



TEACHING  
SCHOOL  
ALLIANCE



**Looking back;  
Moving forwards:  
Always Ambitious  
for Children**

**#KyraJournal** Nov.2017

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# Welcome

## A Warm Welcome to this edition of the **Kyra Journal**

Dear Colleague

Welcome to this edition of the Kyra Journal, an edition that celebrates what Kyra is all about, but also looks to the future and where we wish to go next.

It is amazing to reflect on the last five years and to see just how much has been achieved by a group of thousands of educationalists who wish to ensure the very best possible start for all our children and young people.

If I reflect, there are some key pillars to what has been achieved over the last five years.

**Recruiting and training the best teachers** is the most powerful way in which we can ensure all children have the very best education possible, and Kyra schools have drawn upon their collective strengths to provide the highest standards of teacher training – not least through trainee placements, through mentoring, and through their input into the academic content of teacher training.

We've also seen how the alliance has come together to support **school to school improvement** when it is most needed. There are schools in Lincolnshire that have achieved fantastic progress through their partnership with the support of other Kyra schools. Every child in those schools is benefiting as a result. We're also all learning from one another in the process, whether its through the fantastic work of the Kids Council (you can read more about this later in the journal) or the work of our Specialist Leaders of Education who are, themselves, honing their leadership skills all the time.

And we've seen how the profession can support itself through change. The **culture of support** that is evident when challenges crop up – most notably in areas such as recruitment, financial challenge, or changes to the curriculum or assessment system - has been a defining feature of Kyra's work over the past five years. That culture of support is most evident through our networks and, now, through the work of the Research

School which brings a deep commitment to using evidence to secure improvement and manage change.

Underpinning all of this, of course, is Kyra's DNA and our collective commitment to being ambitious for all children in Lincolnshire. That will not waiver as we move forward.

The next few years will require us to be even bolder and more steadfast in how we work together with ambition for children. The world is changing and we have a generation of children and young people who need us to respond to a changing context. There are big questions to ask, not least: how do we secure children's health and wellbeing in a world of change, uncertainty and complexity?, how do we help children to become masters rather than servants of technology?, and, how do we prepare them to thrive in the future – equipped with the skills and traits that will be at a premium in a rapidly changing economy and society? We cannot simply rely on yesterday's approaches – but only together can we find the solutions to these very complex and important questions.

There has never been a more important time to work together in the interests of children and young people. If the last five years tell us anything, they tell us that – by working together – we can achieve so much. Let's celebrate what is past, but more importantly, let's work together over the next five years to do even more to meet the needs of this generation of pupils – driven, as we all are, by our ambition for children.

Warmest wishes,

Helen Barker



**Hear more from Helen Barker on Kyra's work and achievements over the last five years** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-slBXJHGQc&feature=youtu.be>

## Monks Abbey's perspective on partnership through Kyra



*Vicky Johnson understands the power of school to school partnership more than most. As headteacher at Monks Abbey she has seen her staff team go from strength to strength, overcome the recruitment challenges facing many other schools, and seen practice continue to improve across a wide range of areas – not least through the school's participation in research and school to school support. Monks Abbey's membership and role in the leadership of Kyra over the past five has played an important role in the school's journey, as Michael Pain found out.*

"We were there from the beginning" says Vicky, as she reflects on the inception of Kyra at a meeting of headteachers five years ago. "We were excited by the teaching school model as it was first presented because we knew that it would allow our schools the opportunity to play a much greater role in shaping and delivery of initial teacher training – ensuring we had a pipeline of well prepared, talented teachers. That was a big motivator for being involved. Nothing matters more than the quality of teachers. However, the model also represented a shift in mindset – a collective sense of commitment to one another's schools and to focusing on the children of Lincolnshire, rather than just our individual schools. That was the big attraction for us."

***"The model also represented a shift in mindset – a collective sense of commitment to one another's schools and to focusing on the children of Lincolnshire."***

Vicky joined the Kyra Implementation Committee (the group which takes responsibility for delivery across all aspects of the alliances work) in 2012. Yet, it is the Kyra development day, in early 2014, which she cites as being the moment that the momentum really began to build. "As a group of leaders and practitioners from across the county we thought hard about the legacy we wished for the alliance to create and we came up with the mantra – ambitious for children. That sounds very positive and very noble – and it is absolutely what we are all about – we are ambitious for the children of Lincolnshire. However, there were some key promises behind that made it far more than a slogan."

The promises or 'Kyra DNA' include the importance of building professional capital and being a learning community, with vision that member schools should embark on membership by asking " 'what can we give?' rather than 'what can we get?' generates a rich community of mutual-support and professional generosity." Monks Abbey have embraced this from the beginning, not least through their work around school to school support. "We now have five Specialist Leaders of Education who have been involved in dozens of school to school support deployments and in leading networks, initial teacher training delivery and professional development across the county and beyond" says Vicky. "That school to school support has had an impact in other schools, in areas such as SEN provision, leadership development, maths teaching, and in marking and feedback. I'm really proud of the part this school has played in supporting others. However, working with others has also had a hugely positive impact here too, because our staff have advanced their knowledge, refined their skills through exposure to other schools, and developed in confidence. We have a staff team that are motivated and inspired by being part of that learning community and it has helped us to hold onto some very talented teachers and educationalists."

***“We have a staff team that are motivated and inspired by being part of that learning community and it has helped us to hold onto some very talented teachers and educationalists.”***

The team at Monks Abbey includes people like Theresa Peacock, who has played a key role in establishing the culture of research and evidence-based improvement across Kyra; Karen Richardson, who – alongside Ruth Clark of Mount Street Academy – has developed a strong network and CPD offer for SEN practitioners during a time of huge change in this area; and Ben Carver – Deputy Head – who now leads the Kyra Kids Council, taking over from Simon Clark (the school’s former Deputy Head) who has himself since gone on to take up post as headteacher at Grimoldby Primary School. “Simon is one example of how being involved in a wider network can help to support professional learning and prepare you for the next stage of leadership” says Vicky. “He is now making a big difference to another school and community and that’s in no small part down to his leadership development accessed through the alliance and in his work in supporting other schools too.”

The Kyra Kids Council has become a central aspect of the alliance’s work. Indeed, it emerged as one of those very tangible commitments made at the alliance’s initial development day in 2014. It is unique in how it has put children at the heart of the collaborative activity across Kyra, as groups of children from over a dozen schools across the alliance work together on learning walks, a range of activities, and through regular council meetings. Vicky considers it to be a unique and defining aspect of Kyra’s work. “We have embraced the Kids Council and – through Simon, and now Ben – we are proud to play a leadership role because it relates everything we do as partnership back to children. School improvement activity is informed by the children through their learning

walks and their feedback to headteachers, and children are regularly asked to discuss and comment on key developments within Kyra. That means that we are grounded in pupil voice and pupil involvement and that we never lose sight of what we are about. It also means that we are able to enrich children’s lives through creating activities and opportunities that we can’t always deliver as individual schools – such as the Forest School opportunities or the Kyra Games. It speaks to our moral purpose and, for me, it is one of the defining achievements of the first five years.”

***“School improvement activity is informed by the children through their learning walks and their feedback to headteachers, and children are regularly asked to discuss and comment on key developments within Kyra.”***

When asked what has had the greatest impact, Vicky talks about a number of areas. Key for her has been the schools ability to ride the recruitment challenges without any issues – partly because staff retention has been aided through the school’s collaborative work and the opportunities this brings, but also because of the quality of initial teacher training. “Before, NQTs had less grounding in school life and in the realities of the day to day work of a classroom teacher. Through school-based ITT we have been able to provide trainees with exposure to the classroom and to expert practitioners and mentors on a day to day basis. Our trainee teachers are not only learning from really effective, practicing teachers, but they are also dealing with real world situations and becoming accustomed to the way of life within good schools earlier. They are more averse with important things like the implementation of the behavior policy, the pattern of the school year and have already developed relationships with colleagues both within and beyond the school.



That has been extremely beneficial for us all as it has meant that – generally – we have extremely well prepared teachers entering the profession.”

**“Our trainee teachers are not only learning from really effective, practicing teachers, but they are also dealing with real world situations and becoming accustomed to the way of life within good schools earlier.”**

For Vicky personally, being part of Kyra has brought both professional support and the chance to develop her own skills and contribution to the wider system. As ITT lead, she has been actively involved in developing the current primary initial teacher training curriculum with the University of Lincoln (as part of the LTSA SCITT) and has been able to draw upon the strengths of schools and practitioners across the alliance to ensure the curriculum is delivered to the highest standards. So, for example, Birchwood Junior school have informed training around maths teaching, Ellison Boulsters with music teaching, and Monks Abbey itself has contributed to trainees learning and development around supporting pupils with English as an additional language and SEN. “Immediately our trainees are benefiting from the pooling of knowledge and expertise across many Lincolnshire schools and that is setting them up extremely to have a very positive impact on children’s learning from the outset” says Vicky.

Vicky is clear about the cultural impact that being part of the alliance has had on the school and its staff and pupils. “We know that we are not alone, that we have partners who can support us when we need it and vice versa. We also know that we are part of a bigger picture – a shared commitment to and ambition for the children of Lincolnshire. That manifests itself in all sorts of ways – whether it is through supporting one another to recruit when a key member of staff leaves or through

helping one another to manage change, such as changes in assessment or the curriculum, in the best interests of children. That spirit of generosity not only makes the job more manageable and extremely inspiring, it also ensures that our children are getting a much better deal through better collaboration and learning between teachers in all our schools.”

You can follow Monks Abbey on twitter at [@monksabbey](https://twitter.com/monksabbey)



**Vicky Johnson reflects on five years of Kyra Teaching School Alliance** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8\\_22VUtxtQ&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8_22VUtxtQ&feature=youtu.be)

*“I think over the next five years Kyra can go from strength to strength.... As a group of schools working together we are very good at being creative and helping one another to come up with good ideas that serve children well. I believe there are opportunities for us to ensure children are getting the best education, not just in terms of academic outcomes – hugely important as they are – but also in terms of the broader curriculum we offer to all our children and making sure they develop a love of learning that will take them to their future lives, not just to the end of Key Stage 2.”*

*Vicky Johnson, Monks Abbey Primary School*



# Ben Carver



**You've had an interesting and varied career before joining Monks Abbey, tell us a little more about it.**

Yes, I did my NQT year at Witham Academy in its very early days and then moved to The Meadows Primary School on Calder Road. At The Meadows I was a teacher in year two and became the Key Stage Lead for Key Stage One in 2014. In 2015, I went on a secondment to CfBT where I specialised in maths, supporting schools around the county on the development and delivery of the maths curriculum. In 2016 I successfully applied for the role of Deputy Head at Monks Abbey.

**How has the transition to Deputy Head been for you?**

It's certainly been a leap. It's a big shift from a leadership role where the focus is predominantly on leading teaching and learning to one where there is a big role in the management of staff, budgeting, reporting to governors etc. However, there has been a lot of support – not least through attending the Kyra heads' forums and the networks with other colleagues across the group. I've also just started the National Professional Qualification for Headship which I'm sure will help me to develop further as a leader.

**Tell us about how your role in leading the Kids Council?**

A very important and exciting part of my role is leading the Kyra Kids council, which is a group of children representing schools from across the alliance. The Kids Council has now been established for four years and meets regularly throughout the academic year. It does a number of things – it gives children a voice in how they wish to work with children from other schools (and in how Kyra works generally), it provides children with a role in reviewing and feeding back on the learning and the environments in other schools, and it provides children with enriching activities that it is sometimes difficult for individual schools to provide. The Council has been established for over three years now.

Ben Carver joined Monks Abbey as Deputy Headteacher in 2016. Having taught in Lincolnshire since he was an NQT, Ben is now proud to lead the work and development of the Kyra Kids Council. Here we speak to Ben about his journey to leadership and his plans for the next stage of the Kids Councils; work.

**Tell us about your background and what motivates you?**

I am from Lincolnshire and – as a former Lincolnshire pupil myself – I feel very passionate about ensuring all children and young people in our county have an enriching experience of education and childhood.

I knew, following university (I studied Sociology at York) that I wanted to teach, yet I didn't have the experience, so I spent almost eighteen months working as a teaching assistant at Metheringham Primary School. This experience just confirmed in my mind that teaching and working with children and young people was the career for me. I worked as a teaching assistant for almost eighteen months before enrolling on the PGCE at Bishop Grosseteste University.

## How does the Kyra Kids Council inform school improvement?

The children play a really valuable part in school improvement through their learning visits to other schools. When the Kyra Kids Council visits a school within the alliance, there is usually an opportunity for the headteacher to identify an area – very often based on the school's improvement plan – for the children to review and provide feedback on. Previous examples include a maths learning walk in a junior school and a review of reading areas within another school. The learning visits usually involve a learning walk, pupil interviews, and the chance for children to complete a feedback form, which is then shared with the school's headteacher. A number of heads have described the visits as being amongst some of the most powerful school improvement activity they have experienced. It is certainly about putting the voice and the views of children at the heart of school improvement activity wherever possible.

## What other activities do the Kids Council get involved in?

There's a good mix. We've seen children involved in debating at the Guildhall in Lincoln, taking part in a wide range of activities in the wild spaces at Toynton-All-Saints, making trips to London to see Westminster and the Houses of Parliament, and, of course, they get the chance to explore one another's schools and meet children from other communities and contexts.

## How does the Kids Council have a positive impact on children?

It gives them a sense of responsibility, but also an enthusiasm and motivation for learning and working with others and contributing ideas to their own schools. The children are all very keen to take ideas away from other schools and bring them back to their own schools, sharing them with their pupil councils and their teachers.

It also has a big influence in improving the confidence of some pupils who would really benefit from these opportunities to interact with other children and adults outside their own context. At Monks Abbey we selected one particular child to be involved who had come into the school in year four and was lacking in confidence and struggling with anxiety. Through participation in the Kids Council and the opportunities to mix with children in other schools – they have really come out of their shell. Again, building that sense of responsibility and providing the chance to spend time with other children in contexts beyond their own school can be transformational for some children.

## What's next for the Kyra Council in 2017/18?

We want to make sure that the Kids Council remains at the heart of Kyra's work. That means encouraging and supporting more schools to become involved so that



they and their children can experience the benefits of collaboration between children. It's fantastic to see that a Kyra Kids Council is now flourishing in the East of the county through Kyra East, and we want to continue to build the central council this year. The Kids Council will continue to be involved in learning visits and feeding into improvements across Kyra's schools – sharing the children's ideas and reflections on how schools can be even better.

This year we have an exciting programme lined up, beginning with a trip to the Guildhall for our new council members and then our '500 word' writing competition which will involve all the Kids Council schools. The inter-school final for the writing competition will take place at Willoughton Primary School in January, and all the children will take part in a workshop with Jason Beresford, author of 'The Fabulous Four Fish Fingers' book series. We're also going to think hard about how we can develop a range of events and opportunities so that we are further enriching children's experiences and lives – not least in terms of their outdoor learning and managing key issues affecting them in today's world, such as safe and healthy use of technology. Watch this space!

If you are interested in becoming involved in the Kyra Kids Council, please contact Ben at [Ben.Carver@monksabbey.lincs.sch.uk](mailto:Ben.Carver@monksabbey.lincs.sch.uk)



**Introducing the work of the Kyra Kids Council with Ben Carver** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtgVhNg7n6M&t=20s>

## 5 years of ambition for children

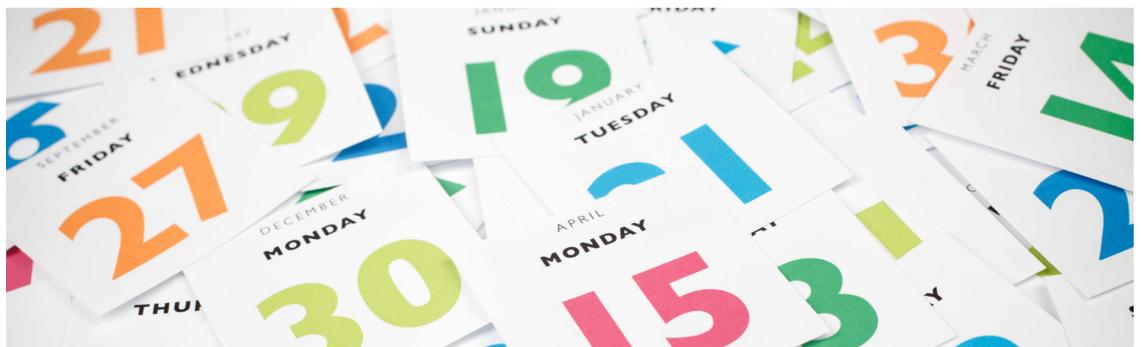
As Kyra celebrates five years, we attempt to capture just a few of its landmark moments and achievements since 2012.

### 2012

- Cathie Paine and a group of schools from across Lincolnshire establish Kyra. They are supported in their thinking by Prof. David Hargreaves – one of the country's leading thinkers of school improvement partnerships.
- The alliance is designated by the National College for School Leadership.
- Kyra begins training new teachers through its School Direct partnership with Bishop Grosseteste University.

### 2013

- Marie-Claire Bretherton becomes Executive Headteacher of Mount Street Academy. Marie-Claire takes on the leadership of Kyra as Cathie Paine moves on to become Deputy CEO of REACh2, the country's largest primary-only academy trust.
- Kyra begins its participation in the national closing the gap: test and learn project, providing the basis for future research and development activity across the alliance.
- Kyra begins delivering the outstanding and improving teacher programmes for a number of schools across the county.



### 2014

- The Kyra Development Day – involving schools and practitioners from across the alliance - cements the Kyra DNA and the hallmarks for how it will work in future.
- The Kyra Journal is launched.
- Kyra publishes its first research report on succession planning for school leadership.
- The alliance designates its first group of Local Leaders of Education, becoming one of the first alliances in the country to do so.
- The number of SLEs continues to grow. The SEN network goes from strength to strength and our SEN SLEs are involved in school to school support deployments as far away as Cheshire.

- Kyra develops its own middle leadership development programme, which goes on to support and inform improvement in a number of schools in the county.
- The Kyra Kids Council is established under the leadership of Simon Clark. Its first meeting takes place in the Lincoln Guildhall in June.
- The first Kyra Ignite Games takes place in July, with 180 children involved from across a number of Kyra schools. By 2017, the number of children participating in the games had grown to 360.
- The central team grows to include Lisa Yates & Jude Smith, who are based at one of the remaining empty classrooms at the growing Lincoln Carlton Academy.

## 2015

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- Kyra welcomes Helen Barker on board as Head of the Teaching School. The central team move into the Kyra cabin.
- Kyra becomes involved in delivering peer to peer review across many of its schools. The project receives excellent feedback as schools benefit from one another's constructive challenge
- Kyra establishes a number of important forums, including the Heads' Forum, Governors' Forum and the SBMA Forum.
- Lincolnshire's first National Leaders of Governance are designated.

## 2016

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- Kyra successfully bids to establish a Research School, becoming one of the first twelve schools in the country to be designated as such.
- Kyra enters into partnership with the Lincolnshire TSA SCITT and Lincoln University to develop and deliver the primary initial teacher training arm. Kyra begins to deliver this to its first cohort of trainees.
- Kyra feeds into the Education Select Committee's inquiry into the purpose of education – drawing on the inputs of dozens of practitioners across Lincolnshire schools.
- Lincolnshire Teaching Schools Together heralds a new era of collaboration between teaching schools, ensuring that teaching schools are playing to one another's strengths and acting in a co-ordinated way in supporting schools and practitioners across the county.
- The Kyra East hub launches, ensuring that schools in the east of the county can replicate and draw upon the work of Kyra, based upon our values and DNA. A Kyra East Kids Council is launched.
- Kyra runs a development day reviewing the changing landscape of education and supporting schools to make wise and timely decisions with regard to academisation. Speakers include the National Schools Commissioner, Sir David Carter and the CEO of the National Governors Association, Emma Knights.

## 2017

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- The Research School is launched in February 2017, at an event involving over one hundred practitioners from across the country. The work is led by Juliet Brookes and James Siddle.
- The central team return to Lincoln Carlton, heralding the end of the Kyra Cabin era!
- Through the Lincolnshire Teaching Schools Together group, half a million pounds of funding is secured to support school improvement in Lincolnshire schools.
- Kyra publishes a number of school improvement case studies, celebrating and capturing the impact of schools and the alliance in securing improvement for more pupils in Lincolnshire.
- The first School Business Management Professional Development Day is held in June.

# Toby Greany



Seven years on from the inception of Teaching Schools, we speak to Professor Toby Greany, Professor of Leadership and Innovation, UCL Institute of Education about how the initiative has changed and developed over time. Toby is a former Director – Policy and Research, at the National College for School Leadership.

## **Where did the concept of teaching schools come from?**

The idea behind teaching schools emerged from the work being done by school partnerships as part of the London Challenge, and was pioneered in a small-scale way by Professor Sir George Berwick at Ravens Wood school and with a focus on initial teacher education. The concept of teaching schools came from comparisons with the NHS and the work of teaching hospitals, which suggested that teacher development needed to link higher education institutions with real-world contexts even more closely.

In the lead up to the 2010 education white paper the National College for School Leadership tasked a group of National Leaders of Education (NLEs) to undertake a 'fellowship commission' exploring how to develop teaching schools as a national approach at scale. This led to the idea of teaching school alliances – networks of schools that could work together on a shared agenda. This model sought to recognise that there are great things happening in many schools across the system, not just those judged 'outstanding' by Ofsted. The education white paper, published in November that year, announced the government's intention to support teaching schools nationally.

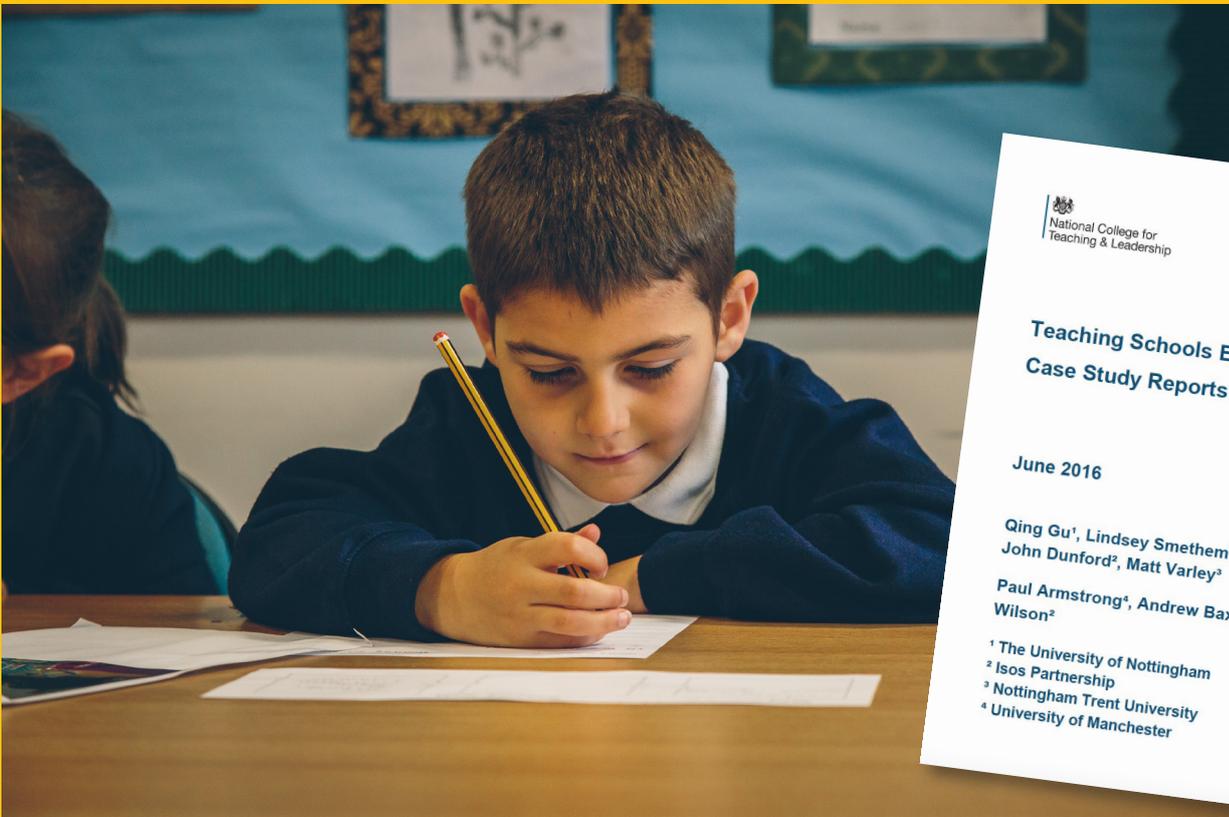
As initial work on the teaching schools programme and teaching school alliances developed, the scope of their activities was codified by Andy Buck, NCSL's first Director of Teaching Schools working with colleagues from the Training and Development Agency (TDA), into the 'big 6'. This remit (later reduced to three) spanned initial teacher education, peer-to-peer professional and leadership development, identifying leadership potential, school-to-school support, designating and deploying specialist leaders of education, and undertaking research and development.

## Were the 'big 6' appropriate and achievable?

The idea of the 'big 6' activities for teaching school alliances came from an argument that there needed to be a continuum of professional development from initial teacher education, through teachers' professional lives and into leadership. There has long been a view that while there is plenty of development available to trainee teachers, this falls away once teachers are qualified. Alongside this was a strong argument, based on the impact of school to school support in the London Challenge, that professional development can have the greatest impact when it is tied to real work in challenging contexts and when it is based on rigorous evidence.

Over time this model has evolved. In 2012, Michael Gove, the then Secretary of State for Education, announced the launch of School Direct. In many ways this chimed with the original idea of a teaching hospital model, by making teacher education more applied and school-led.

The decision to expand School Direct very rapidly meant that the early Teaching Schools were required to focus on this at the expense of other aspects of the 'big 6'. It is arguable that some of the recent criticisms of teaching schools – that many cannot demonstrate impact on pupil outcomes and school improvement – reflect this need to focus on School Direct at the expense of school-to-school support. It's hard to know for sure, because there is not enough good research in this area, but it seems that very few teaching schools have used School Direct to really re-conceptualise how best to train and develop great teachers; most have simply tended to replicate what went before, no doubt because they haven't had the time and space required to do so.



## What are your thoughts on the monitoring of teaching schools?

Partly because of the inherently broad and locally flexible nature of the 'big 6', teaching school alliances are hard to monitor and evaluate in a tight way. As a result it has been challenging to define a sensible set of key performance indicators for measuring success at national level. This problem is replicated at individual teaching school level, so it is very difficult to monitor and evaluate what 'success' looks like.

This is quite a common challenge for research on networks across many different sectors – the participants feel that they are valuable, and they are undoubtedly good at enabling knowledge and expertise to move around (which is essential if teachers are to learn and develop in a 'self-improving' system with a very weak middle tier), but it can be hard to pin point the exact value that networks add.

Despite this, the evaluation of teaching schools undertaken by Professor Qing Gu et al (2016) for the DfE is excellent, helping to illustrate both what teaching schools are and how they work to best effect. I think there should be a lot more emphasis on trying to draw out what is working well and what we can learn from this.

## **What are your thoughts on the teaching school system now; do you think it has been a success?**

When the teaching schools concept was first introduced, a majority of the designated schools didn't really have enough capacity to deliver everything that was being expected of them. That has changed over time and both the DfE evaluation and my own research indicates that there is some fantastic work being done by many teaching schools across the system. I think that many alliances have been particularly helpful in providing networks and 'glue' for the system – without discriminating between academies and maintained schools - at a time of rapid change in the curriculum and accountability framework and when Local Authorities were reducing.

The alliances that have been most successful appear to be those that have focused on the quality of their partnership work, based around an explicit and shared set of values and priorities and underpinned by high levels of trust. These alliances reflect a genuinely collaborative effort: they involve their partners in co-designing and delivering their collaborative remit, with high levels of give and take so that everyone contributes, everyone benefits and everyone is constantly learning about how to improve. They have a strong focus on identifying, sharing and growing expertise – whether in pedagogy, a specific subject area or an area such as leadership.

Equally, there are also teaching school alliances where members simply pay their fees but do not feel really committed to the partnership. And there are teaching schools that are more or less exclusive in their approach, or that have used the designation to enhance their position and status within local systems.

## **How do you see teaching schools fitting within the growing multi-academy trust system?**

Today I think that multi-academy trusts are seen to have superseded teaching schools in the eyes of many policy makers, but what teaching schools have done is keep a focus on issues of professional learning and teacher quality at a time when a lot of the effort has been on structural reform.

Many teaching schools now sit within a MAT and some of these are focussed primarily on supporting schools within that particular MAT. Perhaps there is an argument that once all schools become part of a MAT there will no longer be a need for teaching schools as separate entities.

I think that would be a huge loss to the system, with a risk that MATs would become more insular in terms of their school improvement provision, and not focused on the needs of all schools locally and across the wider system. This would present a huge step backwards for the drive towards a school-led system.

## **Do you have any other thoughts on the teaching school programme?**

The voluntarism of this approach means that whilst some schools have engaged with the teaching school programme and have had the confidence to share their data, there are still schools which are not linked to teaching schools and might not be working in wider collaborative structures. Whilst enforced collaboration is not necessarily the answer, the fact that the teaching school programme and membership of alliances is voluntary does present the risk of a less equitable system than might otherwise have been the case.

A few years ago I wrote an article entitled 'More networked and yet more fragmented' for the London Review of Education, which captured my sense that schools are collaborating more, but that local coherence is still hard to achieve.

We have asked teaching schools and the system leaders who lead them to take on a difficult and sometimes invidious role, with a lack of clarity on lines of accountability and measures of success. The evidence from high performing systems around the world clearly shows that the focus of attention should be on learning, teaching, subjects and the curriculum, and teaching schools remain a key mechanism for keeping that focus in our system today.

*You can follow Toby on twitter at [🐦 @TobyGreany](https://twitter.com/TobyGreany)*

The evidence from high performing systems around the world clearly shows that the focus of attention should be on learning, teaching, subjects and the curriculum, and teaching schools remain a key mechanism for keeping that focus in our system today.

# Kyra at 5 Years



## What do you value?

"From a NLG point of view, the Kyra governor forums have allowed me engage with and support governors from all over Lincolnshire."

Sean Westaway  
National Leader of Governance

"Working in other schools as an SLE is one of the best things I've ever done; schools are always grateful for the support and I've formed long-lasting professional relationships beyond my contracted time."

Kyra SLE – June 2017

"What I value most about working with KYRA is that everything we do holds true to the KYRA DNA – there is real integrity here which doesn't shift with the changing winds but is built on sure foundations, with children at the very heart!"

Ian Tyas – Headteacher Ingham Primary School

"One of the many highlights for our school since being a member of Kyra has been the participation in the Talent management project which led to one of our teachers becoming a Head, another becoming a Senior teacher and a Teaching Assistant successfully completing her Childcare degree and enrolling on an initial teaching training course - so much talent flourished out of courageous conversations inspired by a simple A3 leadership matrix; thank you Kyra, the East is growing its own brilliant teachers for their own brilliant children."

Sue Belton Headteacher –St Helena's CE Primary School

"What does linking with Kyra mean to Toynton? It has become a non-negotiable, crucial investment in an inspiring and sustained future for our children, our staff and our governors."

Lesley Coulthurst – Toynton All Saints Primary School



#13

**KYRA**  
Journal

"The biggest impact has been through the collaborative aspect. In the past twelve months alone, KYRA members as part of the East have held their own headteacher forums, school councils have visited other schools, governors have worked together and we have launched Maths and English hubs. None of this would have been possible without partnership and the dedication of all members."

Andrew Clarke – Headteacher Spilsby Primary Academy

"It was a real privilege to begin working with KYRA in the early days. I was tasked with raising the profile of children in our alliance, and so the Kyra Children's Council was founded in June 2014 at Lincoln Guildhall.

At the time, it was a unique concept – no other Teaching School in the country had formed a Children's Council in the same way.

Ten schools attended the initial meeting, and from then it was clear that there was great appetite for the Council to succeed. Since then, the Council has gone from strength to strength. It has held around 20 meetings at different locations, split into two groups, engaged with hundreds of children from dozens of schools across the county.

In 2015, representatives were invited to Westminster to tour Parliament and meet with the Lincoln MP. Although new school leaders now coordinate the Council's work, I know it will continue and flourish, and that the children of our Alliance will continue to help improve schools."

Simon Clark Headteacher Grimoldby Primary School

"As a new Head the support and guidance from the members of Kyra has been invaluable. The vision of every teacher being responsible for every child in Lincolnshire has become a reality. Together we are pulling together the skills and talents of teachers, pupils and governors ensuring that all of the children in our schools may benefit. The success of the Kyra East Kids Council has been phenomenal and this work is being extended to include e-safety next year; together keeping all of our children safe."

Tracy Cockram, Infinity Academies Trust



**WATCH THE VIDEO: Kyra 5 Years On ...**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hYoY6DdLjnc&app=desktop>

# Why teaching schools should work together



Suzanne Scott is the headteacher at Ellison Boulters CE Academy and a member of the Kyra Teaching School Alliance. Suzanne is the alliance's lead for school to school support strand and a member of the Kyra Implementation Group. Here we talk to her about how Lincolnshire's teaching schools are moving towards a more strategic approach to securing improvement in all schools.

### **What do you value about being a member of Kyra?**

Kyra helps my school to stay connected with other schools and to stay ahead of developments in education – not least in terms of research and best practice. It is important for me that we as a school we are working with and learning from other practitioners in schools across Lincolnshire. Of course, a very important element of the partnership is that we all share the same values and commitments – with everyone focused on achieving the best for children of Lincolnshire.

### **What do you feel has been the key development over the last five years?**

I think we have moved from a place where there was an element of competition – or at the very least a lack of collaboration between teaching schools in Lincolnshire. That wasn't necessarily intentional, but it arose from a context where teaching schools were being designated with a lack of co-ordination from the centre as to how they would work together and complement each other's work. It was an unsustainable approach. All the teaching schools were operating on one another's doorsteps but there was little interaction and a lot of duplication.

Over the last two years we have seen a big shift towards collaboration between teaching schools through the Lincolnshire Teaching Schools Together (LTT) partnership and I am very proud of the part that Kyra has played – along with the other teaching schools involved - in making that happen. It is really important that we model collaboration between teaching schools as that is exactly what we are all expecting schools to do.

### **What has the partnership looked like in practice?**

We wanted to make sure that there was a coherent offer of support to schools around school improvement and professional development. At first, the collaboration spent a lot of time building trust and relationships between the teaching schools. As time went on, they looked hard at how the teaching schools could avoid duplication in areas such as CPD and training programmes and looking at how they could provide the offer together – drawing on respective areas of expertise across the alliance.

A particularly exciting and impactful piece of work has been the Mobilise project which LTT has delivered on behalf of the local authority. The LA, working with the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) wanted to ensure that every school across Lincolnshire was making best use of the evidence on maximising teaching assistants.



## What do you feel are the opportunities for Kyra and the alliance in the next five years?

I want to see us do more in terms of learning from schools, academy trusts and local authorities beyond Lincolnshire. I think there is so much good practice out there in the wider system that we can learn from, and also a great deal that we can share too. These are challenging times for the education system and also in terms of how we prepare children for a complex world – full of opportunity and challenge. I think we need to be even more outward facing as we approach some of these big, fundamental questions around how we develop a curriculum offer that truly prepares this generation of children for their future lives.



### Suzanne Scott reflects on five years of the Kyra Teaching School Alliance

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmOpeHxugc4&app=desktop>

It has been quite amazing to see nearly three hundred schools engaged in this work and to see research evidence influencing practice in many hundreds of classrooms – not least in terms of better lesson planning and encouraging a greater emphasis on independent learning skills. That would just not have been possible had the teaching schools not come together.

### What does the future hold for partnership working between teaching schools?

LTT has now taken the co-ordination to an even more strategic level and successfully applied for funding to deliver school improvement in forty one schools across Lincolnshire. That will require us to draw on expertise and capacity across all the teaching schools involved in LTT and it represents a big opportunity to make a difference to so many schools and children and young people.

I'm also keen that we have a more co-ordinated and strategic approach to identifying the challenges facing the county as they emerge, and that we can begin to anticipate need across our schools and develop an offer in response. Whether that need is in response to substantial changes in government policy, the emerging needs of children and young people, or the areas where we feel staff need more professional development – I think we can be proactive in listening to children and staff, looking at the data, and scanning the horizon so that we are always on the front foot in how we support our schools.

*"Being part of Kyra has been a chance for our whole staff team to be outward looking; involved in a wider network of schools and making connections to like-minded colleagues.*

*I value being part of Kyra. I like the fact that my school is part of something bigger.*

*Kyra instigates, encourages and enables us to make contributions that enrich and develop our own practice. We, in return share in the breadth of expertise within the alliance that is freely given by others. All colleagues focused on improving outcomes for children from within our own schools."*

*Suzanne Scott Headteacher  
Ellison Boulton CE Primary School*



# Teaching Schools

## Teaching schools evaluation, 2016

In 2016, the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) published the final report of its evaluation of the work of teaching schools and their alliances. The two-year research project was undertaken by the University of Nottingham. The report looks at the context of the teaching schools programme, the emergence and development of teaching schools, developing structures and partnerships, the 'Big 6' objectives of teaching school alliances, finance, the impact of teaching schools on school improvement, and the challenges for teaching schools with regard to sustaining quality. The report draws the following conclusions (source: NCTL):

- There is a sustained appetite from eligible schools to apply to become a teaching school and be part of this national initiative. However, there continue to be variations in teaching school representation across geographical regionals and school sectors.
- Leadership credibility, trustworthiness and resilience are paramount in building and leading a teaching school alliance. Leading a TSA is perceived unanimously as a worthwhile but hugely time-consuming enterprise.
- Specific governance and accountability arrangements vary across alliances and most have experienced considerable changes over time.
- There is no single concept of a teaching school or an alliance. The nature, forms, operating structures and priorities of partnerships vary considerably. They are influenced by TSA leaders' values and visions, different individual cultures and prior histories of partnership and collaboration between schools within and across regions.
- The alliance partnerships benefit from the development of other school-to-school partnerships and institutional networks. Almost all teaching school alliances in the evaluation are now reaching out and linking up with local authorities and other TSAs within and beyond the locality.
- Teaching school alliances and multi-academy trusts (MATs) serve different purposes, and their organisational structures and accountability arrangements differ. However, both are perceived to be important in promoting school improvement.
- Teaching schools have become increasingly confident in their strengths in developing, broadening and deepening activities and aspects of the six core responsibilities (the 'Big 6') that have formed the unique identities (or 'selling points') of their TSAs.
- The sustainability of the teaching school initiative is seen as a continuing challenge by almost all teaching school alliances in the evaluation. Ongoing funding support and clearly defined accountability measures are perceived to be essential for capacity and infrastructure to be sustainable.
- As a school-level initiative, there is evidence from those responding to the surveys and interviews of perceived positive impact on standards and improvement at individual school, and local and regional levels. However, the levels of impact vary and the measured overall effects on pupil outcomes are more evident in teaching schools themselves than in alliance schools.

Further details can be found: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-schools-evaluation-final-research-report>



## Unlocking the power of collaboration

The National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) has published (4 July) a blog which discusses how six teaching school alliances in Lincolnshire, including Kyra, unlocked the power of collaboration through agreeing to work closely together.

The coalition of six teaching school alliances – Lincolnshire Teaching Schools Together (LTT) – was formed in 2014, and chaired by Marie-Claire Bretherton, with the aim of ensuring that the county's schools have access to a coherent offer of support and professional development. The collaboration was initially more operational in its focus, with an emphasis on building trust and relationships. The co-operation has now moved to a much more strategic level, which saw LTT secure £140,000 of school improvement funding from the Department for Education (DfE), which has supported 21 schools in Lincolnshire by enabling the deployment of system leaders, including national and local leaders of education and SLEs. The Mobilise project has been another good example of the ability of LTT to work strategically and at scale, involving over 260 primary, secondary, nursery and special schools in making best use of the evidence on maximising the use of teaching assistants.

Further information can be found: <https://nctl.blog.gov.uk/2017/07/04/unlocking-the-power-of-collaboration/>

## The role of research and development in teaching schools

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) published a report in January (2017) about the role of research and development in teaching schools. The report was based on an analysis of a survey of 83 teaching schools and a comparison group of 80 outstanding schools.

### The key findings from the report were (source: NFER):

- There is evidence to suggest that research and development is becoming increasingly embedded within the other areas of the 'big six' (the core activity areas for teaching schools), and particularly within school-led initial teacher training (ITT) and continuing professional development (CPD).
- Despite this, many teaching school alliances report that R&D is treated as an 'add-on' and is considered less important compared to other concerns.
- Many TSAs report engaging 'to a great extent' in producing evidence-informed outputs and yet do not appear to prioritise the development of their staff's research literacy to the same degree.
- There are many challenges facing TSAs in delivering R&D including the long time it can take to show the impact of R&D and the fact there is still a need to build an expectation for teaching as an evidence-based profession.
- There is evidence to suggest that teaching school status does not necessarily enhance an individual teaching school's level of research activity, as measured by selected R&D indicators, relative to other Ofsted-category outstanding schools. Further details can be found: <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/IMTP01/>

Following publication of the NFER report, the Teaching Schools Council published a response by its Chair, Andrew Warren, which welcomed the report but suggested the following:

"Research should never have been one of the six. Rather it must be an integral part of all we do. It should inform and challenge how we deliver ITT and CPD programmes; it should inform and challenge how we work with schools at whatever stage of the journey they find themselves. We want to learn from one another; we want to move "best practice" on to "next practice".

# Diary Dates



**Make a note of these events in your diary today!**

2nd November

**Learning to Lead - 1st of 5 sessions**

A programme for New & Aspiring middle leaders

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8th November 1.00-4.00pm

**Teaching and Learning**

Standards in Focus -KS1 assessment & Progression: This session will enable teachers to develop strategies for assessment that will identify pupils barriers and misconceptions, and support planning that will lead to progression.

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9th November 9.15 – 4.30pm

**School Improvement  
Improvement Champion Training:**

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10th November 9.30-12.30pm

**Leadership & Governance  
Fisher Family Trust Led by Martin Kaliszewski:**

This is a practical session for Heads and Senior leaders during which they can be hands on with FFT

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14th November

**English in Focus:**

Appropriate for subject leaders all day or KS1 teachers AM & KS2 teachers PM

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**KYRA**  
Journal

23rd November 9.30 – 12.30pm  
**ASP Training Led by Martin Kaliszewski:**

This is a practical session for Heads and Senior leaders during which they can be hands on with ASP

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11th December 1.00pm-4.00pm  
KS1 Maths: Mastering Reasoning and problem solving

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7th November - 6.15pm  
**Kyra Governor Forum – Members Only  
Lincoln Carlton Academy**

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14th November 2017 - 6.15pm  
**Kyra East Governor Forum – Members Only  
Spilsby Primary Academy**

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16th November 2017 - 3.00pm  
**Recently Qualified Teachers Forum  
Lincoln Carlton Academy**

A forum for Recently Qualified Teachers to share practice and teaching ideas. With expert guidance, new teachers can develop their ideas, work on areas for development and network to improve and grow in the profession.

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21st November 2017 - 1.00pm  
**Kyra East Heads Forum – Members Only  
Spilsby Primary Academy**

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21st November 2017 - 3.00pm  
**Maths Leader Forum – Members Only  
Lincoln Carlton Academy**

A termly forum where subject leaders can identify key priorities, best practice, and any national changes relating to the teaching, learning and assessment of Maths. Led by an expert SLE, this group will work together to generate a subject newsletter including relevant updates, resources and materials for the use of Kyra schools.

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22nd November 2017 - 3.00pm  
**Deputy Headteacher and Asst. Headteacher Forum – Members Only  
Benjamin Adlard Primary School**

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23rd November 2017 - 3.00pm  
**Science Leader Forum – Members Only**  
**Lincoln Carlton Academy**

A termly forum where subject leaders can identify key priorities, best practice, and any national changes relating to the teaching, learning and assessment of Science. Led by an expert SLE, this group will work together to generate a subject newsletter including relevant updates, resources and materials for the use of Kyra schools.

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28th November 2017 - 9.30am  
**School Business Manager and Administrators' Forum**  
**Lincoln Carlton Academy**

28th November 2017 - 1.00pm  
**Kyra Heads Forum – Members Only**  
**Lincoln Carlton Academy**

30th November 2017 - 3.00pm  
**English Leader Forum – Members Only**  
**Lincoln Carlton Academy**

A termly forum where subject leaders can identify key priorities, best practice and any national changes relating to the teaching, learning and assessment of English. Led by an expert SLE, this group will work together to generate a subject newsletter including relevant updates, resources and materials for the use of Kyra schools.

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1st December 2017 - 3.00pm  
**FS Teachers' Forum - Members Only**  
**Lincoln Carlton Academy**

A programme of structured workshops for early years practitioners that will develop the skills and confidence in using data effectively to inform practice, provision and progress.

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For further information and other upcoming training, meetings and events, please visit: <https://event.bookitbee.com/kyra-teaching-school-alliance>

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