Take the lead
Make the difference you want in your school

Professor Sonia Blandford
With Jenny Hulme

Inviting leadership teams to join our school revolution
This is dedicated to all leaders and their teams who are on a mission to change lives, with our thanks for including every child in every class in your vision for what your school can do...
Acknowledgements

My thanks to all the thousands of school leaders, teachers, the wide range of professionals, parents, carers and pupils who have taught us what can be done for children in the UK and who are helping shape and share the vision and practise of Achievement for All. I am grateful, too, to the committed expert team here at the Achievement for All charity for their continuing dedication and support.

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Finally, my thanks to you the reader for what you have achieved with children and young people and your commitment to do more. Thank you.

Professor Sonia Blandford
Achievement for All
Introduction

I came across a great cartoon which shows a caretaker and head teacher frantically clearing snow off the school steps as pupils arrive for the day. One student in a wheelchair is sitting at the bottom of a snow covered ramp waiting for them to finish. “You know, Sir,” he says. “If you cleared the ramp first we could all get in.”

The cartoon is, in its own way, a story about inclusion in education but, perhaps more importantly, it is a story about how when faced with immediate challenges we sometimes fail to see the bigger picture, and to miss the simplest of solutions that could help us achieve our ambitions to reach all children more often, more easily and more effectively.

No one working in education today wants to see children failing to progress because of barriers to their learning. We all share the belief that every child is valuable and every child deserves an opportunity to be in school making friends, learning, discovering their talents, aspiring for their future, and having a say in how that future unfolds. We all share the belief that, no matter how tough their background, or how many barriers to learning or slippery slopes they face, it is the job of schools to find a way to clear their path, reach them where they are and teach them in whatever way works so they can achieve.

This book doesn’t question why you are in this business of education, it questions why you are not always able to do the job you want. It examines what’s behind the huge achievement gap that separates the 75 to 80 per cent who achieve the much publicised five GCSEs (A* to C) and the other 20 to 25 per cent who don’t. It recognises that if we fail to close that achievement gap it is not only the child who pays a price, but society as a whole. Most importantly, though, it offers some answers. It brings ideas to your setting based on evidence from the thousands of schools we’re now working with who are reaching pupils who aren’t achieving more
effectively. It celebrates the amazing progress those pupils make when that happens.

This book – the stories and ideas it shares – will give you an insight into what Achievement for All is all about. Our relatively new but revolutionary approach is providing schools in England and Wales with a model of coaching and support that is transforming the aspirations and future for those learners who under achieve, enhancing the educational experience for all children across the school, and giving leaders the support they need to lead the way they want.

Professor Sonia Blandford
Founder and CEO of Achievement for All

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* Please note that students’ names have been changed. Student pictures posed by models.

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What school leaders are saying...

At the heart of everything is kindness. We never shout at children. They are children and if they are upset we help them, if they’re confused we help them, if they don’t do their work we help them. We work out what has gone wrong and find a way through. This is not soft or lovey dovey, it is simply a fairer way of working designed to promote the children’s development and learning. And it works.

Paul Green, head teacher at Lyng Hall Comprehensive School in Coventry. Read more on p57.

Our student discussion forums focus on particular pupils who might be struggling and we share ideas as a team about the barriers each student might be facing, and strategies that might work better. Students targeted by our Achievement for All programme are already very high profile in the school and teachers adjust strategies and techniques to suit them all the time. But these discussion forums take that to a new level and allow us to come together to consider in more detail how well things are working, and to draw on outside expertise and new ideas to support children with particular needs.

Steve Dool, head teacher at Neston High School on the Wirral. Read more on p25.
If you believe, as I do, that we are in education to improve life chances – then why wouldn’t you want to improve what you do? Why wouldn’t you ask, ‘What else could we try?’ And why wouldn’t you keep asking those questions until you’ve reached every child in a way that works for them? Catharine Jones, head teacher of Stoneleigh Academy in Oldham. Read more on p71.

After we started the new type of parent-teacher meeting using structured conversation training the buzz around the school was palpable. Previously teachers had seen parents and carers twice a year at a parents’ evening, perhaps getting 10 minutes with those who turned up. Whereas now we have structured conversations once a term for half an hour for every parent and carer of our 220-plus pupils. Pupil Premium money funds the supply teachers’ cover that we need to make that happen. Teachers could see straight away that this would make a difference both to their teaching, and to the children in their classroom.

Helen Tyler, head teacher of St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School in Central London. Read more on p103.

As a leadership team it is essential we look ahead, and keep challenging ourselves. It is essential we look hard at our children and where we can take them next. Achievement for All didn’t pretend they knew more than us about the students here. They listened hard to what we were doing and became part of the team, bringing ideas and experience that added something extraordinary to our school. I am now a complete champion of what they do.

Dame Sue Bourne, head teacher of The Avenue School, a special needs Academy in Reading. Read more on p87.
When I got my doctorate I had one of those ‘a-ha! moments’. I suddenly understood just how much of a difference education can make. How self-belief and aspiration can have the power to shape a future.

I didn’t come from a good school and I wasn’t helped along by well-connected parents. I came from what was called in the 60s a disadvantaged background, born into a poor family. My mother and father were not in regular employment until we were rehoused into the ‘allied’ housing estate in West London where they got factory jobs. A neighbour helped out by teaching my siblings and me to read and write. I failed the 11+ of course and ended up at a secondary modern which taught hundreds of girls like me to wash, iron and cook. When it became a comprehensive school – same teachers, same building – we were given work sheet after work sheet to try to improve our vocabulary. I worked in shops from the age of 12 to help my family pay for food and clothes. I learned by chance (a visiting instrumental teacher helped me learn the cornet), I wasn’t bad at music and as teaching was the only profession I was familiar with I set out to become a music teacher. I read my first book – Jane Austen’s *Emma* – when I was 15. There was no real English teaching before that. I had to take my English O Level five times before I could get into Bretton Hall College to study education. And when I got there I heard parents telling their own children to keep away from me because I sounded so rough.

Overhearing that, I decided there and then that I wanted to come out top of the class. I was one of nine trumpet players on the music course, and by some distance was rated ninth. So I investigated the instruments and players they were missing for each musical performance and learned those instruments. I was the only brass player in the string section. The only brass player who could fill in on percussion. I was the only one who could conduct too – and when the lecturer saw that he took me under his wing and taught me everything I didn’t know about music and learning.

I think this story, my story, gave me a real understanding of how education shapes life, how a teacher believing in you can change things by helping you aspire to succeed.

I did fulfil my ambition to become the highest achieving student in my year but I never ever forget where I have come from and what I have built on. I believe – the team I work with believe – that every child has greatness inside them, and every child deserves to realise that. No one should grow up feeling it is inevitable that they will fail. Everyone should grow up feeling they belong somewhere.

That is why I am so proud of what Achievement for All is doing for the 1.7 million children we have already helped. That is why I have written this book. I know that – despite all the advances that have been made in the last 40 years or so – leadership teams still see pupils like me, and the less lucky ones who end up in jobs they hate or worse as NEETs without a place in society, as out of reach. Those leadership teams are often still working in an environment where staff can feel forced to focus on the children who are progressing and who can help them meet targets. And while they’re doing that, they’re already busy fire fighting as they prepare for the return of Ofsted, deal with social or mental health issues among the pupils, cope with discontent among their staff, or address problems with families who seem on the fringes of the school community. That can be the experience of a leadership team in an outstanding school or a school in special measures.

While they are fighting those fires school leaders tell us they often live with the fear, and too often the reality, that those pupils who inspired them into this profession will remain where they are, and that they won’t make the difference to them they know they could and should be making.

“It was clear that schools had got used to boasting that 80 per cent of their children achieved a minimum of five GCSEs A* to C without explaining what happened to the other 20 per cent of students...”
Achievement for All don’t ever place limits on what children can achieve, whatever their special needs or disabilities. Their philosophy is about ambition and aspiration. They know there isn’t one single solution to the problems a child is having at school. Their programme looks carefully at where children are at, where they want to be, and how we can get them there, and it supports schools to keep trying things until it finds a solution that works. They are also looking, all the time, at the impact of wider outcomes – behaviour, bullying and relationships – which prove to be so important to what happens in class.

We know any decent school is thinking about these issues, but this programme gives them the freedom and support to do something with their ideas, to make the difference they want to make. It isn’t an open-ended programme (that can make it difficult to know where to start), or a prescriptive one (no school likes reading from a script) Instead it offers a balance. It includes must-dos but also flexibility so schools can adapt it to suit their setting. The response we heard from schools during the pilot was unanimously positive. It was the first time we’d seen that kind of response.

Neil Humphrey, Professor of Psychology of Education at the University of Manchester, who led the team commissioned to evaluate the pilot programme of Achievement for All

The first question I ask the school leaders I meet is what would happen if they continued to do what they are doing every day, every week, every year for the rest of their careers. What would happen if they never got the chance to stand back and reflect on their original ambitions when they took the post? What could happen if they had chance to explore and draw on ideas outside their own frame of reference to help them achieve those ambitions?

Achievement for All is designed to empower school leaders to do just that. It is proving every day it can give you back the advantage by helping you take your eyes of the minutiae of the day and focus on wider, bigger, better outcomes for the children in your school. It is being welcomed into schools struggling to help children make progress, and schools who are already deemed outstanding but who don’t want to stand still. Primaries, comprehensives, grammar schools, special schools, academies and pupil referral units are all among the thousands now signing up. It’s a programme that works irrespective of a school’s governance, structure, funding source or admissions policy.

A new way of closing that learning gap

Achievement for All started life back in 2009. As a state-funded pilot programme it was, quite simply, set up to help children not achieving in schools. It was clear that most schools had got used to boasting that 80 per cent of their children achieved a minimum of five GCSEs A* to C, without explaining what happened to the other 20 per cent of students – or more importantly why.

It had become clear that the changes seen in the education system since the 1980s had done little or nothing to help this 20 per cent of students – or more importantly why.

It was the first time we’d seen that kind of response.
of their SEND or the social-economic context of their family leads to a real (if unintended) lowering of aspiration by their teachers, parents, school leaders and wider professionals, resulting in limited access to learning. When we looked at the 1.5 million pupils identified with SEND and compared them to those without it was perhaps not surprising, then, that we discovered a gaping achievement gap of 42 per cent at each key stage, and we saw no signs of it closing.

What’s more, it has become clear that our failure to give children with SEND and other vulnerable children the same chance to reach their potential as their peers represents a huge loss of talent, and we know society ends up footing the bill. This is a problem not only illustrated by the NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) figures but by the fact that those who do not gain English and maths GCSEs are higher in number in our prisons and drug centres and in records of premature deaths. An official inquiry (led by Brian Lamb, OBE) exposed failures in the system, huge frustration among parents and too great a focus in schools on processes rather than outcomes. It was Lamb who recommended the creation of Achievement for All. The Lamb Inquiry (DCSF, 2009) marked a turning point for SEND, placing it more firmly within the domain of school leadership and bringing greater focus to inclusive education.

How this helps you take the lead
Achievement for All’s aim was – and still is – to transform the lives of those vulnerable or disadvantaged students by raising educational aspiration, access
and achievement, and – crucially – to better engage parents and carers in the process. In real terms that means a partnership between you (or one of your leadership team) and a designated achievement coach who together bring to your school a bespoke framework of support for school improvement. This will include a needs analysis, coaching and continuing professional development – both online and via a community of practice support – that you can tailor to meet your needs and priorities. It is not designed to take you in a new direction; it’s designed to help you move in the direction you want to go.

We ran a pilot study in 454 schools reaching 28,000 students across 10 local authorities between 2009 and 2011 to try to discover what was going wrong and discovered that in too many cases schools were simply not expecting some of their students to figure in final year results. We discovered that the programme helped schools not only transform things for that ‘bottom’ 20 per cent, but raised the bar for every child – their friendships and feelings of self-worth. This, of course, translated into higher results in the classroom. Schools which might initially have considered this as one more pressure on their timetable were seeing the benefits, and seeing them quickly. They felt a cultural shift among the staff and students. They came to see that this is a programme designed to be completely flexible (more of how it works in Chapter 3), allowing their staff to benefit from outside expertise and a wealth of resources and ideas, but which they could adapt or develop to suit their setting and the individual children in the classrooms.

During the pilot the programme was further endorsed in the SEND Green Paper (Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability DfE, 2011) which acknowledged its role in helping children with SEND achieve better educational outcomes and a follow-up report recommended the national roll-out of Achievement for All, so that more schools could access the programme.

As a result, the Achievement for All charity formed to lead the national roll-out of the programme, and we are now in thousands of schools and seeing extraordinary results, an outcome of the inspiring and committed leaders we work with across the UK. In this book I want to share what we’ve learned in the years since we got to work and to introduce you to other school leaders – so you can hear what they’ve learned too. Many of them initially thought – like the leadership teams we met in our pilot study – that they didn’t have time to take on a new programme like Achievement for All in a way that was meaningful. But they also – when they saw the evidence from other schools and heard the stories being told by other leaders and their staff – realised that introducing outside help is not a sign of weakness but an essential leadership skill. It’s a step towards getting the support they desired to do the job they knew they could do, in order to achieve the aims they have. They recognised that this community of experts we represent, and who we can introduce to schools, are not inspecting and judging what is going on, but instead buying into their personal and professional aims and their aspirations for their pupils. They understand the context, setting and challenges schools face, and share ideas and expertise to support and empower schools so they can do the job they really want to do.

How it works
Collaborating with your Achievement for All coach and building on your current practices, you’ll access a framework including four key elements:

1. Leadership of school, classroom and teams
2. Teaching and learning, assessment and data tracking, planning and delivery
3. Parental engagement and structured conversations.
4. Wider outcomes such as improving behaviour, attendance and participation in school life

And now...
The last evaluation (published June 2015) showed:
- Achievement for All schools exceeded national attainment targets this year, across reading, writing and maths. Pupil progress data from autumn 2013 and spring 2015 point to an ongoing impact on attainment across all subjects as the programme in a school.
- Some 80 per cent of Target Group parents reported their child is now improving in each subject.
- A survey of school champions showed their confidence in the programme grows over time as schools continue their involvement. Those involved for at least 18 months were the most positive about parents’ and pupils’ confidence and aspiration. This feedback was repeated in terms of the impact on wider outcomes, with school champions reporting a jump in pupil attendance at extra-curricular activities, engagement, participation and behaviour after 18 months in the programme.
What I have discovered by working with those leadership teams is that there is a way we can help each other make a profound difference. A way school leaders and their staff can feel less isolated by the competition between neighbouring schools and less worried about their league table place, and more focused on working with and helping each other – and other professionals in other schools – to raise the bar for all children in this country. The results they see when that happens are an important part of this work, but leaders in our programme now see these longed-for results as just a measure of the much more life-changing stuff that is going on every day in the schools where they are based.

The Anti-Bullying Alliance

What is the Alliance?
It’s a coalition of organisations and individuals working together to stop bullying, and has become a powerful partner in our work in schools. They know how damaging bullying can be and have evidence-based ideas that can help prevent bullying.

Why this partnership?
Because no school can ignore this issue – it’s a societal issue rather than just a school one – and we have always recognised wellbeing as crucial.

How can it help our school now?
By helping staff understand what bullying is and what to do about it. Almost all teachers tell us they take away strategies from our training that make a difference. Crucially we help teachers see that the young person’s experience and perception of the behaviour (not the teacher’s) has to be the starting point, and that a pupil’s hurt feelings should never ever be minimised. That not only damages teacher-pupil trust, but a pupil’s own sense of self. We also encourage schools to take responsibility for the bully in a way that goes beyond sanctions. We have to be smarter and more sophisticated about how we tackle bullying and help children realise with freedom comes responsibilities. We have to help them become the agents of change in their own life with strategies that promote understanding and inclusion. We encourage teachers to model the values and attitudes they expect in others, their expectation that every pupil works with every other pupil without complaint. To read more about this partnership turn to p131.

Autism

There are an estimated 700,000 children with this developmental disability in the UK and 70 per cent are taught in mainstream, but it is still a misunderstood condition and many children don’t receive the support they need.

Autism spectrum disorder (which includes Asperger’s) impacts on how children communicate with and relate to other people. They may be unable to detect or understand sarcasm or wit and may take things very literally which makes fitting in easily with a group of peers very difficult, causing some to seem remote. Sometimes children have difficulty using their imagination. Their autism may also present via their sensitivity to sounds, smells and textures making, for example, a noisy corridor or classroom hard to deal with. It can affect what and how they eat (earning children the label fussy eaters). But it’s called a spectrum because of the different ways it affects pupils. Schools should never assume they know everything about one pupil just because they’ve taught another on the spectrum. Teachers need to work with parents and carers and, if necessary, outside experts to understand how it impacts on each individual child so they can introduce the right classroom strategies to properly include children and support their learning.

Because children with autism can find it hard to explain how they feel or what they want, and can find it hard to pick up how others feel too, we know that instead of being welcomed into a class many children with autism are described as having ‘behaviour problems’, ‘not fitting in’ or ‘being annoying’ for being...
In conversation with...

Steve Dool, head teacher at a large (1700 student) comprehensive in Neston on the Wirral. He is a man with a vision, and it matches the vision of Achievement for All. “When you find something in education that captures your enthusiasm, and gives you a fresh impetus to improve things further you want to embrace it,” he says. His school is a wonderful place to be and students’ progress has been phenomenal.

overbearing or very shy, and for not picking up on social signals or jokes everyone else gets. Sometimes, because they can’t cope, they may choose to be alone, but that doesn’t mean they don’t want friends. All children want to be part of a friendship group.

Instead of finding friendship though, children with autism often get bullied. This most often happens in free time when children with autism can find unstructured activities (in the playground, while waiting in a dinner queue or on a school trip) a real challenge. They can find it hard to tell when others are being genuine and, desperate for friendship or simply to be part of a group game, they can become targets for backhanded bullying where they’re invited to play by those who find it funny to wind them up or get them into trouble. Their classmates lose out too because they never get to know the child behind the ‘behaviour’ and so benefit from all they have to offer the class (creativity, loyalty, intelligence and insight).

Separating a child with autism from their class highlights differences rather than promotes inclusion. While your school’s learning support groups might work well they should never be the only group a pupil mixes with. Indeed that pupil can be vulnerable to bullying within that group from children who are dealing with their own, but quite different, learning challenges. Instead teachers should help the larger class understand their classmate with autism and encourage them to get to know the person behind the ‘behaviour’, ‘differences’ or ‘idiosyncrasies’. And for mentoring, structured play or supervised lunchtime clubs can all help here. And teachers should seek out support and advice (from experts via our coach, other teachers and parents) so they can differentiate in class without singling out the child with autism in any obvious way.
Can I tell you about Simon? He was a student who was disinterested and disaffected from his early days at school and avoided lessons whenever he could. We identified his low levels of literacy and difficulties in language and communication and put him on a school-based Achievement for All reading programme, which involved focused one-to-one recovery work with target students. This was more than reading support, so some 20 staff here underwent specialist training and, with our Achievement for All coach, we identified the students who would benefit. Over eight weeks the gains were remarkable for all of those children, including Simon. We have video clips and you can see, in front of your eyes, how his body language changed and his confidence grew the more he achieved and the more positive feedback he received. He’s now performing well at GCSE level.

I was trained in that Reading Recovery Programme, as was our Achievement for All champion, a school governor and some 20 teachers and teaching assistants. I think that in itself sends out a strong message that the vulnerable students really matter and we really believe they deserve and will benefit from our investment in professional development and the help we can give as a result.

We encourage an open door policy across the school and make sure teachers are comfortable being observed and coached. Achievement for All’s focus on professional development is key here. There is a pressure on young teachers to think they are an authority on all matters linked to education or the children in their class. I want to show them that quality first teaching recognises their strengths and areas where they can improve. We’ve developed a team of staff led by our assistant head teacher who’ve developed new ways for the staff to work together, including coaching support and demonstrations of quality first teaching. Our staff don’t feel threatened by that. Outstanding teachers require passion, energy, enthusiasm – and support from each other.

Parents and carers are a hugely underused resource in schools and Achievement for All’s commitment to and coaching in structured conversations has proved to be so important. I can see how some parents can lose confidence in any sort of partnership, disengage and then risk being ignored. We need to consult and collaborate with these parents much more. Achievement for All’s structured conversation training has been key. To understand pupils better we have to understand what matters to them and what they enjoy. And that kind of information only comes from a partnership with parents and carers.

Our student discussion forums focus on particular pupils who might be struggling and we share ideas as a team about the barriers each student might be facing, and strategies that might work better. Students targeted by our Achievement for All programme are already very high profile in the school and teachers adjust strategies and techniques to suit them all the time. But these discussion forums take that to a new level and allow us to come together to consider in more detail how well things are working, and to draw on outside expertise and new ideas to support children with particular needs.

We also have a personal development programme, this time involving the students who are invited to review their achievements, qualities and strengths alongside their academic reviews. They write up their own personal statements, highlighting where they’d like to improve. We are always seeking to highlight success – it could be in art, sport, science or English, or any other subject – to demonstrate their very real talents and so build confidence to promote learning in other areas. I always say to them at these meetings that they all have a gem inside them. Some may have discovered theirs and it may be shining, others may be waiting to find and polish theirs up – but we as a school are here to help.

I’ve adopted what we call the ‘school around the family’ process for every child in the school now. We hear from the student, the parent and the school and any outside experts what is helping or hindering each pupil and develop that into an action plan.
John was someone we reached as a result of this process. He was having huge difficulty engaging with others and was getting a reputation for his very negative behaviour. When we began the ‘school around the family’ process, the team involved the educational welfare officer, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, John’s parents, John’s student mentor and a key teacher. John had a particular talent in sport and the action plan we developed included getting him a free scholarship for the local hockey and cricket club, something the family couldn’t have afforded. I think simply being noticed and accepted and valued by his school, and hearing how we were going to nurture his sporting talents had a huge impact on him and his behaviour. And now? He plays hockey for the north-west of England.

Students like John can help other students too through our student leadership programme. It involves email buddies who reach out to prospective students in primary school and answer their questions, and then mentor them when they arrive here. We also have a whole team of peer mentors in year 9 and counsellors in our sixth form.

Modeling behaviour is important here. We want students and teachers to see and hear from those making progress. We have our students with SEND come in and lead staff meetings, and when we had a special event to celebrate our learning support assistants it was the Achievement for All target students, including those with SEND, who presented at the lectern, telling the school how much they’d learned from and appreciated the help they’d had, and how they had progressed as a result.

I’m chair of the Head Teacher Association locally and invited Achievement for All to come in and talk to other heads about the work they are doing and the strategies they use. Achievement for All’s vision is our vision and the impact it has had in our school is immense.
After a very different kind of meeting with parents at a school in Gloucester, our Achievement for All coach and the deputy head realised that one of their target group, Libby, wasn’t getting help at home because her dad, Tim, couldn’t read. Tim was frustrated, and wanted to know how the school could help Libby. So the school offered to teach him to read. Not only did that make a huge difference to Libby, but it made a huge difference to Tim who is now a trained teaching assistant at his daughter’s school. He says we showed him what ‘different’ and ‘good’ looked like.

In another school where the head could see the learning support interventions weren’t having an impact, we did an analysis of the system with the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator and the senior leadership team and found any benefits of coming out of the class were being cancelled out by the chunks of lessons the children were missing. We reorganised the learning support programme so no child had to miss a lesson, but were supported in class instead. And we met a student in the south west who – as a result of her disability – went home for a break and lunch mid-day, but who didn’t want to come back in the afternoon, her favourite morning lessons being over. So we simply changed around the timetable to ensure both morning and afternoon had more appeal.

In a staff room in the Midlands you will see a display chart of the target group on the wall, covered in Post-It notes as the whole school team (from deputy head to lunchtime assistant) share observations and ideas that might make life better for those individual pupils. Ideas on that chart come from staff who hadn’t thought they had a say, hadn’t thought those children were their responsibility, when of course every child in every school is everyone’s responsibility.

Few of the leaders behind these initiatives turned to Achievement for All because they had spare time and resources on their hands and were wondering how to spend them. Sometimes we go into schools because the local authority, Multi-Academy Trust, Teaching School Alliance or academy sponsor has suggested those schools might benefit from our programme. Sometimes school leaders have heard about the experiences of neighbouring schools and wanted to find out more. In almost all cases leadership teams don’t believe they have the capacity to embrace Achievement for All in a way that is meaningful, but are driven by their own desire to improve, recognise they need some support to do that, or are simply enticed by the evidence we bring to the table. In almost every case (97 per cent of the schools we work in) the programme has the impact schools want, usually over and above what they hoped for.

The basic framework

Head teachers like Paul Green – who we’ll meet in Chapter 4 – have never accepted the idea that not every pupil can achieve. But, like many on the programme, he recognised he didn’t have a framework to embed that belief effectively in the school strategy, and that is what Achievement for All gave him.

Of course leaders like Paul also recognise that they need the whole leadership team to share a commitment to what the programme can do.

This can be a challenge. In our first session with a school, we can sometimes see teachers are not interested, perhaps
We are at a point in time where we have an opportunity to review how we teach. There is a rising tide of support for education that looks harder at individual children and how they learn and how they see the world – and then finds new ways to reach them. That has to include engaging with their parents and carers in a respectful way so that, instead of hearing what is wrong with their child or why their child is struggling, they hear about the positive things that are going to happen to change that. They hear that they can be part of that process – that the school needs them to be part of that process working in partnership with the teacher.

What I am hoping to do with Achievement for All is to encourage schools to think outside the box, and to try something a little different which could make a huge change to children’s experience of school, to their confidence, happiness, outlook – and to their exam results and the opportunities that are open to them in the future.

Henry Winkler, OBE, author and actor, co-founder of First News’ My Way! campaign and an ambassador for Achievement for All

perceiving this programme their leaders are introducing as yet another pressure on their already stressful day, another judgement on their professional ability. When we talk about the role of parents, we can see – we hear – some staff making value judgements against them too. How ‘you’ll never do anything with that pupil,’ or ‘the family is a lost cause’ or ‘the problems all come from home...’

Teachers may be sceptical at first, but when they experience the quick wins of the programme – and there are several including behaviour, attendance, happiness levels – they start to realise its power and potential. Our coaches are not going in like an outside consultant telling teachers what to do, but are there to help teachers bring out the best that is already within them, and help them remove the barriers (the stress, noise, bureaucracy) so they can put their desire to make a difference into effective practice.

Getting staff on board
Teachers need to feel valued by everyone they encounter. The same goes for every pupil – indeed, for every human being. We all need to know we are doing something which is going to have a positive impact. Teachers do so much work, in and out of school, and are in this profession to make a difference. We don’t question that. When we go into schools we question what prevents that happening. What is stopping them enjoying their job, learning from each other, collaborating effectively with parents and getting the best out of each other and their pupils?

Achievement for All should mean achievement for ALL: leaders and all their staff, parents and pupils. We want to help school leaders create an environment where everyone is supporting each other when things get difficult, and celebrating together when something goes well. We know if teachers feel judged they will also begin to judge (blaming the pupil, their family, Ofsted inspectors or even their head). If staff are at the receiving end of their colleagues’ frustrations, they are more likely to be frustrated and so shout at the pupils. We want to help school leaders turn that around. They tell us all the time that when they shift their management
Take the lead

approach to staff, and model positive, collaborative behaviour instead, the staff shift theirs too. And when pupils notice staff put something special in place just for individuals, they in turn want to model that in the same way. It’s little surprise that peer mentoring is often developed after schools sign up to Achievement for All.

**Feeling the difference**

I’ve been in schools where disengaged pupils have banged through the door and slumped into a chair and looked at the ceiling and shrugged when a teacher has raised their voice demanding to know why they are late and where their pen and notebook are. I’ve seen what happens when the same teacher – having reflected and discussed with our coach what’s making that pupil frustrated and fearful and defiant – looks beyond the next angry entrance and simply shakes the pupil by the hand, pulls up a chair and, in the absence of a pen or pencil, offers the student their own. The result? A child who feels welcome and who wants to know more.

I’ve seen staff rooms come out from under a cloud of negativity, where the tension is tangible and there is always one teacher or other bringing the group down with the hopelessness of it all. I’ve seen that room slowly and subtly transform into a peaceful place to take a break, where the mood is positive, and the buzz is about ideas that might make things better for individual pupils after the break.

We continually hear – from our coaches, leaders and their staff – that our coaching, professional development and online support is second to none. Maybe that is because it gives everyone time to stand back and reflect on what they want out of their job and their school, and because it facilitates a shift in attitude from the “can’t” to the “can do”. Sometimes I think it’s because the solutions we bring to the table are often so beautifully simple, and make so much common sense.

**A bespoke approach**

Once we are working with a school the programme ceases to be ours and becomes the school’s – to shape and share as they see best. They have the Achievement for All coach to support and guide throughout and to help the school create a system of rigorous assessment and tracking of target pupils so schools can see what is working and what isn’t. Schools also have the opportunity to collaborate with other schools on the programme and to draw on the expertise of our professional partners and The Bubble: our hub of resources and professional development tools for teachers, of which more later (p122). This also requires recognition that the education systems that succeed are those that share good practice irrespective of the starting point. We know that within schools who are in special measures or require improvement there will be excellence. Equally, within good and outstanding schools there will be gaps – learning that can be gained from schools that are in special measures. The change we see stems from the openness to recognise and to accept that we can all support each other.

We have a huge box of tried and tested ideas – packed with out of the box thinking – that schools can dip into as they innovate and inspire their staff to try new things, covering everything from morning registration to after-school clubs. But in all cases the leadership teams shape and share

Out of the box thinking...

**A creative curriculum**

Writing levels in this junior school needed attention – it was an issue flagged up by Ofsted – so they introduced a creative curriculum to make sure children were totally immersed in a topic before being asked to write about it. For example, the school team reflected a topic on World War II in drama, art, history, music, PE and literacy so children across the class had the chance to learn about the subject in different ways. In one class the room was blacked out and the children dressed as evacuees and for the duration of the lesson were under desks or behind tables acting as “role play rooms in a family house” during a bombing raid.
the programme in a way that suits their setting and environment and, most importantly, the specific needs of the pupils who attend.

Introducing our coaches
The coach we introduce to schools – and each school on the programme has its own – works with the school leader, their leadership team and a designated member of staff who becomes the Achievement for All school champion. Our coaches are your professional peers, selected from a wide pool of applicants who have worked in both outstanding schools and in the most difficult and challenging settings. Many are leaders in the field of education. But they never come to us thinking they don’t have something to learn and they always feel they profit from both the initial rigorous training and ongoing support, and they tell us they are discovering new things about children with SEND and ways to reach them and other vulnerable children every day. They come back to us with knowledge gained in schools and from school leaders they work with, ready to discover more tools, information, expertise, and partnerships based on what those school leaders are telling them, with a commitment to helping the school promote progress. This is a continuing professional development programme designed to give school leaders continuing professional support.

We practise what we preach and promote when it comes to professional training. Our coaches are trained by successful school leaders who have been steeped in Achievement for All practices and research, and then enjoy two terms of peer support and ongoing CPD. The programme

“Schools are telling us the programme actually saves them both time and money over the period of two years. More often than not ideas they embraced for their target group they take to the whole school...”
Our programme’s priorities

- A positive ethos, helping school leaders create an environment where not only do they support teachers, but also where teachers support teachers, parents and pupils support teachers, and teachers support leaders and pupils.
- Ways to break down the barriers that are preventing teachers progressing and pupils achieving.
- A culture where everyone can give and benefit from constructive criticism and so effectively collaborate for the benefit of individual pupils.
- A peaceful and respectful environment where there are places and spaces to walk and talk. Where toilets are clean and staff rooms are peaceful, pleasant places to take a break.
- Raising self-esteem by ensuring staff are working at their best, and their skills are being utilised in the most effective way.
- Engagement with parents (more of this in Chapter 7). Schools are telling us the programme actually saves them both time and money (the stuff leadership teams often don’t think they have when they first meet them) over the period of two years. More often than not the ideas (including the structured conversation) school leaders embraced for their target groups demonstrates the need to improve or change.

We always see improvements in wider outcomes like attendance and behaviour in the target groups too. We know happier children learn more (see Chapter 7). Schools are telling us the programme usually saves them both time and money (the stuff leadership teams often don’t think they have when they first meet them) over the period of two years. More often than not the ideas (including the structured conversation) school leaders embraced for their target groups they decide to take to the whole school, so great the initial effect. They then report an overall improvement in behaviour and attainment as a result. At the same time research shows that the programme improves teacher retention, teacher attendance and teacher wellbeing. It allows staff to feel good on a Friday night when they finish work, and it allows them to feel good on a Sunday evening before they go back. It allows them to see every material has been written by a team of head teachers who have, between them, 770 years of experience creating schools where all children progress. Our training and materials are continually evaluated by the schools that participate and by the data we analyse on a termly basis. We then change or improve our programme when the evaluation demonstrates the need to improve or change.

Our coaches are never, though, asked to grade a school’s work. That is not their purpose. They come to listen to the issues leadership teams are dealing with and only come to the table with ideas, support and signposts to organisations once they’ve understood the context, setting and challenges a school is facing. We don’t include anything in our programme – and our coaches don’t bring any ideas to the table – unless we have hard evidence that they work.

We know that if school leaders are dedicating every hour leading staff and a school of pupils and parents, they need to see something over and above what they are already doing – and proof that it will make a difference. No school leader wants to lose or jeopardise what they’ve built, or to stall progress they are making. I absolutely understand that. We are here to build on, and from, what you are doing right now.

The results the school leaders give us, though, are demonstrating this works. Pupils in primary schools where we work are making better progress than national expectations for all students, an average increase in APS for targeted children (SEND, LAC, disadvantaged and underachievers) over 4.4 for reading, 4.4 for writing and 4.3 in maths, which is actually above that required by Ofsted for all pupils. We are seeing score changes of 6.7 (reading), 7.4 (writing) and 7.4 (maths) in our top-performing secondary schools.

A virtuous circle of positive activity

The partnership between schools (led by the head teacher, an Achievement for All School champion and the Achievement for All coach) is underpinned by what we call a ‘virtuous circle’ of activity in schools

- Achievement for All coaches contribute to developing the skills of school staff
- Achievement for All coaches contribute to developing the skills of school staff
- Achievement for All coaches contribute to developing the skills of school staff
- Achievement for All coaches contribute to developing the skills of school staff
- Staff develop their teaching and learning strategies, supported and informed by their coach with the aim of increasing opportunities for the target pupils
- School colleagues evaluate outcomes
- Outcomes are expanded to all pupils
- Outcomes are fed into further development of school staff.

Achievement includes but is not limited to:
- attainment
- experience of success
- progress

Access includes but is not limited to:
- motivation
- orientation
- self-concept
- self-efficacy

Aspirations includes but is not limited to:
- participation
- opportunity
- exclusionary barriers
- engagement

Achievement for All on the timetable

Take the lead
child as a conduit for their teaching and allows them to be a pedagogue in the truest sense of the word.

What is behind all this though are the hundreds of thousands of children in schools who are feeling they have a bigger say in their school life, are having a happier time at school, and are realising they are worth something. School leaders always believed this, of course. This programme helps them communicate that belief in a very practical way through their staff and through the curriculum until the child believes it too. It is not a magic bullet – it needs your commitment and your skills to make it work – but it is magical to watch.

**Mencap MITA programme**

**What’s this partnership about?**
It’s designed to help schools improve their use of teaching assistants. Mencap and Achievement for All could both see that teaching assistants deployed to work with a child with a disability or a child who is disruptive can actually become a barrier to that child getting all the benefits of teaching and of being part of a bigger class.

**So how does it work?**
Mencap fund training for school leaders with MITA (Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants), whose school improvement work is based on research conducted by University College London Institute of Education. Leadership teams complete a survey about how teaching assistants are used, and then work with trainers to examine the impact of that way of working and how this section of staff could better be deployed. What they learn is fed back into their school action plan and implemented with the support of the coach.

This is just in its pilot phase at the moment but we’re incredibly excited about the impact we’re seeing and the feedback we’re getting from leaders.

In conversation with...

Carole Dundas, who was a secondary school teacher and SENCO before arriving at Parbold Douglas Church of England Primary School in Lancashire, where she is now vice principal. This is a lovely school and it had a great reputation for supporting children with SEND before we arrived. “But the head knew we could do more,” Carole told me.
When we signed up for Achievement for All three years ago there were some teachers who thought we were trying to fix something that wasn’t broken. We had good results and parents would seek us out because we had such a good reputation for children with SEND. But it was clear, too, that these children were not making the same rate of progress as their peers. In the past that might have been expected and accepted – their needs, home life or motivation would, perhaps, have been used as an excuse every time we looked at their results. But our head teacher wasn’t happy and he’d heard about an Achievement for All Conference, held just after the report on the programme’s pilot study had been published. We went together and were bowled over by what other schools had to say and the stories they were telling us about the impact it had had on their students. We talked about it all the way home and knew it was something we had to do.

The problem for us was mindset. We had convinced ourselves as a teaching staff that we couldn’t do more than we already were doing for children with SEND. But it became clear, too, that we had become complacent. The change that was needed was not about extra time but about higher expectations for those children. The head worked hard to communicate his vision for change and for the future of the school. He put all his weight behind it. He knew he needed every single member of staff on board.

When the Achievement for All coach first came in there was a lot to learn. We had not been tracking data accurately or effectively and the coach sat with me for hours helping me establish a new tracking system. It was very hands-on support. He talked things through with the teachers, discussed ideas and interventions, and – of course – gave us all training in the structured conversation.

There was a sense at this stage that it would, actually, take time and effort. More training. More meetings. But if anyone remained at all sceptical at the beginning, the results quickly changed that. Everyone could see the difference it was going to make, not only via the more efficient tracking of pupils’ progress, but as a result of those structured conversations. Relationships with parents that we already thought were good became stronger and more positive. Then there was no question that we all wanted to go the extra mile to make this work.

The Achievement for All coach provided training for us on self-esteem and resilience and that became a priority for the school. One of the things that emerged was an audit of extra-curricular clubs and activities. It became clear that just holding these clubs wasn’t enough – simply accepting that children who struggled didn’t want to join in wasn’t on. We had to measure the impact the clubs were having, look at who was missing out and find a solution to suit them.

As a result lunchtime clubs were launched to specifically target and include children who were having social difficulties and who needed extra support so they could interact with others more easily. For example we set up a Lego club (which uses Lego therapy to promote social skills) and a chicken club – a two-year project that involved hatching eggs and looking after the chicks. We targeted specific children who were given the privilege of caring for the animals. So many children have benefited from these initiatives. Those children who would previously be left on the edge of the playground waiting for the bell at playtime are now queuing up at the hall door ready to play. It matters to them, and makes such a difference.

It’s also changed the way we teach. We have what’s called Lesson Study where teachers work together – for example by observing each others’ lessons – to improve their teaching techniques. We’ve also seen a shift in accountability so instead of support (eg teaching assistants) being responsible for children with SEND, the teachers have taken that on, working with the whole school team to ensure every child progresses. It is always the teachers who have that hour-long structured conversation and so they know each child better and want to take ownership of what happens next. As a result
children come out of class less often for extra support and instead, they
get it inside the classroom with their peers.

It isn’t always easy doing all this, and change didn’t happen
overnight, but every one of us feels everything has changed
for the better and that continues to be the case. There is no
going back now. Our recent results have been outstanding – our last Key
Stage 2 results put us 10th in the country – and we put that squarely
down to Achievement for All. The impact on the whole school – staff and
students – has been completely positive, and the changes we’ve made
are embedded forever. Elements we initially considered added extras are
now simply good practice.
I was chatting to a head teacher recently who was sharing the challenge he faced when trying to meet with parents of his vulnerable pupils – including those with SEND – to discuss his plans for progress with Achievement for All. When less than 20 per cent turned up at the school he organised a social to draw in more. And when he was still missing over half (of the 200) target group he decided to visit each and every one of them at home. That’s 100 home visits. He didn’t want anyone to miss out.

Meanwhile in the Midlands, I recently saw how a school leader had introduced a programme of mentoring among the staff, organising the day so they could watch and learn from each other, as well as feed in their own ideas about how their colleagues could better reach challenging or vulnerable pupils. And not far down the road from that setting, another leadership team looked at new communication channels with students and organised a survey of 130 pupils to glean their views on what they thought could help them achieve maximum progress. Having clubs linked to their studies was a popular idea and, soon after, the school launched an Achievement for All Sports Club and an Achievement for All Cookery Club, which led students to work on a BTEC qualification. The clubs were filmed and the positive outcomes fed back to the whole school team which immediately led to other departments taking up the idea.

I’ve got scores of stories like this, and each moves and motivates me because I can see the power of good leadership to promote the best kind of learning.

One of the things we are most proud of at Achievement for All is the framework of coaching and support our model offers leadership teams which inspires this kind of innovation and inclusivity. How it’s devised in a way that focuses on pupil progress while giving school leaders the chance to see and learn from others in their profession, and to share their own skills and ideas at the same time.

At the heart of the Achievement for All programme is the desire to promote inclusive leadership and to help you create a truly inclusive school, be that through new ideas or by enhancing the inclusive practices already in place. It offers a framework designed to help you work more effectively with the pupil as the focus, a system to lead reform from within.

The Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education outlines what inclusion involves in an educational setting (see panel). At the heart of it is the acknowledgement of the barriers that stop children (all children, not just those with educational needs or disabilities) being fully involved in and learning at school and, alongside that, a determination to find ways to remove those barriers. That comes with a commitment to utilising vulnerable students, including those with SEND, as a resource to create a diverse, tolerant, inclusive school rather than allowing them to be seen as problems to be overcome. It’s matched, too, with a duty to a sense of shared community, where every single pupil and member of staff feels valued by the leadership team and each other. This means that needs are picked up early, and teachers and heads are trained effectively to meet them, with a focus on outcomes. These include wider outcomes like friendship – an under-valued but vital outcome which can help children achieve the results they need to progress confidently when they leave school.

Clear vision
In an inclusive school with an inclusive leadership all these things become part
Leaders with vision

I can remember when I was in a mainstream school in London, after we’d moved here from Nigeria. I used to get called peg leg, and the kids would take the mickey out of the way I spoke. I was the only child with a disability in the school (my sister, who has Down’s Syndrome, went to a special school), and one of the few black children there. My parents were big on equality and respect, and we’d been taught to treat people as we wanted to be treated and to stand up for others. That gave me confidence, and a sense of purpose. When you have that confidence, you don’t want to bully, and you don’t want to stand by and see others bullied. That has stayed with me.

We know a lot of bullying comes from insecurity and ignorance. From a lack of understanding about differences. That goes beyond colour or disability. There are so many people who are marginalised and isolated and hurt because they are different. The biggest weakness of human beings is a lack of respect for difference, a lack of empathy for others. The best thing we can do for children is to tackle that. Then we can make a real change to the world they’re growing up in.

Ade Adepitan, MBE, Paralympic Champion, TV presenter and ambassador for the NSPCC

Making it real
Visions are notably achievement-orientated, inspirational and aspirational. Crucially, though, a school’s vision should be realistic and doable. It should be something which leadership teams have generated by collaborating with the school community and which is attractive and accessible to them. The aims which unfold and which are communicated to everyone must have a clear sense of direction and purpose. It should allow staff to see how their skills can be utilised as the school moves from A to B, building on everything that is good while reaching the place it wants to be. It has to include and value wider outcomes like behaviour, attendance, friendship and participation in extra-curricular activities.

These are all the means of creating operational plans: those objectives or targets to be met by teams, targets that can be reviewed as you evaluate progress of pupils. In our model leaders can base these targets on a high expectation for all pupils and positive engagement with parents, staff and other professionals they call on for support. It helps those of the school vision – those core values and beliefs which should be reflected in the school’s aims and organisational practice. Vision is, of course, one of those words used slavishly in management literature but we all know that a vision can easily become an intangible and ambiguous thing, sometimes so vague and dream-like it has little value in the day to day running of the school. When that happens we find school leaders, their staff and the parents frustrated because the vision doesn’t feel real, and good things don’t happen.

Making an impact
We’ve found that the Achievement for All model and the training and support it provides is having an impact on:
• The status of SEND in each school
• The development of clear strategies designed to support the progress of pupils identified with SEND
• A distributive leadership and the development of other leaders within schools
• Self-reflection and school self-evaluation
• Improving pupils’ learning, progress and wider outcomes
• Parental engagement – listening to and taking account of the views of parents and carers
• Revisiting the vision and values of the school
• Planning for sustainability and real change
• Achievement, access and aspirations for all children.
leaders turn core values and beliefs into tangible opportunities for all pupils (whose progress is tracked) and for all staff (whose development is prioritised and promoted).

Sharing the news
Leaders need to be able to communicate well so the whole school community can share and buy into the vision and collaborate to ensure it stays real and pupils continue to progress. They subsequently share information with each other about pupils’ progress (we ensure rigorous data collection to support this) and actively encourage formal and informal dialogue about strategies to improve achievement.

This is how you make things happen. This is how you create a continuous approach designed to drive your school forward forever. It is the kind of visionary thinking that becomes apparent in schools via formal and informal communications – in staff meetings, in conversations between pupils and staff in the corridors, during meetings with parents, during liaisons with other agencies and experts.

Collaborating for success
Leadership requires collaboration, between staff, parents and other organisations which can help optimise the educational experience. This goes beyond individual schools too. Effective collaboration – the stuff that delivers the results – relies on leaders working in and across schools with a sense of collective responsibility for vulnerable learners and seeing that all schools are different and can share strengths and good practises and that every school can learn something from another.

This does of course require enormous commitment, and the leaders I work with now reflect that through their behaviour. They are relentless in securing the most appropriate support for children and to providing high quality resources and engaging specialist staff when they are needed. They are committed to their staff, constantly developing and supporting them and recognising and celebrating their skills so they can be deployed to meet the needs of individual children. They ensure provision for vulnerable pupils. Discussion about their progress is high on the agenda at staff meetings and these discussions continue through the week and through the term. They value parents and carers and ensure that in their meetings with staff no one plays the blame game but instead recognises the hugely valuable resource that the parents and carers can be. This includes those sometimes hard-to-reach families of the most vulnerable children. Via coaching (in structured conversations, p61), the school can...
reach out to and learn from parents and carers for the benefit of their children, the pupils in the school.

When leaders demonstrate this kind of commitment, and give attention to individual members of staff and individual pupils, their team and their pupils and their parents see that. It becomes a powerful force for the greatest kind of inclusion.

Out of the box thinking...
Listening for learning

At this secondary school they wanted to improve classroom learning and had identified that many of their approaches to class disruptions had become negative. A teacher constantly demanding children ‘listen to me’ was causing pupils to stop and listen while being told off, but then see them simply switch back to their disengaged or disruptive behaviour afterwards. The school knew disruptive behaviour was preventing the teacher identifying students who were struggling with the lesson. With their Achievement for All coach they identified a programme to embed good behaviour called Listen-EAR and four teachers developed a strategy and a whole school plan, including a tool kit of ideas teachers can use in various situations. Essentially there is a set of rules pupil and teacher have to follow (eg pupil and teacher have to look at each other while responding to or asking questions), and a whole range of interventions and ideas teachers can use in various situations.
Early Support and the SEND reforms

Why the partnership?
Reform and change is good if it helps us reach children more effectively, but transition from one system to another and the change of culture that some of the changes represent can be an added stress for schools. We help leadership teams unravel and introduce the changes in a way that ensures no child falls through the gap and no school experiences more stress than they do benefit as they move forward.

What are the changes?
When the Children and Families Act became law in 2014 (with the new SEND Code of Practice: 0–25 years) the aim was to make the support schools and colleges give children and young people with special needs and disabilities more individualised. More emphasis is now given to the role of high quality teaching that differentiates according to individual needs and focuses on personal goals and individual outcomes, agreed with each pupil and their family. Early Support (which we’d been helping introduce in schools) was superseded and subsumed by the SEND Reforms. Statements, Learning Difficulty Assessments and School Action (and Action Plus) were replaced by the new single Education, Health and Care Plan and SEND Support. Schools are now obliged to have systems for identifying, assessing, monitoring and securing support for their students.

What difference could Achievement for All make to your school now?
If a school wants to embed the SEND reforms (and so the principles of Early Support) in a high quality way Achievement for All can show them how.

Leadership teams tell us they agree with the principles of the reforms but don’t always fully understand how these principles and ideas can be used in practice, or the immediate and powerful difference they can make. We also know that all children (not just those with SEND) can be vulnerable at some point in their schooling (for example after bereavement, when they develop mental health issues, when they become young carers) and that can, and usually does, affect how they progress. We help schools apply the principles of the reforms to reach all children who are under-achieving.

For more detail of this partnership, the history of our work with Early Support and what we can do for you turn to p137.

Dyslexia

This is the most common learning challenge teachers see in classrooms and a condition most often defined as something that affects skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. But we know for the one in 20 children who suffers severely, and one in 10 who might suffer milder forms, it is the co-occurring difficulties that can complicate things at school.

Dyslexia can impact on concentration, handwriting and other fine and gross motor skills, short-term memory (and so revision), organisational skills and on a pupil’s ability to organise thoughts and ideas on paper. Children can learn and remember spellings one lesson and have forgotten them all by the next as a result of short-term memory challenges, have all the answers to a test but not able to get them down on paper. They might constantly be in trouble for forgetting their PE kit or books or dinner money. The danger is a child’s potential and aspiration and enthusiasm can be lost as they fall behind their peers, fail in tests and start to view themselves as stupid. Without the proper understanding and interventions pupils can easily end up as one of the 20 per cent who don’t achieve qualifications at school.

While celebrities like Henry Winkler have done wonders raising awareness of this learning challenge, most will admit to having hated school (as he did) and to finding their niche and success in spite of a lack of support from teachers rather than as a result of what happened there. It would be
a mistake to see famous people with dyslexia as proof that it’s a problem that can be overcome. We need to be aware, instead, of the difficulties and potential mental health issues that can develop as a result of the bullying and lack of self-worth. Like pupils with autism, children and teenagers with dyslexia often – desperate for a sense of belonging and often with low self-esteem – befriend people or get into gangs who will lead them into trouble.

We work with the Dyslexia-SPLD Trust and know there are a range of strategies to promote inclusive and effective but subtle differentiation and class-based support. That has to include working with a pupil’s parents and carers to better understand what they’re good at, and how they best communicate ideas. Strategies can also include giving the whole class one instruction at a time, giving extra time for the whole class to process verbal instructions, subtly providing extra time for some students to complete homework or written assignments or offering pupils alternative means of recording information or taking tests.
There is a danger of all children under-performing if a school is not correctly identifying their strengths and abilities, and helping them – and their families – overcome barriers in their life to effective learning. They could be a young carer, the child of a parent in prison, they may have witnessed domestic violence at home, or come into school worrying about their parents gambling or drug problem or what they have overheard about the family facing eviction. If we categorise a child’s lack of progress as SEND it can be self-defeating. Labels can be useful to group children, and to signpost outside expertise you can call on. At the same time, though, we need to understand that there are a multitude of things that can prevent a child making progress.

Once you start unpicking the difficulties in the lives of children you see how it impacts on their education and attendance at school, and then you are duty bound to do something about it. We worked with our Achievement for All coach to create a completely new sort of staff team here we call associate teachers. Previously we had learning mentors, welfare officers, teaching assistants and now those same people have new roles. They’re not teachers, but they work in association and in parallel with our teaching team and their job is to remove barriers to learning by working though children’s social and emotional problems, or supporting parents and carers if they are struggling with behaviour at home, or their own problems (debt or relationships for example). We wanted every member of staff to have a special connection with students, and we wanted students to know there is one particular person looking out for them. One person they’d want to come to school to see. The result? Attendance went up to 96 per cent and academic outcomes went up in an equally impressive way.

We started to talk to the Citizen’s Advice Bureau (CAB) and became the first school in the country to train teachers to be CAB staff. At our fingertips we now have access to the resources and specialists that can help families. We had one mum who will claim the school saved her life by helping her deal with a gambling addiction. Helping her has had a hugely positive impact on her child’s future and education.

At the heart of everything is kindness. We never shout at children. They are children and if they are upset we help them, if they’re confused we help them, if they don’t do their work we help them. We work out what has gone wrong and find a way through. This is not soft or lovey-dovey, it is simply a fairer way of working designed to promote the children’s development and learning. And it works.

This does go against some conventional expectations of teaching and it took time to weed out and work on the shouters, and to get all staff to buy into it. But they have and I have nothing but admiration for them. That ‘don’t smile/show them who is boss’ kind of teaching doesn’t have a place here. The first thing I expect teachers to do is smile. To tell the children how much they’re looking forward to teaching them, and how excited they are by the timetable. I always ask a new teacher how they would demand respect. The answer I’m looking for is they couldn’t. They can only earn it through their actions. I know I am painting a perfect picture. We’re all human. If I raise my voice – and of course I do on occasions – I apologise for that. If a staff member cuts off a student in the corridor, I expect them to seek them out and apologise and hear them out. This school is a better place for the way we engage in a positive way with children. You can feel the difference you are making, and it gives us all an entirely different perspective on the day. We are no longer coming in to battle 30 angry kids in the classroom.

We focus equally hard on what goes on in the classroom, as well as what is going on at home. We have developed some great things in class with Achievement for All, and identified ways to reach children in less conventional ways. Achievement for All is the most focused and most flexible programme I have ever worked on. It’s co-operative and collaborative. They don’t dictate strategies, but work with us to understand what needs to be done, and then make a space to talk about strategies that might work. Achievement for All have this wealth of research and experience of what has worked in other schools like ours, and they bring that to the table.
We are highly collaborative here too. The associate teachers programme is part of that. But we share ideas and practice all the time. When my year 11s were starting their GCSEs all the teachers came together and sorted a timetable to ensure they could all help students revise. If one of the younger teachers shares with the rest of the staff room that they’ve had a disastrous lesson I can guarantee that the rest of the staff will step up to empathise and share ideas or offer to come along to help next time the teacher has that class.

The pressure around results is terrible and I feel most of the government’s reforms have had a detrimental effect on my kids’ attainment. The issue about retakes for example. I know if my children take a maths GCSE in year 10 and get a D their confidence will go up and they’ll work their socks off to get a C a year later. Reform has overlooked that. The same goes for vocational qualifications. They were really valuable, boosting children’s self-worth and belief in their ability to do well in the more conventional subjects. You can feel you are being forced down a pathway which isn’t the best pathway for your students. But we have created a different kind of provision to counter that, and Achievement for All have helped us develop this. For example, for some children who struggle we have separate classes where they focus on maths on Monday, English on Tuesday and then enjoy outdoor activities Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Our most vulnerable children work in small classes with teachers and associate teachers who have the skills they need. There is lots of nurturing and circle time and work done to build their resilience. Those activities don’t contribute to the measures the government use to judge us, but they allow us to put individual needs first and, as a result, help us create positive outcomes for children who might ordinarily end up in a PRU or being excluded. We haven’t excluded a child in this school for years.

There’s a lot in the media about behaviour in schools and naughty children. We believe that at that point when a child is being their worst we need to be at our best. That’s when I most need my skills as a teacher, and support from other professionals to make a difference.
Craig was at primary school but was frequently absent and falling behind. The more he fell behind the more he hated it. During a structured conversation the school discovered his love of gardening – he tended a window box at his flat. So they enlisted the caretaker to create a small plot in the school grounds which Craig could help develop. Craig was asked to come in to work on the plot each morning rather than going to class. The caretaker started to put words on the plant pots and got him counting seeds and measuring beds. The gardening not only helped him build his confidence in the school, but helped him catch up. Before long he was choosing to come in earlier to tend the garden before school started so he could go into class.

The structured conversation provides you and your staff with new skills in coaching and counselling, mentoring and meeting with parents in a way that changes the relationship you have with them...
Meet the family

One of the many great things we saw in our evaluation of Achievement for All’s pilot project was the impact of the structured conversations. I don’t think schools set out to make parents the problem, but we know that that is how many parents feel; many say they only get a call when there is trouble. It became clear that schools often think they know how to talk to parents, but of course this is about knowing how to listen. Achievement for All changed a one way communication system to a two way communication system and encouraged schools to give parents and carers space and confidence and the freedom to contribute in a really positive way. The data was clear about the difference that made. Leadership teams told us it was a new idea that had to stay.

Neil Humphrey, Professor of Psychology of Education at the University of Manchester, who led the team commissioned to evaluate the pilot programme of Achievement for All

has made expected progress and should keep up the good work, or that they haven’t made the expected progress and need to do more. Some school leaders recognise their staff – somewhat understandably if they’ve had a run-in with a family – do, too easily and too quickly, lay the blame for the child’s learning (absenteeism, attendance, behaviour, results) at the door of the family. And too often this impacts on the very target group – those children who are struggling – that we are here to help.

What prompts people to make rash judgements about each other – parents of teachers or teachers of parents – is their own lack of resilience. If a teacher makes a judgement about a parent or carer and their child without all relevant information, without professional support and without the skills to be able to really listen, then without this ‘structured conversation’ the child’s needs get lost.

The same happens when a parent has a negative experience of the school (one-off or sustained). They make judgements about the school and/or the teacher, stop going to meetings or socials, and the needs of their child get lost. What binds these two parties is the commonality of the child, and our aim is to build the resilience of that child by building the resilience of the teacher and the parent.

We have found – without exception – that the structured conversation does that, and with marvellous effect. While a commitment to the training might seem daunting, it provides you and your staff with new skills in coaching and counselling, mentoring and meeting with parents in a way that changes that relationship. As understanding develops so does the action plan for improvement and for achievement.

Reaching families where they are

We know if children are struggling and parents and carers are already disengaged this process can be difficult, with some parents not even wanting to come along to events to hear about a programme targeted at their child. This is the beginning, not the end of the matter. Schools have to find a way to reach those parents and carers. I’ve seen schools organise
curry nights, barbecues and Saturday morning meets at the local library. At one school the school leader visited the target group one by one, over the course of four weeks, until he was sure he had everyone on board. Then the structured conversations can start to change things forever.

School leaders tell us that effort is more than worth it because when they meet with and listen to what parents and carers are telling them, and unpack the baggage they share, everyone in the school gains a better understanding of the pupil – of their needs and the way they learn best. Then and only then can staff work with each other, with outside professionals, with other pupils (class peers, mentors and more) to make that learning process more effective.

There is a stack of evidence underlining the importance of parents and carers’ engagement with education and plenty that suggests parents today still do not realise they have a place in their children’s learning, or know how to get involved. The SEND reforms of 2014 aim to put the parent and child at the centre all choices pertaining to a child’s education, health and social welfare, and Achievement for All have been commissioned to reach schools with this important message and to explain how that will work (more on p139).

Achievement for All’s approach to structured conversations benefits from and builds on that research and those reforms but it goes further, ensuring that the child’s individual needs are completely understood and that the partnership between home and school is something meaningful, influential and life-changing. The framework we provide for schools does that in a number of important ways.

**How a conversation can change everything**

Firstly, it gives parents and carers the time and space to discuss their child’s interests and hobbies, fears and dislikes, friendships and foibles. What they like and don’t like about school. What they find easy and what they find hard. What a good day looks like and what a bad day looks like, and the impact it has. This, in turn, gives teachers a real opportunity to
Take the lead

Meet the family

discover and explore what works for the child, and to transfer what they have learned to the classroom.

Secondly, it gives teachers the opportunity to create the best kind of Individual Educational Plan, a programme for progress and positive schooling. Teachers are taught to listen and to listen hard to parents and carers. To feedback and agree (not assert but agree) what they could try to make their child’s life better and their learning more effective. To agree that if what they try doesn’t work they will try something else.

We know – because they often tell us so – that parents and carers feel valued and listened to in these conversations and are encouraged to talk about what might be the barriers to their learning too. In a zero judgement atmosphere, parents might talk about some of the difficulties they have supporting homework, a caring role the child has, the pressure on the family (work, social, health), or the kind of thing their child finds difficult (friendships, sleeping, school dinners). Nothing is considered unimportant. It all helps create a picture of that child’s life and their needs. This picture is never used to judge the family or explain away low achievement, but instead is used to understand each child, and to open opportunities for more support or new interventions or ideas to help the child progress.

Thirdly, in this new atmosphere of collaboration, it gives parents and carers the chance to better understand what is happening at school and to set – with the teacher – shared learning goals and agree ways they can help by supporting their child at home. It gives parents and carers an opportunity to communicate their aspirations for their child and to learn more about the school’s aspirations for him or her too. Something which, when modelled by parent and carer as well as teacher, has a huge impact on the pupil.

Crucially structured conversations make it clear to everyone that schools can’t reach and teach every pupil in the same way to achieve the same ends. This powerful process encourages teachers to talk to each other – to everyone who is in contact with the child from the last class teacher to the teaching assistant to the caretaker – and helps them reach each pupil in fresh, new ways. It is helping teachers see that they don’t need to know it all and will never know it all, and that part of this job is learning something new from each other and from the families and from the individual pupils every day. That brings out the best in teachers so they can bring out the best in each pupil.

First News My Way! campaign

Why the partnership?
This children’s newspaper has won awards for the impact it’s having on children’s learning and schools that subscribe have access to a treasure trove of resources to support their teaching in class. We teamed up with the newspaper to support their My Way! campaign, launched by their editor Nicky Cox and American film and TV actor Henry Winkler (famous for his role as The Fonz in the smash hit comedy Happy Days). It promotes the idea that children sometimes need to learn in their own personal way – a different way. Winkler is dyslexic and author of the children’s series Hank Zipzer: The World’s Greatest Underachiever.

How can this help your school now?
Henry Winkler and Nicky Cox visit schools on our programme each year, talking to children about Winkler’s experience, about the paper, and about the campaign. They want to inspire children – and they’ve inspired hundreds of thousands so far – to believe in their own talents and future. They want to support leaders and teachers who want to reach children in new, effective ways and to focus on learning for life. They want to lobby ministers (and they’ve taken this campaign to Downing Street) to ensure the curriculum meets the needs of all children in schools. You can read more about their work on p135 and hear Henry Winkler’s take on the project on p32.

Out of the box thinking...

Tea time workshops
To help parents and carers understand more about how literacy is taught this school introduced tea time workshops, providing refreshments and introducing word and spelling games they could do at home ... the response was fantastic.

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Chapter 8

In conversation with...

Catharine Jones, head teacher of Stoneleigh Academy in Oldham. When Catharine arrived at this primary school in Lancashire it was, she says, in dire circumstances. Five out of eight teachers were supply teachers rather than permanent staff and relationships with many of the parents were very strained. Catharine had been at an Achievement for All school before – the first to get one of our Quality Lead Gold Awards – so she quickly introduced the programme to Stoneleigh.

“The work we had to do wasn’t about the bottom 20 per cent in this school. It was about every single child,” she says. “And every single child has benefited.” In a remarkable turnaround, the school is now listed in the top 100 primary schools in England and the leadership and management of the school has been rated by Ofsted as outstanding.

Young carers

There are an estimated 700,000 young carers in the UK who care for parents and siblings and other family members, sometimes for many hours a day. One survey by the national charity Carers Trust found that more than four in 10 had no particular adult at school who recognised them as a carer, or who helped them as a result. It’s clear many families don’t feel able to share the caring role their children take on, especially if it is as a result of mental health issues in the home (a third of children support a family member with mental health or addiction issues).

Pupils can present as late, frequently absent, tired, forgetful, oversensitive or angry. They are often bullied as a result of their vulnerability and lack of friends. In fact their biggest challenge is often the lack of close friendships which might otherwise form naturally, both in and out of school.

There is so much schools can do once they recognise the work young carers do and the barriers to learning they face. Flexibility about arrival times, homework support, peer mentoring and support for the family can all make an enormous difference to their wellbeing and so their learning.

If your child is a young carer it is essential you flag this up to the school, and that they recognise that this is a problem affecting hundreds of thousands of children, with new ones joining their ranks every day – when they have a parent fall ill, or a new sibling arrives with a disability. To change things, talk about the kind of support other schools offer young carers and talk to them about what your child might need.
Our Achievement for All coach understands where we are at, the skills we have, and wants to help us use them well and to live our vision. I had my own ideas and own systems when I arrived here, but they fitted with the philosophy of Achievement for All and we work together. We look at data and discuss the issues arising from that. We discuss the progress each child is making and we review it regularly to ensure what we are doing is working. We look at the quality of teaching and it is so useful to get an outside opinion and perspective. It is all valuable, because if something is not right I want to know about it. If there is something I could do better, I want to hear about it. After all, what you are in education for? If you believe, as I do, that it is to improve life chances – then why wouldn’t you want to improve what you do? Why wouldn’t you ask, ‘What else could we try?’ And why wouldn’t you keep asking questions until you’ve reached every child in a way that works for them? The Achievement for All coach is so flexible and so supportive and some great things have come out of that relationship.

Around 95 per cent of children in this school come into reception way below base line and we want them to leave here and move on to secondary school having achieved above expected levels of learning. That is the business we are in. It is not just about achieving grades, of course. It’s about giving children a sense of their own worth, a belief in their future and the part they have to play in their community. That translates into grades, but we want them to feel they have a contribution to make because they can. We’re not doing it just because they’ll get a better grade or because they’ll get something back in return. We were really proud when a group of year 5s recently picked up a Pride in Oldham Community Award for their charity work and for promoting the message COOL2BKIND with the charity Forever Manchester.

You can’t do any of this if you work with children in isolation. We have to work with parents and carers too, to understand how to reach children better. The structured conversation was pivotal and the start of something very exciting here. There was a history of negative relationships. Some parents had become so frustrated they were verbally attacking staff. The change didn’t happen overnight and we worked hard to explain what we wanted to do – via home visits, coffee mornings and more. I think for some of our parents and carers extra conversations with teachers was greeted in the same way as an invite to take extra trips to the dentist. For others, of course, there was a sense of relief that there would be a forum to talk, and to be listened to. But once those structured conversations got under way all parents welcomed the chance to discuss what was and wasn’t working for their children. What help they’d like at home. What help they felt their children needed in school. For everyone the relationship has changed into something positive. There are no negative interactions here anymore. In fact parents who had fall-outs with staff in the past are, instead, now regularly asking what they can do to help here, and what they can do to help their children get on.

We sometimes find if parents have no aspirations for themselves, they have no aspirations for their kids either. We have helped change that. From year 1 children have a life plan that starts with what they’d like to be when they are older. They think about what they are good at, what they love to do, but also what they need to learn, what they need to experience to make the plan a reality. We want them to know they can be whoever they want to be and by working hard, working with us, we can help make it happen. We have children who want to be game developers and writers, zoo keepers and police officers, hairdressers and vets. It’s wonderful. It is also important we help parents see how well their children are doing – how kind they’ve been or how hard they’ve worked. We sometimes need to build the self-esteem of the parents as well as their children. We coach parents to celebrate what is happening at school so they can support it at home, and so that what children have learned at school is practised at home and in the holidays.

The school is in an area facing serious challenges, socially and economically. Drug and alcohol issues, dog fighting, domestic violence, unemployment... we see it all. But parents can be absolutely confident that we don’t judge anyone who comes here. We have
Take the lead

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that small nurturing group with that bespoke support they have all made phenomenal progress.

This kind of provision is always tailored to the children, not the other way round. With every intake and at every stage we are asking, what provision do individual children need and what interventions might help? Everything we do is carefully thought out and guided by data. We might not need that nurture group in a few years. We might do something completely different.

We have to be smart about our staffing arrangements too, making sure we utilise everyone’s skills to best effect. So we might move staff around because, for instance, the class four teacher would be better suited to the individual children we have coming into class one. Next year our class five – 30 children in all – includes children at opposite ends of the learning spectrum (some working at level 1, others at level 6). So we’ve decided to split the class in two, just for one year, and for three simple reasons – to enable us to give them more targeted teaching, to help those who are under-achieving, and to help the more able children go further.

When we have a vacancy we look at the budget and think about how creative we can be, and how we can best meet the needs of children.

We’ve employed a play therapist three days a week to work with groups of children on literacy interventions, and we’ve trained existing staff so they can do play-based interventions too. We have a learning mentor on the team now, and a big part of his work is doing home visits and supporting children back into school if for some personal reason their attendance goes down. We have over 95 per cent attendance at the moment.

It helps to know the ideas Achievement for All bring to the table have been tried and tested. As a leader I am also part of a team, and so I need staff to get behind what I am doing and to share in the vision I have for this school. It helps that my staff know my ideas aren’t crazy.

One of the many brilliant things that has come out of this new kind of relationship with parents is the launch of a new group of parent advocates – we call them Parent Representatives. They work to ensure all parents are represented and involved in school life, and parents also know they can come to the group with queries and concerns. Parents do naturally support each other, and they know they can talk to staff about anything at all. But this provides something in addition to our structured conversations. It’s a formal pathway to an advocate who can use the school facilities or phones to get the help that parent needs. We already had a strong if small PTA but it was made up of the same group of parents who came to everything, and we really wanted to involve those harder-to-reach families who didn’t seem involved in the school at all. So we targeted them, engaged with them, trained them and they formed the launch group.

Working with Achievement for All we’ve modified some of our classroom practices too. There used to be a teaching assistant in every classroom as a general help. Those members of staff are now timetabled to support interventions to narrow the achievement gap. These interventions are based on data analysis and specific to each child or group of children. For example in our year 2 there were 10 children who despite lots of interventions weren’t making the academic progress we wanted. They just weren’t responding to what we were doing. They had social and emotional needs, but not really behavioural ones. Some were withdrawn and wouldn’t speak. Some were angry about what was going on at home and didn’t know how to deal with those feelings. So we set up a nurture group – a snack and chat group we call it – run by a teaching assistant. They do some work, have lunch together as a family unit, and access other activities too. Not for the whole day – they still have the whole class experience – but as a result of being in their best interests at heart, and want to do what is best for their children. They know that and talk to us about everything from domestic issues to children’s behaviour to housing problems. They know they will be listened to and if we can’t help directly, we will signpost people who can.

We have to be smart about our staffing arrangements too.
We are a close team. There is a sense of gracious professionalism here. We can’t expect children to work together and support each other if we don’t model that. I try to identify what the staff are good at and what they are interested in and give them opportunities to progress in a way that benefits them and the children too. I don’t need to tell them they are doing a good job every 10 minutes, but they are recognised and they do have a sense of ownership of their work, their class, their data, their parents. They are incredibly proud of what they have achieved here.

That rubs off on the children. We encourage them to understand each other’s needs, and value each other. If we have a child with a disability or special need we don’t just work to understand them as a team of staff, we help their peers understand them too. That might involve explaining why some children will behave or respond in the way they do, but also what positive things they bring to the class. And children do embrace that. I see that every day. There is no calling children ‘weird’ or ‘annoying’ here. They are Richard or Mason or Luke or Sarah or Sally. They accept each other for who they are.
Take the lead

Simon arrived at his secondary school in Year 8 feeling anxious, wishing he could just give up. This was his third and in the last two he had been in trouble, been bullied, been behind and been – in his mind – disliked by teachers who seemed to call his name whenever anyone was talking or anything disruptive happened in class. Their expectations were, he said, that he'd be behind anything that went wrong.

Simon’s new teacher heard all this and more from his rather exasperated father and step mum who in the structured conversation explained some of Simon’s communication and concentration difficulties. When the teacher asked what did make him happy it was computer games, particularly ones he could play with others.

Simon’s teacher didn’t get it right straight away. She welcomed him and monitored him and although things in the classroom started well he wasn’t progressing, and he wasn’t making friends. After discussions with the rest of the school staff she tried extra support in the classroom but it didn’t make enough of a difference. She enlisted him in a lunchtime club to help him make friends, but he dropped out after three weeks, preferring to watch classmates playing football on the field. Then she decided to bring in the IT teacher who Simon seemed to like. She asked him to observe Simon in class, to talk to him at break and then, after collaborating with her colleague, agreed he might ask Simon if he’d like to help with a school IT project. The deal was he could miss language lessons and help the IT team work on the school website. Simon’s teacher then suggested he work with two boys in class on an IT project for the form. He could look at the history of computers in history, and design a website for the form in art. He would lead and a group of other students would be commissioned to help him develop it.

As a result, Simon’s doing fine now. He has friends, he has good GCSE grades, and he’s studying IT at A Level.

Chloe was identified as School Action Plus for severe BESD. She was aggressive and had frequent bouts of depression. She bullied and dominated her peers and had extremely low self-esteem. Interventions had included a learning mentor, art therapy and behaviour management strategies; things that had worked for other pupils with Chloe’s issues but they didn’t work for her. The teacher sat down with the leadership team and looked at the assessment and tracking of her learning and talked to Chloe about her own experience of school, and to her family about what made her happy. The school learned Chloe had her own dreams for after school and so the teacher worked with her to set targets and then offered one-to-one tuition to help her reach them. From having level 1 in each subject and no evidence of progress in year 5, she quickly achieved a 4b in writing and 5c in reading, three years’ gain within a year. This success led to a virtuous circle of improved self-esteem and social skills and a very different experience of year 6 and transition to secondary.

These are stories of teachers who got it wrong before they got it right. These are stories of teachers who needed help finding a solution. These are stories of teachers who knew they didn’t know it all. These are teachers who changed children’s lives.

A journey of discovery

One of the challenges facing teaching today is the curious idea that teachers should know it all when they come out of college and finally find themselves with their own class. This can, in turn, create a culture of fear, where those same teachers feel their leaders or inspectors are judging rather than supporting them, parents are complaining about rather than collaborating with them, and that neighbouring schools are competing with them rather than co-operating to raise the results of everyone in the area. It’s a culture that causes too many teachers either to give up their job or to struggle on demotivated, bemoaning their fate, the state of education, and the fortunes of the children around them.

We need to ask ourselves, both as school leaders but also as teachers, why our profession falls into this trap. Why do lawyers and doctors, journalists and film makers, artists and accountants come out of college and for the rest of their careers assist or shadow colleagues, seek out...
Teaching today

best practice so they can learn from it, and seek out the views of their target market to ensure they are doing the best job possible? Why do so many teachers meanwhile end up isolated and disillusioned, feeling undervalued and under threat?

I have been teaching for 35 years and am still learning. I learn something new every time I go into a school. I learn from amazing teachers, and I learn from teachers who – with the right support – could be amazing. I learn from Ofsted. I learn something every time I ask a colleague or coach to observe a lesson I deliver and comment upon it.

The wellbeing of staff is fundamental to the Achievement for All programme. Evidence from the pilot quickly demonstrated its impact on teacher retention, teacher attendance and teacher wellbeing. Put quite simply teachers said they enjoyed teaching more as a result. We continue to hear that over and over again.

We want teachers to recognise that initial teacher training is what it says on the proverbial tin: initial teacher training. It opens a door to a profession which allows its members to learn something every day, from every pupil they encounter, from every parent they sit down with, and from every team they are a part of.

School leaders we work with our modelling this, working with coaches on a process of improvement that in the end reaps better results, but which in between times also improves the lives and learning and achievement of everyone – staff and students – in their school. That process involves giving teaching staff accountability, confidence, a positive ethos and environment, and ongoing professional support.

The gift of accountability

We know that pupils who struggle, because of a special need or any other issue, are often given special help by a teaching assistant, or are perhaps moved into a SEND group. We understand why this is, and that it can help a pupil’s progress. But as a result teachers can subsequently lose touch

Teachers are under so much pressure, constantly having to reinvent themselves in a way that you don’t have to in other professions. Constantly having to meet targets by people who never work in schools. That’s why First News supports Achievement for All, because we see how they support school leaders and their staff, recognising the importance of their role and the size of the task they face. I can see the difference Achievement for All make every time Henry Winkler and I go into schools on the My Way! tour. The atmosphere in these schools is so collaborative – you sense straight away that everyone is there to support one another – and the results are phenomenal, in every way. We’re not just seeing the difference in academic results but a real change in the demeanour and happiness of the staff and students. And you have to be happy to do a good job as a teacher, and to learn as a student.

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with these pupils, rather than gain more understanding of them. They see reports from the SENCO or get feedback from the teaching assistant but their own responsibility for that pupil’s learning, and aspirations for him or her can be diminished in the process. If something is tried and fails, especially if it has worked for a student with a similar need, then it is too easy to assume that nothing else will work. We can see how this happens but know it needs to change.

A key feature of the national evaluation of the Achievement for All pilot was the way the framework enabled schools to give teachers responsibility for all the pupils in their classroom. This shift in emphasis – a re-alignment of accountability paths which has continued in all the schools we work with – has to be led by school leadership teams and has to be supported through focused staff training and the structured conversations. When that happens, though, it delivers astonishing results. And not just for the pupils. When teachers start teaching all pupils in a more effective way they benefit from an increased sense of professional responsibility and from the professional satisfaction of seeing their expertise reaping rewards – seeing needs met, expectations exceeded and sometimes a life transformed in front of their eyes.

This in turn encourages greater focus on the identification of those learners who aren’t achieving and raises aspirations and expectations for them too. Teachers stop seeing the learning needs of pupils with SEND or pupils who are under-achieving as the responsibility of the SENCO or the teaching assistant, but something which challenges their own teaching and learning, something which instils a desire in them to seek out more effective approaches in pedagogical practice.

**Promoting confidence and collaboration**

This process further enhances a teacher’s sense of professional confidence, which in turn opens them up to all the benefits they can enjoy as a result of collaborating with other teachers and with their pupils’ parents.

Too many teachers have lost confidence in the curriculum they have to deliver, even sharing their frustrations with pupils and parents. They need to feel confident about it, engaged with it, and excited about delivering it. If they can’t do that, how can pupils? Our coaches work with leadership teams to look at the effectiveness of staff and planning meetings. Could they move things around on the calendar so things are planned further in advance? If so, this would give all staff in the school a chance to share ideas, collaborate on lessons and think out of the box about how subjects are tackled – and how pupils who are under-achieving could be engaged. This focus on CPD and staff collaboration (and improved accountability) can create a new mood in meetings with a new focus on good ideas to help promote progress, and working partnerships with outside agencies to promote a better understanding of the pupils in the class.

Teachers need this to happen. They need to feel valued by everyone: their colleagues, their pupils, the parents and carers, and outside agencies they call on for help. They need positive feedback and to know they are working to their strengths.

**Creating a positive environment**

One of the things we ask leadership teams to look at is the school environment to make sure it supports this. Are there spaces where teachers can walk and talk and discuss the issues they are facing? Is the mood positive in those spaces, or dominated by the teachers who like to complain about their class or curriculum and so create barriers for themselves and stress for others? The sometimes-overlooked details can be important here. Are the toilets clean and pleasant, and is the staff kitchen or staff room a pleasant place to take a break? All these teachers can deliver more if they...

• know their pupils and how they learn
• have high aspirations for their pupils
• give children a sense of ownership
• have a more personalised approach to learning
• keep good records
• set and assess targets using a common practice for all students to ensure single teacher subjectivity doesn’t influence what happens next
• expect to see identifiable progress each term.
things matter. Not only to underline how much staff are valued, but also to create spaces where they can grow and learn.

**Making inclusion part of everyday life**

Teachers need to know they are not just working in school to help others learn, but also to learn more themselves. To learn something every day. With the support of CPD, teachers can enhance their practice. And with the support of data-led discussions with the leadership team and more collaboration with other staff they can develop a more personalised approach in the classroom and so find a way to help every child succeed.

The processes we share with leadership teams aren’t rocket science. They are, in many ways, common sense. But they are often overlooked. They can, however, open the door to more inclusive practice so the teacher can meet the diverse needs of pupils in a way that benefits everyone in the class. In essence it causes what was previously considered to be an extra practice – inclusion – to become rooted in every day practice.

**Kids need confidence too**

Too many teachers still don’t recognise how crucial a child’s confidence is to their success in the classroom. Teachers who do recognise this can help motivate children and move them forward. Everything these teachers do is constructive – from their assessment of children, their feedback to parents, and their development of targets. All these elements help the children navigate their way through school ready to meet challenges and to strive for what they want to achieve. Identifying children who lack this confidence is crucial and in schools where we work the leadership teams and their staff hear parents’ views, and look at what’s happening outside the classroom that is having an impact.

**Pupils progress further if they...**

- access the curriculum, and that’s dependent on feelings of confidence in themselves and their ability to learn
- feel understood by the teacher
- feel valued by the teacher who aspires for them to do well and who has agreed targets with them
- feel valued and included by their classmates
- feel supported at home by family who have agreed targets with the teacher through structured conversations.
Many leadership teams see breaks and lunchtimes as a chance for staff to take a breather and for children to develop social skills through play. However, this fails to take into account that for those children who struggle socially, or don’t have social skills to develop, or who are learning anti-social behaviour from those around them, these breaks negatively impact on what happens when they go back into class. We see breaks as a time to support children’s learning and sense of belonging and so their learning and progress. See Chapter 13 for more about these wider outcomes.

Out of the box thinking...
When pupils arrive after the bell

We always take a look at what happens at the start of the day in schools, a hot spot for vulnerable children who might turn up late to school because of problems at home, because they’re being bullied and are scared to come in, or because they are anxious about something in class. And we so often see those children receive a late ticket as they enter, a reprimand from the receptionist and then more of the same when they finally get to class. We always ask schools what this is meant to achieve. How will the pupil feel when he or she finally takes their seat? Misunderstood? How will they look to any bullies in the class? Vulnerable? How will that help their focus in the next lesson? Not at all?

In Achievement for All schools we have encouraged a new sort of welcoming party for children presenting frequently anxious and late and this has had a hugely positive impact, an impact that often starts on the first day. A teaching assistant who is free at the start of the day is given a list of children to look out for and trained to welcome them to school, reassure them about the time and then gently escort them to class to ensure they receive a warm welcome when they get there. If there are real struggles, a nurture room where the student can meet and chat to a nominated mentor and/or member of a pastoral care team can start to break down the barriers before school days become unbearable.

Chapter 10

In conversation with...

Dame Sue Bourne, head teacher of The Avenue School, a Special Needs Academy in Reading catering for children from the ages of 2–19 with complex special needs including those with significant health needs and autism. The school is commonly accepted as the oldest purpose built special school in the country and has Specialist Status for Performing Arts, working with pupils who have complex special needs in dance, music and drama. As a music teacher I was blown away by their lessons when I first visited. Sue Bourne’s school has long been rated by Ofsted as outstanding for its effectiveness, leadership and outcomes but, she says, “Outstanding should never be a place of rest.”
We have a teenager here who has a degenerative condition. He can see every day everything his able-bodied brother can do that he can’t. He was definitely a head-down rather than head-up pupil, and no matter what we tried to lift his mood and to raise his confidence it wasn’t quite enough. In the structured conversation we learned he was completely obsessed with football and with Manchester United in particular. We knew he liked football and to wear a football top, but this passion of his had never come up when we’d spoken to his parents. So we organised his IEP targets to integrate football and his love of it into his learning. That led to him designing a new football strip for the school as part of an art project. His design was great – and when the Reading Football Club (RFC) players heard his story they took his design and worked with their kit manufacturer and the pupil to create a one-off kit for RFC first team. They dedicated a whole match to him and wore his strip. Afterwards, they sold the shirts on eBay to raise money for the school (we were able to buy a wheelchair-accessible people carrier with the proceeds). That same pupil is currently doing a week’s work experience with the club, something he previously wouldn’t have dreamt of. The whole project exploded. It was a real joy to see the whole thing unfold, and we now have the football shirt worn by the club captain proudly displayed in school for good reason.

Just as we learned more about what happened at home and brought it into school, we took what happened at school to the home setting.

My team all remember that first meeting with the Achievement for All coach. He was talking about building the relationship with parents, and issues such as aspiration for our children. He received a somewhat prickly reception. The staff really believed our communication with parents was good and knew many of them simply aspired for their children to remain alive, focusing on one day at a time. Some parents weren’t, the teachers argued, thinking about the future. Some teachers worried it would be insensitive to ask about ambition and aspiration. And as for barriers to learning it seemed obvious. Our children have complex special needs.

My team were, in many ways, right about all those things, but we also had a lot to learn. After our initial training – and more importantly the initial structured conversations that came out of that – we were blown away by the overwhelming positivity of parents, to what we wanted to do, and by what they were telling us. We had under-estimated how much aspiration matters to our parents, and the difference it can make to pupils. The next time our Achievement for All coach came to the school all resistance had gone and he couldn’t get a word in edgeways. We were full of ideas and stories and questions.

One of the many good things that came out of that was the re-engagement with some of our KS3 parents. As children get older and parents become really confident in what happens here they do tend to disengage with the school. It is such a common pattern we had excused it. We tapped back into this cohort of parents and the benefits of that have kept coming. Sometimes it can be something small that makes the biggest difference. One parent talked about how her teenage son wanted to help her out at home, for example by being able to stand at the kitchen counter. We had, of course, talked about his progress, around things like walking frames and physio and more. But not really about how this translated into his home life. So we built new things into his learning to meet these very specific ambitions at home.
Bullying

Time for us to make a change

When the Children’s Society’s 2015 Good Childhood report suggested that children in England are unhappier at school than their peers in almost every other country surveyed, bullying was the key issue. Again. School leaders have long dismissed the idea that bullying is an inevitable part of playground life – most recognise how much a child’s wellbeing and happiness impacts on their ability to learn, and how much that wellbeing and happiness depends on how they are viewed and treated by their peers. Yet even knowing this, the same leaders see staff getting very little training in bullying at college, and – perhaps not surprisingly – still have very different views of what bullying is, or how it should be handled.

As leaders we can help make a change, not only to statistics in reports, but to young people in our school today – starting tomorrow. Leaders I speak to see staff getting very little training in bullying at college, and – perhaps not surprisingly – still have very different views of what bullying is, or how it should be handled.

Lots of good things like this have developed via our work with our coach. As a result of the structured conversations we have changed the way we develop students’ IEPs. In the past we followed a solid but standard format recording maths, literacy, performing arts etc. for each pupil, but as we’ve worked with parents more closely the IEPs have become more relevant and personal. If maths isn’t a priority we don’t list it as a priority (although we obviously keep teaching numeracy). The coach worked with us to develop an IEP that more effectively measures and monitors wider outcomes (be it learning to sit on a chair or learning to play or learning to share). We also worked together on what we call the STAR system, a much more visual and accessible way to present all this information to parents. It’s also a more effective way for us to evidence progress incorporating these wider outcomes and more personal attainments for our own records and for any external challenge that comes our way.

As a leadership team it is essential we look ahead, and keep challenging ourselves. It is essential we look hard at our children and where we can take them next. Achievement for All didn’t pretend they knew more than us about the students here. They listened hard to what we were doing and became part of the team, bringing ideas and experience that added something extraordinary to our school. I am now a complete champion of what they do.
I visited a school recently that has a local authority ‘anti-bullying’ certificate prominently displayed in the reception area. I was there to meet the mother of a girl called Sasha who has endured years of bullying, because – I was told – her teachers had not properly understood her isolation and fear, or why she was missing school.

As teachers it is too easy to misunderstand what is behind our students’ behaviour, their lack of enthusiasm – or even lack of attendance – in our classes. But it’s also – I’ve learned – too easy to overlook the impact our misunderstanding has. Too easy to hope that the problems will go away when a student leaves in year 9 or 11. That what learning they’ve had, and self-esteem remains, will be enough to see them through the next stage. That we will have done the best we can.

Sasha was adopted at 17 months having suffered severe neglect. She was underdeveloped in all areas and below the lowest percentile in physical growth. Her new parents followed a strict regime of diet, exercise and stimulation and by the time she started school Sasha was happy, loved, and liked by other children. At primary school, though, it became clear she would be a late developer and that she had learning difficulties. Her parents were soon hearing she was ’lazy’ and ’not trying’. She was often ‘teased’ by boys – with both verbal and physical abuse. Name calling, tripping up. You know the kind of thing.

She was, her mother told me, excited and optimistic when at 11 she had a fresh start at secondary school. She loved those first weeks, was excited by the classes and signed up for lunchtime clubs. But assessments and subsequent setting of pupils placed Sasha in the lowest groups which included children with a range of challenges, including behaviour and emotional problems. I discovered then that lessons were often directed by the weakest teachers, with many covered by supply staff who admitted they found the class noisy and ’difficult’ with the language ’blue’. There were, in fact, days when Sasha did not speak at all. The teachers were pleased when Sasha formed a friendship with a girl with mild autism, but didn’t realise, they said, that both spent break and lunchtimes hiding away from tormentors, their ambition being to escape bullies and their aim just to survive.

One boy in her learning group, who had his own problems and was known for his deviant behaviour, threatened to sexually assault Sasha. Her health began to suffer, resulting in ’cluster headaches’ and glandular fever, and absence from school became more regular than attendance. Her parents received notes concerned at the level of absence.

When a child is vulnerable we know that bullies take advantage. And so it was in this case. Sasha’s friend formed a bond with another girl in the learning group who decided to send texts to Sasha, saying she’d fail her exams and that she no longer had any friends. The messages became threats to beat Sasha up if she spoke to other girls. The teachers recognised that this behaviour wasn’t appropriate but did nothing to stop it, or to reach out to Sasha to solve her problems. Instead, they accepted a doctor’s certificate advising the school examination office that Sasha should be allowed to take her exams away from the stress of other pupils.

The bullying continued and Sasha was threatened at home. She did not attend the school prom, an event she’d dreamed about for years. Her mum said she’d lost her smile years before. But no one seemed to notice. Instead of starting a Level 3 BTEC programme Sasha returned to school joining an access course, feeling safe away from the bully who was attending college. But it all changed when the bully returned to the same school, to join the same access course, sabotaging Sasha’s attempts to move on, her bullying escalating to death threats and stalking outside...
Bullying

I don’t think many adults understand how hurtful and damaging bullying can be. Even now, there are still parents and teachers who believe – incredibly – that it’s a natural part of growing up and that we should simply live with it. I was bullied when I was at school when I was 12 because I was overweight and bad at sport and I have a feeling that, in the early sixties, my parents thought it might make me more of a man. A stiff upper lip and all that.

The truth is that bullying doesn’t do anything useful for the bully or the bullied. No good comes out of it. There is nothing beneficial and nothing character building about it. Positive experiences, positive peer groups and positive reinforcement are what build a strong character. Not being hurt or afraid or isolated. Not hurting or causing fear.

Children often ask me if I have my old bullies in mind when I write my books and the fact is that – yes – Alex Rider has vanquished one or two unsavoury characters drawn from my past. I still remember escaping into the library when I was at school, losing myself in the stories I found there. I wanted to be Hal or Roger in the Willard Price adventure series. Or Tintin, travelling the world. That was when I started writing stories too.

I was lucky, but I know that today, many children leave school with their self-esteem in tatters as a result of what has happened there. The damage has been done.

Anthony Horowitz, OBE, Author and Patron of Kidscape, part of the Anti-Bullying Alliance

But the family home. Six months later after arrests, police reports and more the ‘bully’ received a two-year restraining order, a five-year suspended sentence and community service. Sasha has applied to join a residential animal care course in a neighbouring town. Whether or not she gets this is uncertain. Her academic assessment, low attendance and school report may go against her. The report does not cover the loss of her smile, her isolation, fear or the cause of her absences.

This isn’t an unusual tale. I hear this over and over; perfect illustrations of how when we ignore bullying behaviour we leave the learning and the future of our vulnerable learners to chance. The bullying I am talking about can range from those first destructive teasing words at primary through to the ill-mannered assaults that are too often allowed to go on within learning groups at senior school. The problem rarely goes away when the pupils leave school, even if the bullies do. Instead it can shape a young person’s future, and continue to cause damage long after they are no longer in our class or care.

It’s a problem we have to address while children are with us.

The government has several guideline documents on bullying and asserts that there is no place for bullying in schools and that no child deserves to suffer the pain and indignity bullying can cause. There are subtle implications of this as well – ‘teasing’ should never be brushed off as banter when there is intention to hurt and teachers, children parents need to know, and act on, the distinctions between banter and bullying.

The statistics, however, still reveal a shocking picture of the problem in our schools today and we know those with SEND or who are in any way vulnerable are at higher risk.

For example The National Autistic Society says that four out of every 10 children with autism are bullied; some 70 per cent of these children are taught in mainstream settings. Dyslexia charities report a huge problem among those who face this learning challenge. The Carers Trust report that half of school-age carers in the UK are bullied; this may be up to
350,000 children. And it isn’t a problem that goes away as children get older. One survey showed more than one in 10 calls to ChildLine were about bullying and nearly a third of them were made by young people aged 16–18 years old.

As I mentioned above, it’s clear during the training sessions we do with schools and from other anti-bullying initiatives that teachers are not always clear about what bullying is, how their school’s anti-bullying policy can be used for the best effect or – crucially – the impact it has on children’s learning and their long-term future.

At the same time almost every teacher can see, when given the time and space to look at and discuss bullying, that students who see others covering their ears every time they talk, or find themselves excluded from groups during class or on school trips, or who are attacked by peers on Facebook for where they come from, how they dress or how they learn, can shape a view of themselves as worthless and the world around them as something that can’t be trusted. Those teachers come to realise that if, as adults, they dismiss that experience or those children’s worries or fears by telling the student to simply log off Facebook or play with someone else or toughen up and ignore it, those children can grow up believing they should put up or persist with relationships which are hurtful or abusive. They go through school believing that they shouldn’t share their worries or fears with adults as they won’t be acted on, even when those worries and fears are more serious. Studies have shown victims of bullying, including children who are very able, stand a much lower chance of doing well at school and are more likely to experience depression, anxiety and poor physical health as adults. This is a society-wide issue rather than just a school one and leadership teams must see that they and their teachers cannot afford to ignore it.

We know, too – anti-bullying organisations tell us – that while tools to tackle bullying are essential, strategies to prevent bullying happening in the first place are even more important. Your vision for the school can help develop a culture where children are supported and encouraged in
free time to be inclusive, and where differences are celebrated. It can also help ensure that bullying is not overlooked or even tolerated – that all staff communicate in their words and behaviour that bullying is not acceptable and will never be tolerated.

**What is bullying?**
Bullying is defined as the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It’s where one individual or a group of individuals exert their feeling of superiority over those who are perceived as weak or vulnerable. Bullying can be physical, verbal or psychological. It can happen face-to-face or through cyberspace.

**What is bystanding?**
Children who are bullied are just as hurt, though, by those other children – sometimes children they considered friends – who stand by and do nothing when the bully strikes. Research shows that we are all less likely to do the right thing when we’re among other people who are doing nothing. We know that when children are in a group who are bullying (or in a group who are doing nothing about someone else’s bullying), they are less likely to do the right thing than when they are on their own or with their family. Parents and teachers sometimes make assumptions about how children will behave if they show understanding at home or volunteer positive feedback in class discussions about friendship, respect and inclusion. It’s clear, though, that if those same children are in a school where bullying is not tackled, or those who appear vulnerable are not valued, they might feel powerless to help – even though they know they should – and might even fear being ostracised if they do. That then has knock-on effects not only on the initial target of bullying but on their own feelings of self-worth or their learning when they get back into class.

**So what to do?**
We work in partnership with The Anti-Bullying Alliance and offer anti-bullying training in schools where we provide staff with an understanding and strategies to take back to their class. Teachers do not get this level of

**The growing problem of cyberbullying**
Nearly all children have access to the internet at home or school and there is an increasing number who use smart phones or tablets to share messages and photographs as a tool to build friendship. As more young people do it, so the need grows in all children to belong to those same online social circles. While technology brings huge benefits – it facilitates new learning and access to knowledge and can, indeed, build friendships in schools – it has also created a new platform for bullying and an increasingly challenging one. Bullying is no longer something children can escape from when they go home or are away from their peers. It follows them on to the bus and into their home. What’s more – protected by distance and often anonymity – young people send messages online they might not say face to face, and see no impact of their aggressive or mean behaviour. Sometimes methods to imply a joke – using emoticons such as a classic smiley face ironically – can only add to a victim’s feelings they are being attacked and laughed at. While there has been an enormous amount of media attention given to the damage done to adults by cyberbullies, studies on its impact on students in schools and college are still in their infancy. It is enough to know that it is understood to be a contributory factor in self-harm and teenage suicides.

**Behaviour to be aware of...**
- Harassment: Content that includes threats of harm or is highly intimidating.
- Denigration: Put downs or “trolling”, involving sending or posting harmful, untrue or cruel statements about a person to other people.
- Masquerade: Sending or posting content pretending to be someone else.
- Outing and trickery: Involves engaging in tricks to solicit sensitive or embarrassing information or images that are then made public by sending the material to others or posting it online.
- Flaming: Sending angry messages directed at a person online.
- Exclusion: Actions that intentionally exclude a person from an online group.

training at college and 95 per cent of those we work with rate what they learn in our sessions as outstanding and agree that they shift the way school staff look at the problem. They learn:

• That as confident adults they might see name calling or exclusion from games as a trivial thing, or even part and parcel of playground experience. But their view of behaviour isn’t the issue. It’s how students feel about it that matters. The child’s perception has to be the starting point. The measure of how hurtful something is has to be seen through their eyes, not yours or the teacher’s. A student might feel isolated because they are never picked to be in a group in class and have to be manipulated into one by you. Or they might always feel excluded from a game in the playground by children they say they can’t play or that they’re annoying. They might hate the way others make fun of their clothes or voice or the way they learn. How they feel about that matters – and it will affect their learning unless it is tackled quickly and effectively.

• That allowing a culture of popular versus unpopular children feeds an imbalance of power where bullying can thrive and cause some children who are confident and popular to cross the line and become mean and manipulative. There is a fine line between ‘you can’t play’ and ‘you can’t play because everyone hates you’ which is easily crossed if children aren’t taught the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. This problem can be prevented by creating a culture where there is more balance and greater understanding between students, for example via peer mentoring.

Putting homophobic bullying on your agenda

We are seeing a shocking rise in homophobic bullying in school. According to one survey reported by the charity Diversity Role Models 66 per cent of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students suffer bullying at school and half of them skip classes as a result. This kind of bullying can start with gay ‘banter’ (the ‘you’re so gay’ line) but can be hurtful and isolating if children have gay parents, think they might be gay, or to anyone when the term is used to mock them or their looks or hobbies. It’s also promoting discrimination by suggesting being gay is rubbish or weird. Anti-bullying policies need to address this issue and give teachers the skills and tools so they have a clear response to gay banter and can challenge children to think about the impact of their words, and so they can think about policies that can prevent the rise of this kind of abuse. Diversity Role Models who work in schools around the UK know a lot of gay bullying develops from established gender stereotypes so, for example, boys who don’t like football but like to dance, or girls who like football but not fashion become targets. But they say when this subject is aired and discussed staff and students recognise that this isn’t just about gay people, it’s about accepting and respecting everyone in the classroom, whatever their differences.

• That children can bully for all sorts of reasons – they might feel insecure about their friendships so not want to share them (and so exclude others). They might feel lonely, or even be on the end of bullying behaviour themselves; or they might not have been taught to understand differences between them and their peers, so don’t realise just how damaging their comments can be. They might not realise how much they are missing out on, and how much their lives could be enriched by a more inclusive friendship group. Bullies need help too, otherwise they’ll go through school feeling they can progress by being powerful and manipulative and get away with being top dog. If they never learn their limitations they won’t learn how to deal equably with failure and success or understand healthy interactions between themselves and others. Schools should help them become the agents of change in their own lives with strategies that promote understanding and inclusion. This will then have a positive impact on their future relationships, in college, work and life.

• That teachers need to demonstrate the values and attitudes they expect in others, and to understand how that builds character and resilience. There is a whole range of strategies that can help here. For example, we ask teachers to think about group work sessions or team play, both powerful learning tools. We ask them to think about what happens to those children who get left out each time and have to be manipulated into groups by the teacher, or sit on their own on trips, or who are coerced into a complaining team. We ask them to think about how their confidence is eroded and their self-worth damaged every time that happens. If, on the other hand, the teacher chooses the groups and partners and establishes the unquestioned expectation that every pupil has to work with every other pupil, then group or team work can build solidarity, build new relationships and promote diversity and tolerance.

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What your school needs to know about…

Mental health

Hundreds of thousands of children and teenagers in the UK have been diagnosed with a mental health condition and we know a huge proportion of adult mental health issues first become evident at school. We know, too, that many more have not been diagnosed and pupils are still suffering alone.

The very nature of mental health problems – the range of causes and symptoms that can present – means you might only properly understand what is going on if a parent or pupils tells you. Until then their symptoms – absenteeism, a lack of focus, poor performance in class, aggressive or unsociable behaviour, self-harming – may not be recognised as a symptom and trigger disciplinary measures rather than appropriate interventions, and/or lead to students being stigmatised by other pupils and even other teachers. Most of us would find it shocking to see a pupil receiving this reaction as a result of a broken leg or a case of chicken pox. But, even with all we know about mental health, pupils who are facing problems are still mistrusted and can be made to feel ashamed of how they are feeling by the very way we react to them.

This is one of the most important issues facing schools today and the Achievement for All programme and its focus on pupil wellbeing wants to embrace it. We need to improve mental health literacy so we can challenge misinformation and misunderstanding around mental health issues. We want to support teachers so they can call on appropriate interventions and support. We also want to promote an understanding of how we can help prevent mental health problems among pupils, for instance by tackling bullying (which we know is linked to issues like depression and anorexia) or by supporting children and teenagers with SEND to reduce stress and anxiety around exams or transition.

Helen Tyler, head teacher of St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School in Central London which has over 220 children on the register. She arrived at the school when it was in very challenging circumstances, but has embedded a culture which delivers excellent progress and outstanding outcomes for children from all backgrounds. The school attained an ‘Outstanding’ judgement from Ofsted in February 2014 and has been a national finalist in the Pupil Premium awards. Helen enlisted Achievement for All to support her huge ambitions for the setting and its students. “We have a no-excuse culture at this school,” she says. “It is our responsibility to find a way to reach children and help them learn.”
We are on a mission to change children’s lives. My view as a head teacher is you don’t work here unless you believe that, and unless you are willing to go above and beyond to deliver that. We are in the business of creating happy, resourceful, resilient, independent individuals who can learn alongside each other and collaborate with each other. Every child can succeed and flourish, but we have to find the right personal learning pathway for each of them. To do that we need to make sure children feel safe, secure, included in friendship groups – the strong foundations they need if they are going to learn and to thrive.

We have a significant proportion of parents who have had a poor education – some can’t read or write, and English is a second language for 44 per cent of our families. Nearly one in 10 children is on the SEND register too. But every family wants the best for their children; they all want to help them at home. Often they don’t know how.

We have worked to reach out to families – one family, one child at a time. We continually review and develop our practice to support ever more parents in engaging positively with their children’s learning. The recent move to structured conversations, a new type of parent teacher meeting, is the most recent of these initiatives, but it has unleashed a new and palpable energy around the school. Previously teachers had seen parents and carers twice a year at a parents evening, perhaps getting 10 minutes with those who turned up. Now we have termly 30-minute structured conversations for every pupil. Pupil Premium money funds the supply teacher cover we need to make that happen. Teachers could see straight away that this would make a difference both to their teaching and to the children in their classroom, particularly in terms of consistent goals, messages and adult feedback at home and in school.

Parents’ evenings previously tended to be all about progress – where the child was at. The structured conversation has shifted us into another gear, involving parents and carers and children in a new way. We meet with the children first – looking at targets and talking about their likes and dislikes, what helps them learn and what doesn’t. Then we share that with parents and carers and hear their views and ideas, not only about the child’s learning, but about their wider aspirations for their child’s wellbeing, friendships, confidence and more. Surveys indicate that parents are 100 per cent positive about the experience. They feel that instead of being told what they should do (or what their child should be doing differently), they are being invited into a very positive partnership and are finding new ways to help. Their view is heard and valued and helps shape what happens next.

This is just one thing Achievement for All has brought to our school, but it is such an important thing. It’s transformed the quality of our relationships with parents and carers, especially in terms of their own expectations for their children. In fact, when parents and carers see what is possible their expectations and demands continue to grow so that parents’ aspirations for their children become a force for change. We had, for example, a pupil in year 2 who couldn’t read or write and found it hard to fit in with others. She was often tearful. This process has undoubtedly helped her progress. She is now in year 6 and has ambitions to be a lawyer. We also had a year 5 pupil with limited language and communication skills which led to behavioural difficulties. His mum found it hard to cope and didn’t engage in his learning at all. Personalised support made such a difference to him. We were able to identify barriers that were holding them back, and remove them. We worked, for example, with external agencies to help his mum sort out housing, which gave her a better base and more time to help her son. He is now making expected progress for his age in reading and writing, and above expected progress in maths. The transformation in him and his mum’s outlook is fantastic. In fact now she is constantly pushing me to raise the bar for her son.

I, in turn, expect my staff to raise the bar. I demand a lot of them. We have a no-excuse culture at this school. It is our responsibility to find a way to reach children and help them learn. When we identify barriers to learning it is our job to remove them. That takes expertise and training and a lot of blood, sweat and tears. But seeing a parent or carer
engaging and seeing a breakthrough, and watching their child achieve, is the biggest and best reward.

**Expertise and training is a priority here. For the best learning outcomes you must have the best staff so we invest heavily in CPD, and we expect to see an impact as a result.** Staff at St. Joseph’s are very fortunate to have such a strong investment of time, external and internal training and the support of senior leaders, in terms of advice, feedback and even in-class support and modelling. This is, however, a culture where the benefit of that investment must be felt by all children, in the form of stronger teaching, accelerated progress and greater challenge. That makes for a staff room full of highly motivated, expert professionals, eager to support one another. It also makes for a whole-school approach in which all staff share the highest expectations of and aspirations for each and every child.

**Quality teaching and authentic parental engagement in learning has to be matched by relentless review and evaluation and action planning.** Our Inclusion Manager found the support of the Achievement for All coach invaluable when it came to data analysis and intervention. We track children and then make relevant and useful interventions if they are not making progress – be it a circle of friends for a child struggling to fit in, or speech and language intervention to help children who find communicating or social situations difficult. We are always striving for innovative personalised approaches to support the learning journey of individual children and families. We don’t accept that any child cannot make good progress. Achievement for All has a whole box of ideas and partner organisations that can help here. We are learning all the time, introducing new ideas constantly, and making a concrete difference every day.

**Chapter 13**

**Wider outcomes**

*Why what happens outside the classroom matters so much*

We know a sense of wellbeing is one of the most important aspects in promoting a child’s achievements and progress at school. The quality of teaching is crucial, but on its own it is not enough. What children bring to the table – their feelings of self-worth, their place in the school community, and also their personal expectations and aspirations – is fundamental. And it is the responsibility of leadership teams to ensure that what children bring to the table is positive.
Anna catches the bus after school each day to go to her grandmother’s. She watches others go off together to the park, their mums pushing strollers behind or climb into each other's cars, some with an obvious sleepover bag. She sees them arriving together the next morning and going to netball club and circus skills after school. She had wondered about joining the circus skills club and the teacher had talked about arranging a lift, but she was nervous and had no one special to go with.

The teacher had no real concern. Anna, who is 10 and in year 5, seemed to fit in fine in the class. She worked hard and wasn’t unpopular, but she wasn’t really thriving. She played with the other girls when a game allowed, but was often on her own at lunch. She never complained.

When the leadership team started to look at how they could engage children in extra-curricular activities better, an audit showed Anna didn’t attend any, her family were never at school socials, and they hardly ever came to parents’ evenings. They recognised this could be impacting on her progress and talked to her teacher about where Anna would best fit into the friendship groups, and then with that teacher created a circle of friends for her – which extended to a circle of parents who were asked if they’d be able to give Anna a life if she joined one of the after-school clubs. The school also launched a mentoring programme and asked two year 6 girls to act as mentors, looking out for her at lunchtime. Anna was soon on the netball team too and was never left on her own. As her confidence grew, so did the friendship groups, and so did her grades.

Greg is on the autistic spectrum and so had always struggled to fit with a friendship group. His communication difficulties meant he was often manipulated into activities, but often on the end of unkind teasing when he joined in. The few times he’d been to school socials – where children were left to enjoy activities around the school field – his mum said he’d ended up on his own, feeling ostracised so refused to attend any more. He ended up forming a friendship with another child with behavioural difficulties, a boy he was often paired with in the numerous learning support lessons that were built into the timetable, and started getting into trouble; a risk he felt was worth taking in order to have a pal to hang out with at lunch.

When the school identified the problem – and the downward direction of Greg’s learning (he was in fact very able but had become disengaged), the school talked to his parents about the kind of social support he’d enjoy at lunch and Greg helped launch a dance club, led by a local dance charity who came in to teach street dance. A year 10 who attended the club became Greg’s mentor but the emphasis was very much on nurturing friendships within Greg’s own class. The teacher introduced autism into the lesson one day, using resources from one of our partners to help Greg’s classmates better understand both what autism was, but also what skills Greg had he could bring to the classroom. The teacher also clearly defined what the school considered bullying (including manipulative play) to ensure pupils understood behaviour that was unacceptable. She allowed the class to develop their empathy skills – the best mark of emotional intelligence – and within six months, when asked about Greg, his peers were talking more about how they valued him and less about his idiosyncrasies. In his personal learning diary one boy wrote that Greg had helped them see the world through another’s eyes.

This isn't about saying to pupils 'you have to sign up to a club' or 'you must come to every school social' or even saying to friends 'you must play with girl A or boy B.' It is more subtle and also way smarter than that...
journey. Teachers might recognise playtime as ‘the hardest lesson of the day’ but still may not see these sessions, any ‘social’ sessions, as really relevant to the progress of pupils we want to help. What we have found — what all the research shows — is that what happens outside the classroom is not only relevant but can be crucial to what happens when the bell goes and pupils troop back inside.

Happily the whole aspect of wider outcomes has been put back on the school agenda and Ofsted’s current framework makes schools accountable not only for physical wellbeing but for mental wellbeing too. This has been absolutely central to what our charity have been doing from the very beginning.

The staff you lead are stewards on each child’s learning journey. They might only have them in their class for what seems like a moment in their lives, and they might only be held accountable on performance measures, but they have a much greater potential impact on each child when they are 8 and 18 and 28 and 38 than some of them may realise. By ensuring that each child feels valued, and by modelling the values and attitudes they expect children to have and to show to each other, they build characters who will go on to model positive behaviour and build positive relationships in the future and — of course — progress and fulfil their potential. When that doesn’t happen, when children learn their worries are dismissed (and so considered trivial), that teasing has to be tolerated (it’s their job to toughen up), and that more serious bullying — everything from name calling to persistent excluding from games to abusive texts — is something they can’t control, then they start to form a view of themselves, their place in society and their expectations of relationships, in a way that can be terribly harmful in the future.

Small steps to great things

When we team up with a school leadership team we always ask them what they do with the children’s free time, and ask them to do an audit of who stays on for after-school clubs, or which families attend school socials. Many leadership teams who had assumed everything was all
right, or that it wasn’t an issue related to specific groups of pupils, quickly realised via the audit how few students (sometimes if any) with SEND show up at these extra-curricular activities – indeed, how few pupils who are under-achieving for whatever reason are there after school.

We apply the same rule to playtimes and lunchtimes. Many leadership teams see these 15 or 30 minute breaks as a chance for staff to take a breather and for children to develop social skills through play, but perhaps don’t fully appreciate that for those children who struggle socially, or don’t have social skills to develop, or who are learning anti-social behaviour from those around them, that these breaks are negatively impacting on what happens when they go back into class.

The Dyslexia-SpLD Trust

Why the partnership?
The Trust brings together seven key dyslexia charities and provides a range of resources to support any child with literacy difficulties, including those who have dyslexia.

Why this matters?
Because these children and young people may struggle to access all areas of the curriculum, and be held back by low levels of motivation and self-esteem. Children with dyslexia may also experience other difficulties like poor motor-co-ordination, concentration, personal organisation and communication difficulties which can impact on their relationships with peers and become barriers to their learning and progress. Too many children disengage from learning as a result.

How can this help your school now?
We know that interventions (and the Trust has a wealth of ideas and resources your coach will bring to the table) can make a huge difference to students, especially if links are made between any intervention and general classroom practice to ensure students can apply learning in lessons.

The surveys we do – including the aforementioned audits – demonstrate over and over that pupils with low confidence are less likely to attend extra-curricular activities in or out of school, are more likely to be absent or late, don’t have a strong circle of friends and are less likely to attend parties or weekend or after-school socials with their peers. And of course, as a result they are less happy and so often have difficulty concentrating in class.

We also know that pupils with SEND or looked after children or other pupils with specific challenges are much more likely to be the ones who are low in confidence and so might not want to attend extra-curricular activities, or be given the opportunity to develop friendships in and out of school. This puts them at a disadvantage from the start.

So what next?
This isn’t about saying to pupils ‘you have to sign up to a club’ or ‘you must come to every school social’ or even saying to friends ‘you must play with girl A or boy B.’ It is more subtle and also way smarter than that.

Out of the box thinking...

‘No more difficult children’
Staff in this school decided to analyse the data and examine how well they knew and, more importantly, understood each child. They talked as a whole staff, sharing and discussing knowledge and ideas. They realised how often they used the term ‘difficult child’ and – while they recognised why they were doing it – they determined not to use the phrase again. They also recognised those ‘difficult’ children who were too often absent in discussions about progress, and they committed to including all children in future progress meetings.
First off it is about asking children – and their families during the structured conversations – what kind of free-time support and socials the parents and children want and need. The parents and carers always have loads of ideas. At the schools where we work, we then see the launch of different types of get-togethers at times to suit all families. We also see organised games, crossword, and chess and domino clubs. These activities are subtly supervised by adults but support the social needs of pupils who need that support, and who are too often isolated or, worse, on the end of bullying behaviour.

Secondly, we work in partnership with the Anti-Bullying Alliance and offer training which 95 per cent of schools rate as good or outstanding, with roughly the same number reporting that they leave the sessions with strategies to improve practice. I talked about this in chapter 11 – how it shifts the way school staff look at bullying, crucially helping them see it is the child’s perception of the problem that has to be the starting point rather than teacher’s. How what adults may consider trivial can erode a child’s feeling of confidence and self worth.

Thirdly, we bring to the table tried and tested solutions and ideas – through training and ongoing coaching – that leadership teams can take and shape to suit their setting. Ideas for lunchtime clubs, after-school activities and initiatives to promote free time and playtime inclusion. Solutions that help children shine and develop strengths outside the classroom and so build their confidence when they come back in and which transfer to concentration and effective learning. Solutions that build friendship groups which give children a sense of their place in the school community, and thus their place in society.

We find solutions that help children shine and develop strengths outside the classroom and so build their confidence when they come back in...

My favourite part of my role as President of the National Autistic Society is going into schools and seeing the difference the right support can make. Seeing the difference in children’s confidence and their parents’ happiness when the support and understanding are in place. And if this is a mainstream school that has a special unit for those on the spectrum then it’s always very heartening to see how the whole school benefits: it’s a two-way learning process. This has to come from the top: an inspirational head teacher can ensure that both the neurotypical children and those with autism are given the chance to achieve their full potential.

Jane Asher, actress and writer,
President of the National Autistic Society
Schools tell us that once they started to model inclusive behaviour more effectively, other children model it too. Those children – the ones who are achieving well and who don’t seem to face barriers to learning – see school staff including all children, listening to all children, valuing all children, going the extra mile to find a way to reach all children or to remove barriers to their learning (be it the bullying or the lonely breaks or the challenges they face in the classroom), and they learn to do the same.

The leadership teams tell us over and over again they see a new atmosphere in the playground and new friendship groups forming. They see absenteeism and late arrival go down. They see problem behaviours reduce. Without exception things improve. Not only for those children who are sitting on the sidelines or staring out of the window wishing they were at home, or for those who are feeling bullied and insecure, but for all the other children in their class who have not previously benefited from all that can come from a more inclusive friendship group, and from all those children – previously sidelined or misunderstood – can bring to the class. When this happens the whole student body demonstrates progress, including – but not exclusively – the children we set out to help.

Building inclusive communities and an inclusive future for all

Finally, we come back to our starting point, the parents and carers who can help support this more inclusive model. Leadership teams too often hear from vocal parents and carers ‘concerns’ that their own children are being held back by those who struggle in the class, and by how much time a teacher has to spend with children who are under-achieving. Leadership teams have not always felt able to counter that or to enlist those same parents to actually support the inclusion they are trying to achieve.

What we encourage leadership teams to look at is a new kind of triangle. As well as the parent, teacher, child model, what we call the ‘parent, parent, leader triangle’, which sees the leadership teams working with parents and carers specifically to support this more inclusive community. That starts with the children – the future ambassadors of diversity – and their families see the change in them. It progresses with those same parents and carers supporting and encouraging that inclusive behaviour when their children come home, arrange birthday parties or outings and organise get togethers.

Whole school communities start to learn that inclusion isn’t about doing something for someone, it is doing with. It is not about asking pupils or parents to do a child a favour with an invite to play or an invite for tea. It is about genuinely including them in the friendship group as it grows. School communities start to see it has to be the responsibility of all children and all parents and carers to make the school work for everyone who attends. What’s more parents and carers of children who achieve well start to fully understand the benefits that brings to their own children – their learning, relationships and values as they grow. In fact schools so very often report how grades improve across the board, and not just for our target group. When you go into schools where this happens it is an amazing thing to behold. It reminds me again why I went into education.

Pupil Premium Practice Review

What’s this service all about?

Since the Pupil Premium was introduced in 2011 to provide additional support for looked after children and low income families it has become clear – to schools themselves, and to Ofsted – that it is not always easy to make sure the money has any meaningful impact. There are plenty of reasons for this. It might be, for example, that a school doesn’t have a good enough system to track funding or to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions (and so to know when to try something new). It could be because they don’t efficiently identify the skill gap or the need of each individual pupil.

How can our review help your school now?

This service – available to all schools, not just those on our two-year programme – offers a fast, intensive and effective review to make sure Pupil Premium funding is really making a difference. A specially Achievement for All coach looking at your current practice, what's working well and what could be more effective. They bring along a whole tool box of tried and tested ideas for you to try. You can read more on p127.
Collaboration is the fuel that energises a successful school, and the key to unlocking and sharing expertise for the benefit of all – students and staff. That’s why we encourage collaboration in our training sessions, in the classroom, across the playground, in leadership and staff meetings, and across the schools and communities where we work. That’s why Achievement for All works in partnership with a whole range of relevant organisations and charities to ensure we can bring the latest ideas, research, resources and more to your table. Here’s news of some of those we’re currently working with, but you can read more news and updates at www.afa3as.org.uk

**ADHD**

It’s thought as many as one in 20 children suffers with ADHD, with 70 per cent of them also experiencing other issues like dyslexia, dyspraxia or autism. And of that group some 40 per cent experience mental health problems like anxiety and depression.

Experts believe dopamine – one of four major neurotransmitter chemicals in the brain that plays a key role in memory, learning and reward-based behaviour – doesn’t work properly in the brains of children and adults with ADHD. It causes symptoms including difficulty staying focused and paying attention, difficulty controlling behaviour, and hyperactivity (over-activity). But despite all the new studies it’s also one of the most misunderstood conditions – either because the hyperactivity suggests children are undisciplined or fed too much sugary food, or because the inattentive element can cause children who sit quietly not paying attention to get overlooked or into trouble for not keeping up. Either way children and their parents too often end up taking the blame.

We want to help schools understand that some children with ADHD can no sooner stop fidgeting than the teacher can stop blinking and that these pupils don’t have low intelligence but often simply can’t remember what they’ve been taught. They can become more frustrated and anxious than their peers and once stress hormones elevate they shut down cognitive function and learning becomes more difficult. Our coaches can share some tried and tested strategies which might include simple things like permission to doodle or model play dough as they listen to lessons, or a time out card when it all gets too much. Early intervention is crucial though.
 CHILDREN UNITED

Children United is a unique new project designed by Nicky Cox to empower children – give every one of them a voice – and ensure their views are heard. We developed and launched this initiative with the children’s newspaper First News, Save the Children and Microsoft to provide an online platform (moderated by schools to ensure it’s safe and secure) via the website www.childrenunited.com so children across the world will have an opportunity to discuss issues that matter to them. A CD, We Are The Children United, featuring Alesha Dixon and the voices of children from around the world, was released to raise awareness of the charity at launch.

Bringing children together from across the world like this was a bit of a first, and I’d encourage you to take a look and register your school on the website so you can benefit from this fabulous resource.

“Getting involved with Children United was a no-brainer! I love the idea of children coming together from all around the world – having a voice and being heard. I think it’s really important. They’re the next generation and we need to hear them and they need to be considered.”

Alesha Dixon, singer

MENCAP and MITA (MAXIMISING THE IMPACT OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS), UCL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

We’re thrilled to be working in partnership with these two organisations on a programme to help schools effectively deploy teaching assistants to ensure they can make the most meaningful contribution to teaching and learning by working more closely with teaching staff.

STEP UP TO SERVE

This charity runs the #iwill campaign which aims to make more of the energy, talent and commitment of millions of young people (aged 10-20) who want to contribute more to their communities and who, as they change other people’s lives learn more about their own, building their confidence and skills as they go.

How it can benefit your school

The campaign wants to embed this kind of social action into every young person’s journey by creating opportunities through school and college, other youth settings and via employment opportunities. Its Patron is HRH The Prince of Wales, and it is supported by a huge range of ambassadors and partner organisations. Achievement for All is incredibly proud to be part of the campaign’s education steering group and supports the campaign by embedding youth social action into our Schools Programme so pupils like yours can benefit from the opportunities the campaign offers.

Why it matters

A recent report looking at the quality and quantity of youth social action opportunities highlighted the shortage of activities in education, and a failure to inspire young people to take part – often due to confusion among educators and businesses about the kind of initiatives they could support. Step up to Serve and its campaign aims to offer a coherent vision and clear pathways for you and your students. Achievement for All is excited to be part of its journey. For more details visit www.iwill.org.uk

PWC SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This model, an evaluation framework based on a Theory of Change, allows us to assess the impact of the Achievement for All programme and helps us ensure that what we bring to your school works. The programme is led by a team of experts from PwC Strategy team based in Northern Ireland.
Take the lead

And some other ways we can help your school...

THE BUBBLE

This is our ever-growing online hub where schools on the programme can dip into a wealth of resources, research, teaching tools and real-life case histories at the click of a mouse.

How does it work?

It’s like a vast self-organising library. Our coaches can pick up real-time information about their schools and academies, and access to all the training and professional development materials they need to work effectively with partner schools. Meanwhile our schools can instantly access supporting materials and resources for the Achievement for All programme in their school.

But there’s more too. This online hub contains a series of unique interactive learning journeys that support staff training and leadership development 24/7 – individual teachers in each school can create their own bespoke ‘journey’ to suit their setting, backed up by units of interactive immersive web-based learning. Core modules build on the four elements that are the bedrock of Achievement for All effective practice while Tailored Modules on a whole variety of topics (from Speech Language and Communication Needs to Building Character and Self-esteem, from Governance for Inclusion to Effective Use of Pupil Premium) develop key themes further.

Some of our key partners also have a series of modules that help our schools understand and appreciate how they could contribute to school improvement. These include...

BBC Children in Need Fun and Friendship

This module tackles head-on the isolation and unhappiness children and young people with disabilities can experience at school. With the BBC Children in Need’s Fun and Friendship Programme, we aim to help schools establish a whole school approach to Fun and Friendships by reflecting on current practice, identifying strengths and areas of development, and adding to that with tools, knowledge and ideas (including some fabulous examples of great practice).

Disability Matters

This module aims to tackle some of the inequalities disabled children and young people face in their daily lives by developing senior management’s communication and problem-solving skills so they can engage more confidently with those students, taking into account issues like their preferred communication method, the physical surroundings and the role of any accompanying adult. It’s been developed in partnership with Disability Matters and with the support of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. Leadership teams who have embraced it have greatly improved planning for and interactions with students with disabilities.

Dyslexia-SpLD Trust Teacher Development Module

This module offers a ‘road map’ of expected skills and knowledge for schools staff working with students with Dyslexia-SpLD and provides the resources to help them meet those expectations. It gives schools the chance to benchmark teachers’ improvement in professional knowledge by using the Self-Assessment Strands before and after training to measure improvement. Crucially it helps embed a culture of professional development and so long-term improvement in teaching within an atmosphere of teacher-led enquiry and knowledge exchange. This – with the use of evidence-based literacy interventions – helps secure an impact on pupils’ literacy skills.
The Module uses the Literacy and Dyslexia-SpLD Professional Development Framework developed by The Dyslexia-SpLD Trust in conjunction with Dyslexia Action and PATOSS (the Professional Association for Teachers and Assessors of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties), and in consultation with a wide number of Stakeholders. You can read more about our partnership with the Trust on p112.

Youth Sport Trust
This module is designed to support primary schools by helping them audit and then develop their physical education (PE), physical activity and school sport provision. It also aims to build schools’ confidence by ensuring they are maximising the impact of the Department for Education’s Primary PE and Sport Premium funding and demonstrating its impact on a wide range of educational outcomes.

Schools using this module will be able to ensure that PE and school sports meet the needs of all young people, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. It signposts schools towards national and local support and expertise that operates through the Youth Sport Trust’s Project Ability network. This national network of expert schools supports colleagues as they develop a truly inclusive offer – providing professional development for teachers, links to inclusive sports clubs in the community and access to a pathway into inclusive local and regional competitions.

TUTE and Skoolbo
Technology and the virtual world are now intrinsic to the lives of children and we know that, when used effectively, they can have a significant positive impact on the engagement with and progress of students by creating a curriculum that is inspirational, motivational and relevant to young learners. This module sees us working with two leading exponents of technology in education to champion the unique properties of online learning, drawing on the ways it can be harnessed to create a curriculum that can overcome barriers to learning and to address and meet individual needs and so raise attainment among children who are under-achieving.

I CAN
I CAN – the children’s communication charity – knows that more than half of children who live in some socially disadvantaged areas in the UK start school with delayed language. This has a direct impact on their ability to learn, thrive and succeed. Poor language skills can significantly impact on a child’s attainment in reading, writing and maths, as well as their behaviour and wellbeing. Only 12.9 per cent of pupils with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) gain GCSEs A* to C including maths and English compared to 58.2 per cent of their peers.

We’ve created a tailored module on Identifying and Supporting SLCN as part of our Schools Programme, to help schools better identify and support children with SLCN so they have the foundation skills they need to make progress in reading, writing and maths. The module signposts schools requiring more further support and expertise to I CAN’s evidence-based training and intervention programmes, such as Talk Boost, a targeted small-group intervention that can boost a child’s language and communication by 12–18 months over 10 weeks of intervention. This is three times the ‘normal’ rate of progress. Our partnership supports I CAN’s mission to ensure that no child who struggles to communicate is left out or left behind.
PUPIL PREMIUM PRACTICE REVIEW

Since the Pupil Premium was introduced in 2011 to provide additional support for looked after children and low-income families, it has become clear – to schools themselves, and to Ofsted – that it is not always easy to make sure the money has any meaningful impact. There are plenty of reasons for this. It might be, for example, that a school doesn’t have a good enough system to track funding or to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions (and so to know when to try something new).

How can this partnership help your school now?

Our reviews are proving to be a fast, intensive and effective way to make sure Pupil Premium funding is really making the difference you want it to make (and, of course, the difference Ofsted wants to see). It involves a specially trained review coach looking at your current practice and seeing what’s working well and what could be more effective. You’ll see at the end the impact your spend is making, and what could be improved. The coach brings new ideas to the table for you to try (they benefit from having seen best practice across the UK and have a whole toolbox of tried and tested ideas) and ensures you have efficient systems to monitor the impact of them.

What does it involve?

Over a four-week period there is time to collect data, a day of review at your school and time to present a report to the senior leadership. We’ll look at what educational offer each pupil receives, how that provision is strategically planned and implemented, how funds are allocated to the most vulnerable pupils, and how the activity and impact is monitored, recorded and reviewed. We will look, too, at what financial monitoring and reporting is in place and how progress accelerated for vulnerable pupils as a result of the grant. At the end you’ll have a full review and assessment of spend versus impact.

LONDON FOSTERING ACHIEVEMENT

This is a unique programme currently being developed in London which aims to raise the aspiration and achievement of children living with foster carers across the capital. It’s being delivered by Achievement for All in partnership with The Fostering Network, funded by the Department for Education and supported by the Mayor of London through the London Schools Excellence Fund. It aims to bring together those who have a shared responsibility for looked after children – foster carers, social workers and schools – to ensure the children they care for succeed in education. We’d like to see it rolled out nationally in the near future.

Why this partnership?

We know children in care traditionally do less well academically than their peers, with only 20.8 per cent of children in care in London achieving five GCSEs A* to C including English and maths compared to a national average of 61.3 per cent of children in mainstream education. These children – who’ve all been separated from their birth family – will have gone into care because of family illness, family breakdown or because of problems at home or because of circumstances that threatened their welfare.

How does it work in practice?

By supporting everyone responsible for children in foster care the aim is to increase attainment, improve attendance and reduce exclusions. In this initial project, some 27 of London schools in nine local authorities and over 100 school pupils who are looked after by the local authority will benefit from our schools programme using a specially designed toolkit to meet their specific needs (covering current legislation, research and evidence-based best practice) with the aim of improving reading, writing and maths outcomes. At the same time – and in line with our commitment to engaging with parents and carers – foster carers will be supported to work with schools and help the children in their care to achieve the very best in their education. The Fostering Network runs foster care training in every London borough, in some areas developing mentoring programmes, masterclasses and more to support the work foster carers do.

6

And some other ways we can help your school…

7
How many schools do you work in?
Thousands, and this is a service that schools can take up even if they’re not on our two-year programme. Over and over, though, it demonstrates out-of-the-box thinking, professional collaboration and inclusion at its best. Crucially it maximises the ongoing impact of Pupil Premium funding and more specifically the impact it is having on the individuals it was originally designed to help.

Examples please?
The list is long, but for example our reviews have led to everything from more effective deployment of teaching assistants to better use of data to enable more focused differentiation in class. We’ve seen the introduction of adult learning workshops for parents and carers so they can support pupils more effectively and the introduction of empty school visits for Pupil Premium students to encourage a sense of belonging. One school launched an on-site exclusion unit (the leadership team recognised how vulnerable Pupil Premium students in this school were to exclusion) which is helping keep those who would be excluded in a positive learning environment. This reduces days lost and improves behaviour and access to enrichment activities to build self-esteem.

“Our Pupil Premium Review made us look harder at our Pupil Premium provision which was useful for future planning. It highlighted all we were doing well – reassuring with a pending inspection – but informed future discussions so we could develop and build on our practice further…”

Deputy Head Teacher

THE READ ON. GET ON. CAMPAIGN
This campaign aims to put an end forever to illiteracy in the UK. This is more than closing the gap; this is about saving lives.

Why it matters
In the UK today, one in every four children leaves primary school without being able to read well (that’s at level 4b according to the government’s old definition). This results in 130,000 children each year starting secondary school already behind. We know that these children who fall behind at age 11 are less likely to secure good qualifications by the time they finish their education, and this impacts on their ability to get a job and participate fully in society. We also know that children born into poorer families are more likely to have fallen behind in reading by the age of 11.

How is Achievement for All supporting the campaign?
We are working in partnership with Save The Children as part of an extensive coalition of leading literacy charities. Our Achieving Early and Schools Programme provides the training and support needed for leaders, teachers, practitioners and wider professionals to work in partnership with parents, carers and families to prevent children falling behind. We want to see this kind of support reaching more schools more quickly and, while policies like the Pupil Premium are welcome help on this issue, we believe more is needed. We know that when given the best and most appropriate educational opportunities, all vulnerable and disadvantaged children can and should be able to read well. More than 1.7 million children have now benefited from our work – the work described in the previous chapters. Based on data collected three times per year, the progress of Achievement for All pupils is much greater than similar types of pupils (ie those with special educational needs, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups) and significantly greater than all pupils nationally in reading (ie between one and two levels higher than average progress for all pupils at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4). We will continue to support this campaign to ensure that by 2025 all children are reading with understanding by the age of 11.
ONE MILLION MINUTES
We’re totting up millions of reading minutes in this venture – our own reading challenge for primary schools across the UK – which is designed to encourage a love of reading in even the most unenthusiastic of readers. For one week in the school year, teachers encourage children to log how long they read each day and then log the class total on our own bespoke leader board. It doesn’t matter what they read, or how much, just as long as they’re reading and log their time. The longest reading class at the end of the week is our winner and – thanks to our sponsors Peters Books and Furniture – their school earns a brand-new reading corner. Visit our website at www.afa3as.org.uk to find out more or turn to the previous page to read about our involvement in a coalition of charities leading the Read On. Get On. campaign, which aims to see every child reading well by the age of 11 by the year 2025.

THE PARENT ENGAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME (PEPP)
PEPP is a tailored framework which supports schools to raise the ambition, access and achievement of students through parent and carer engagement and home/school partnerships. PEPP has been developed in a partnership between Achievement for All 3A’s and GEMS Education.

Why the partnership?
As you’ll have read in Chapter 7 parental engagement is central to our programme in schools. PEPP recognises that most effective teachers work with parents and carers as partners, and that family engagement in schooling has been linked to positive changes in school and student achievement (Lamb 2009, OECD 2012). We work with them not only to offer schools an opportunity to reflect and build on a school’s current practice and approach to parent and carer engagement (including CPD), but to raise the expectations of parents and carers about what their child can achieve via their own involvement with the school and their own positive feedback to their child.

THE ANTI-BULLYING ALLIANCE
This coalition of organisations and individuals works together to stop bullying, and has become a powerful partner in our work in schools. The Alliance knows how damaging bullying can be and has produced research which shows, for example, that one in four children quit activities they enjoy because they’re scared of bullies, and that nine out of every 10 children have been bullied or witnessed bullying. They have evidence-based ideas that can help prevent bullying.

Why this partnership?
Bullying is not something any school can ignore, however outstanding its rating might be. It is a societal issue all schools have a responsibility to address to ensure no child or young person is held back or stifled by a fear of what happens when they get on the bus, go into class or move around the playground. Achievement for All has always recognised wellbeing as one of the most important aspects in promoting a child’s achievement and progress at school. Children who have sense of wellbeing – and have the chance to develop resilience, character, and self-esteem – achieve more and achieve better.

How can it help our school now?
The training delivered by Achievement for All and supported by the Anti–Bullying Alliance encourages teachers to understand what bullying is and what can be done about it. The response we get to the sessions we run in schools is amazing, with almost all teachers telling us they take away strategies that make a difference.

What does the training cover?
It takes a fresh look at bullying and encourages teachers to see that what can be seen as ‘normal social interactions’ like...
teasing or not being chosen to play or even criticism becomes bullying when it is intentionally hurtful, when it’s not in a positive context, and when it creates an imbalance of power and erodes a student’s rights and confidence. Crucially we help teachers see that the young person’s experience and perception of the behaviour (not the teacher’s experience) has to be the starting point. We encourage teachers not to make quick judgements based on their own evaluations, but to take time to understand how the child is feeling. And we help teachers see that a pupil’s hurt feelings should never ever be minimised, not only because that impacts on the trust students have in school staff, but because it impacts on their own sense of self.

We also help school teams recognise different types of bullying. For example ‘condition’ bullying, where something about the child (be it a stutter or a family issue or a hobby) become the focus for teasing; or manipulative bullying where vulnerable learners can be coerced into games which get them into trouble, or where they might be ostracised or teased.

Equally importantly, we encourage teachers to take responsibility for the bully in a way that goes beyond sanctions. It is too easy to treat bullying with threats and detentions but it is now clear that, on its own, those things can actually aggravate the behaviour (children may even learn they get what they want through intimidation). It also ignores the fact that some children might even bully as a reaction to the verbal or manipulative abuse they are getting but which teachers aren’t seeing. We believe schools have to be smarter and more sophisticated about how they tackle bullying and help children realise that with freedom comes responsibility. We want to help children become the agents of change in their own lives with strategies that promote understanding and inclusion.

PLACE2BE

We’re proud to work with this charity, which provides emotional and therapeutic services in primary and secondary schools, building children’s resilience through talking, creative work and play. The charity brings to the table ideas to help reach children affected by everything from bullying to bereavement, family break-up to personal trauma.

Why this partnership?

We both share a commitment to improving the lives of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people. The work we do together is funded by the Department for Education and began in 2013 when we introduced the Achievement for All Schools Programme to 10 primary schools that already had Place2Be. The project was extended to additional schools in 2015. The results to date have been extremely encouraging.

ASPIRING SPACES

We want you to create visionary spaces in your school to help children be the best that they can be – pockets of inspiration in the garden, library, playground or dining hall. And we’re recruiting businesses in your area to help.

We invite schools on our programme to draw up their basic design for an environment they believe will make a real difference to the wellbeing of students and then we send companies local to the schools a list inviting support. Maria Fidelis Secondary school in Camden, for instance, wanted a room where children could study in a calm and supportive environment, with sensory support and the opportunity to learn basic life skills. A team from the Marks & Spencer Spark Something Good campaign (which includes Achievement for All Ambassador David Gandy) swept in for the day and delivered the dream design. Aspiring Space accomplished. Schools on the programme can visit our website to find out how to submit a proposal.
Take the lead

And some other ways we can help your school...

FIRST NEWS CHILDREN’S NEWSPAPER/ MY WAY! CAMPAIGN

This children’s newspaper is the place where young people are introduced into the real world – and into reading non-fiction – on a level they can understand, and via stories and resources they can relate to and interact with. Over two million seven to 14-year-olds read the title every week and come out of it understanding the impact of weekly events around the UK and around the world. Children can submit their own stories, have their own say on big issues via surveys, and get involved with the newspaper’s campaigns. First News has won awards for the impact it’s having on children’s learning and schools that subscribe have access to a treasure trove of resources to support their teaching in class.

Why this partnership?

In 2012 we teamed up with the newspaper to support their My Way! campaign. Their editor Nicky Cox launched the campaign in 2009 with the support of American film and TV actor Henry Winkler (famous for his role as The Fonz in the smash hit comedy Happy Days). It promotes the idea that children sometimes need to learn in their own personal way – a different way. Winkler is dyslexic and has written about his own experience of school and the huge challenges he faced there in a series of wonderful children’s books (Hank Zipzer: The World’s Greatest Underachiever). With Nicky Cox, he started touring schools and festivals talking about the need to rethink the attitude we have to children who struggle to learn and – via that rethink – help tackle all the social problems (bullying, isolation and more) that are so often part and parcel of having specific learning difficulties like dyslexia. They were looking for a partner to build on their work in schools and we were looking for a partner to promote our ideas to children. It was the perfect fit.

How does it impact on your school?

Henry Winkler and Nicky Cox visit schools on our programme each year, talking to children about Winkler’s experiences, about the paper, and about the campaign. They want to inspire children – and they’ve inspired hundreds of thousands so far – to believe in their own talents and future.
They want to support leaders and teachers who want to reach children in new, effective ways and to focus on learning for life. They want to lobby ministers (and they’ve taken this campaign to Downing Street) to ensure the curriculum meets the needs of all children in schools. "Teachers have a huge task," says Nicky Cox. "They have to communicate the same amount of information to the fastest and the slowest in the class. They’re under more pressure than ever and do astounding work. We simply want to stress the fact that the way you learn has nothing to do with how smart you are, and that sometimes a new approach, more in line with an individual child’s needs, can make a difference. We want to encourage schools – all those leaders and teachers who so badly want to support children so they can do better – to ask for help so they can explore a new approach. That’s where Achievement for All comes in.”

CENTRE FOR THE USE OF RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE IN EDUCATION (CUREE)
CUREE is a centre of expertise in evidence-based practice in all sectors of education and uses its knowledge and skills in teaching, research, communications and knowledge management to produce high quality research, CPD and tools and resources. We’ve been involved with CUREE since our early days looking specifically at Response to Intervention (RTI).

How does the partnership work?
We ran a project with CUREE in 60 primary schools looking specifically at the literacy needs of their vulnerable year 6 pupils and then used evidence-based interventions to raise the pupils’ achievement. To kickstart the project, we carried out a survey to find out about the most prevalent learning needs affecting literacy (they included children with moderate learning difficulties, children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and children who used English as an additional language at school). The early study suggested, for example, that the three most popular English interventions were talking partners, peer mentoring and tutoring and paired reading and writing. With CUREE we’ll continue to develop ideas to feed into our evidence-based interventions in schools.

NATIONAL CHILDREN’S BUREAU
This leading national charity supports children, young people and families and those who work with them. Our vision and theirs is a society in which children and young people are valued, their rights respected and responsibilities enhanced. Our mission, and theirs, is to advance the wellbeing of children and young people across every aspect of their lives.

THE DYSLEXIA-SPLD TRUST
This Trust involves seven key dyslexia charities, is funded by the Department for Education and provides a huge range of evidence-based resources to support schools working with literacy difficulties. That includes students with a diagnosis of dyslexia but also those without a diagnosis who would benefit from the resources on offer. You’ll have read about their module on The Bubble on p122.

Why the partnership?
We know that children who struggle with literacy may struggle to access all areas of the curriculum, and that they are too often held back by low levels of motivation and self-esteem. Children with dyslexia may also experience other difficulties such as poor motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organisation. If any or all of these things become barriers to their learning and progress – causing them to fall behind their peers – it can lead to behavioural issues which can impact on social relationships and exacerbate their focus and progress in class even further. Too many children disengage from learning as a result.

How can it impact on your school?
In schools where we work the coach introduces the Trust and works with the leadership team to identify the evidence-based resources needed to increase their professional knowledge and to support specific children in the classroom. We know that interventions supported by specialists can double a student’s rate of progress, and that they are more effective if links are made between the intervention and general classroom practice to ensure students can apply learning in lessons.
EARLY SUPPORT AND SEND REFORMS

In a bid to reach children with special educational needs and disabilities, schools have seen Statements, School Action Plus and now Early Support come and go, all of them developed one way or another into the government’s new SEND reforms.

Change is good if it brings us closer to a place where we are going to reach all children more effectively, but transition from one system to another and the change of culture that some of the changes represent can be an added stress for leadership teams. These latest reforms come at a time when pupils in mainstream are presenting a whole range of complex needs, not always easy to assess but which can impact hugely on their experience of and achievement in school.

Achievement for All knows that and is in a perfect place to help schools unravel and introduce the changes in a way that ensures no child falls through the gap and no school experiences more stress than necessary to benefit from these important changes. We know that early government evaluations of the reforms have suggested that, despite some improvement around the process, there has as yet been no statistical change in the extent to which families thought the decisions reached were fair. In fact the family survey the government carried out found little evidence of significant improvements in parental outcomes or in either children’s health or quality of life. This is simply not good enough and illustrates how much still needs to be done to help schools embrace the reforms, while underlining the real value of our approach (including the structured conversations) which help drive forward the changes families want to see quickly and effectively.
Take the lead

And some other ways we can help your school...

What’s the background to the SEND reforms?
When the Children and Families Act became law in 2014 (with the new SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 years) the aim was to make schools and colleges give children and young people with special needs and disabilities more individualised support. It set out to see more emphasis on high quality teaching that differentiates according to individual needs and focuses on personal goals and individual outcomes, agreed with the learner and their family. It wanted to see enhanced outcomes for children and young people with SEND, better engagement with parents and carers, and a whole-school approach to meeting the requirements of the new legislation.

So Statements of Special Educational Need and Learning Difficulty Assessments were replaced with the single Education, Health and Care Plan, while School Action and School Action Plus – designed, of course, for children with less complex needs – were replaced with SEN Support. Schools are now charged with a duty to have clear systems for identifying, assessing, monitoring and securing support to better meet the needs of children and young people. As I write many are still in the process of transition.

So why the partnership with Early Support?
These SEND reforms do effectively subsume and build on the important principles set out in Early Support (which we helped the government embed in schools across the UK and which continue to be promoted via the Council for Disabled Children) – principles which are in line with our own philosophy and which we now deliver as part of our framework in schools where we work.

How does the partnership work in schools?
Our coaches introduce the principles of Early Support to leaders and work with them to ensure the SEND reforms and the Code of Practice work effectively to meet the needs of their setting and their individual pupils in the way they were intended to. Crucially we make sure it works for pupils with special needs and disabilities and all other pupils who are under-achieving for whatever reason (more of which below).

Tell us more about Early Support and its principles
This Department for Education approach was working in schools for over 10 years until March 2015. It was launched to give parents and carers of children and young people with disabilities a single assessment and then to co-ordinate services (health, education, social care) into a plan of support. Its 10 key principles (including valued uniqueness, informed choices, workforce development, working together, key working and learning and development) were designed to personalise each family’s package of care and to provide holistic, solution-focused support to meet individual needs, rather than to expect one size to fit all. Key Working proved especially crucial in giving families a single point of contact, or a key worker, so they didn’t have to repeatedly tell their story to different agencies.

What difference could your partnership with Early Support and your work embedding SEND reforms make to our school now?
If a school wants to embed Early Support and apply the principles of the SEND reforms in a high quality way we can show them how to do that.
You might use MAPIT (multi-agency planning and improvement tool) to evaluate with parents and teachers your current practice around support and to look at how things can improve. You might introduce key workers to develop a more positive relationship with families and ensure information regarding individual children and young people is passed between your staff, and other relevant professionals who can help support your students. Our coach can give leaders insight into how any or all these things and more can work in their setting, and support changes via coaching and some brilliant resources online.

Do schools need your help to do this?
We know schools don’t always access the training and resources available locally and so don’t realise the implications of the SEND reforms or how they’ll be assessed during Ofsted inspections. The principles and ideas of Early Support and the SEND Reforms may look good to everyone but many leadership teams don’t understand the potential of how these principles and ideas can be used in practice, or the immediate powerful difference they can make to children and families in their school. That might be why early surveys and feedback have been disappointing.

Which children will benefit?
All children can benefit. We’re demonstrating in thousands of schools that this can support students with or without a Statement or disability.

How does it benefit children who aren’t SEND?
All children can be vulnerable at some point in their schooling – after bereavement, when they become young carers, when they are fostered, when they have medical or mental health issues, when they struggle to learn because of a need not yet identified...

the list goes on. That then can, and usually does, affect how they progress. The principles of Early Support in our framework ensure early intervention to bring together relevant parties (it may just be parents and carers, it may be parents, carers and health or social services) to understand what is going on, and to provide the support families need as quickly as possible. They can also prevent children going onto the SEND register, can transform schools and can change children’s lives.

Can we talk to other schools that have used this?
Have a look at Paul Green’s and Steve Dool’s stories (p57 and p25) – Paul’s key workers approach and Steve’s ‘team around the family’ are examples of how the Achievement for All framework is bringing Early Support principles to their setting. There are some great stories on The Bubble too. For example news from Kelford School, a special school in Rotherham, where the leadership team have focused on a whole school approach to key working. Here, every member of staff underwent training and every child has one of these adults as their key point of contact. So many pupils have benefited – their attendance, confidence, attainment, and successful transition to new schools all prove the powerful point about this holistic approach.
Take the lead

And some other ways we can help your school...

THE EARLY INTERVENTION FOUNDATION
This Foundation champions and supports early intervention measures to tackle the root cause of social problems among children and young people. Working with regional and local leaders in England, they bring to the table all their research and expertise as we work with schools to support those who aren’t achieving.

Why this partnership?
Graham Allen MP invited Achievement for All to support the founding of the Early Intervention Foundation as a charity. In partnership with their Trustees and the national charity 4Children, we created the structure, recruited their team and started engaging with local authorities, within the first six months reaching 20 local authorities in all.

How does it impact on your school?
The Early Intervention Foundation research provides ‘What Works’ examples of good practice from the UK and beyond, directing organisations so they can engage with difficult challenges beyond the school. Their evidence-based research is delivered across the country involving families and family support agencies.

MICROSOFT
Our partnership with Microsoft has provided a unique opportunity to work with the BBC on the Enchanted Kingdom project. The Enchanted Kingdom takes audiences on a journey of discovery, using entertainment to bring to life incredible wonders, stories and characters in Africa. The BBC site has been linked to the Achievement for All Bubble site where our schools are provided with eight separate ‘Enchanted Kingdom’ project-based learning lesson guides. Each lesson is a journey to a specific learning objective and allows the class teacher flexibility to adjust tasks on the basis of age and ability of their pupils. Digital literacy training is an inherent component of all these project-based learning guides and this approach provides a new and free approach for learning in the school environment.
THE BLACKPOOL CHALLENGE

The Blackpool Challenge Board began its journey in June 2015 in collaboration with Blackpool early years settings, primary and secondary schools and post-16 settings, academy sponsors, local authority officers and councillors, Diocesan boards, and business leaders. In collaboration with the office of the Regional Schools Commissioner and Department for Education they want to improve the outcomes for all children in this area and invited me, as CEO of Achievement for All, to Chair the Challenge.

Blackpool has an amazing history driven by aspirational entrepreneurs and a real desire to succeed. The town has achieved so much as a mainstream tourist destination, which is testament to the vision and commitment of the community and its leaders. Now the focus is on education and I am leading the drive to raise the aspirations of every leader, teacher, parent and carer and support professional to create world class education provision in this area. I discovered here a tremendous commitment among the school communities who share our vision of 100 per cent of children progressing 100 per cent of the time regardless of their background, vulnerability or need.

BT

Our strategic partnership with BT has been in place since May 2014 with a focus on improving technical literacy for students in schools where we work and developing our online programme The Bubble (p122). We have been supporting BT as it has introduced the Barefoot Computing project, an initiative with the Department for Education and the British Computer Society designed to help teachers deliver the computer science elements of the new primary computing curriculum that was introduced in September 2014.
AND WITH THANKS TO OUR AMBASSADORS

“I believe we all have a responsibility to ensure every child grows up with the highest aspirations for themselves. I am proud to support the work Achievement for All is doing to enable children from all walks of life to be the best that they can be.”

David Gandy

Achievement for All’s Ambassadors come from the worlds of education, sport, showbusiness and books but are united in their commitment to improve outcomes for children and young people who are at risk of under-achieving. Each shares our vision of a world in which all children can achieve, regardless of their background, challenge, or need. They include:

Supermodel and fashion designer David Gandy (pictured left) announced his official involvement with and support for Achievement for All in 2015. David followed an unusual route to stardom via a This Morning competition win and is passionate about ensuring every child dreams big. He hopes his work for Achievement for All will inspire more children to overcome life’s challenges and succeed.

Henry Winkler OBE is best known for his TV role as The Fonz, and more recently as Mr Rock in the hit CBBC series Hank Zipzer, based on his novels of the same name. He launched the My Way! campaign with Nicky Cox at First News and now provides ongoing support for the work we do (see p135).

Kate Grey is a Paralympian swimmer who lost her left hand in an accident when she was two years old. Kate never let her disability hold her back, and alongside club swimming she was involved in netball, athletics, tennis and horse riding.
Paul Smith is the Regional Schools Commissioner for the North West and committed to improving outcomes in this region. He invited our charity to be involved with the Blackpool Challenge (p147). Paul was an Achievement for All Ambassador in his former position as Head of Parbold Douglas Church of England Primary School.

AND OUR INSPIRING SCHOOL LEADERS...

Julia Hunt – head teacher, Brightlingsea Infant School, Essex
“It’s about whole school change. You know this is happening by listening to the type of conversations that teachers have now. When the language changes that’s when you know that a programme has had a fundamental impact. Achievement for All has helped changed the culture of the school. It’s not a programme just for children with SEND or on free school meals”

Wendy Wheldon – head teacher, Greengate Lane Academy, Sheffield
“Achievement for All isn’t an add-on, it’s a whole school improvement tool – it has been the catalyst and the model we’ve used for our school improvement and continues to be so. We are now above the national average for key stage one results and for the past two years have been oversubscribed with parents going to appeal to try to secure entry.”

Jacques Szemalikowski – head teacher, Hampstead School, north London
“We were very mindful that our students were not achieving as quickly as they should. Our data indicated that work was needed on SEND and other areas. What we have found with Achievement for All is that although it has really helped us target particular groups, students across the school have benefited as well.”

References


Also available from Professor Sonia Blandford
in this Achievement for All series:

Love to teach: Bring out the best in you and your class
Inviting teachers to join our school revolution

Make school better: Have a bigger say in your child's school day
Inviting parents and carers to join our school revolution

Don’t like Mondays? Make school work for you
Inviting children and teenagers to join our school revolution

All titles available at www.johncattbookshop.com