kyra

At Kyra, our CPD is continually growing and developing to meet the needs of our alliance. In 2013/14 **90% of heads or line managers responding to our annual survey said that Kyra's CPD provision had had a positive impact on the practice of those staff that had engaged with it.** 10% said that it had had a 'somewhat positive' impact.

We generally have three main approaches:

- Cross school networking
- Cross school research projects
- Expert led training opportunities

i. Cross school networking

Each term, schools in the Kyra network put together an offer from their staff. This offer comes from across the whole staff group, such as teachers, teaching assistants, midday staff who lead sessions in their school. These usually cover a wide range of areas of teaching and learning such as moderation activities, 'ipads in phonics', 'godly play', 'introduction to counselling' etc. Not only does this spread good practice and specialist interests across schools, but develops staff at all levels who lead sessions. Much positive feedback arises from these sessions, and staff gain from visiting other schools and meeting (and building ongoing professional relationships) with colleagues who do similar jobs.

As one headteacher wrote in our annual survey this summer: *"(Working with Kyra) has been beneficial for my staff who have had the opportunity to work beyond our school either through shared CPD; through leading CPD or by supporting colleagues in other schools."* *Headteacher within the Kyra Alliance*

ii. Cross school research projects

A new venture we have been developing within Kyra is for our CPD network activities to include research projects. Staff are invited to attend 3 sessions over a term, the first to understand the theory behind why research is important for our professional development and what action research might look like in the classroom. A key research question is also established at this point through professional dialogue between practitioners from a number of schools. The second session focuses on updating the group on how the project is going, what key learning has taken place and how this has impacted on practice. The third session draws together the project and disseminates findings. We have recently undertaken two projects and have a plan for six more, investigating questions such as 'how does the maths learning environment affect progress in maths?' and 'is verbal or visual feedback more powerful in moving children's learning on?'

Some of our research projects, including our research into succession planning and talent management in rural schools, can be found here: <http://kyrateachingschool.com/research-and-development/>

iii. Expert led training opportunities

Finally at Kyra, we provide a wide range of 'expert led' training. This includes statutory training such as positive handling, safeguarding, e-safety etc and courses such as NPQSL, a middle leadership programme, SLE designation, the Outstanding Teacher Programme and Improving Teacher Programme.

However, from this year, our Specialist and Local Leaders of Education will have a growing role in delivering expert training based on their specialist areas of work. This will ensure high quality provision is designed and delivered locally – by schools for schools. The approach is based on very successful examples of where our SLEs have delivered high quality conferences (including an SEN conference attended by over 100 delegates in 2013) and research programmes such as our joint practice development research into effective feedback for writing. It is intended that LLEs, in addition to their role supporting schools in challenging circumstances, will provide support and mentoring to new headteachers. A 'system leadership' training day for SLEs and LLEs in late 2013 included input and materials on designing and delivering high quality CPD.

This 'expert-led' training will be expanded and delivered throughout the year and will benefit colleagues at all levels of Kyra. SLEs and LLEs will be commissioned by clusters of schools within and beyond Kyra to deliver specific, bespoke training to schools. Clusters will be regularly consulted through our Heads' forum and other market research to ensure expert-led CPD is responsive and timely. This we hope to match very closely to the needs of groups of schools who will commission the services to meet their specific development requirements.

Kyra Teaching School Alliance
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The impact of this new approach will be monitored carefully – with feedback from participating schools and professionals being used to refine and improve our offer as it becomes more established. This will closely resemble the current Kyra annual impact and needs survey: <http://kyrateachingschool.com/our-impact-2/>