

# PPA and the Use of Support Staff

A report on progress in South Gloucestershire Schools

May 2006



## **PPA AND THE USE OF SUPPORT STAFF**

### **A REPORT ON PROGRESS IN SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS**

#### **THE REPORT'S PURPOSE**

The National Workforce Agreement has led to significant changes in school organisation and the job roles of support staff. Implementing the agreement has been a major challenge for school leaders, particularly the introduction of guaranteed Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time in September 2005. It is important that the local authority monitor and evaluate these changes in schools because:

- They are statutory and the local authority needs to know where to direct support for schools in implementing and sustaining changes
- School leaders have developed innovative solutions and emerging good practice and key learning points need to be disseminated
- Ofsted, in the December 2005 report on implementing the National Workforce Agreement, recommended that Local Authorities should:
  - gather accurate information about the progress schools are making in order to target support and training for those who need it most
  - monitor and evaluate the impact of their actions on the quality of education and standards in schools.

It is hoped school leaders will find this report useful in reviewing their own practice in covering PPA time and developing support staff roles, particularly in achieving sustainability. Case studies are included on each of the schools visited.

The fact that all schools in South Gloucestershire have introduced PPA time and a large number are employing innovative and sustainable solutions says a great deal for the management skills of school leaders in the authority.

#### **HOW MONITORING AND EVALUATION WAS ACHIEVED**

- School Improvement Advisers carried out surveys of PPA arrangements in primary schools between December 2005 and March 2006. Results are available for 4 clusters – 80 schools.
- Tony Cleaver, Remodelling Strategy Manager, followed up these surveys by visiting 9 primary schools across three clusters and looking in detail at PPA arrangements. He interviewed Heads, a range of key staff involved and also some pupils.
- He visited all secondary schools between September and November 2005 and spoke to Heads, primarily about restructuring but also about remodelling and the developing roles of support staff. He followed this up in February to March by visiting two schools to interview Heads and support staff and talking to the Head of the third school.

The surveys and subsequent interviews form the basis of this report.

## **TEN KEY FINDINGS**

- 1. Support staff grow into new roles most readily in a school culture which encourages development and values everyone equally.**
- 2. Financial sustainability is greatly enhanced by making some use of staff such as TAs, cover supervisors and coaches.**
- 3. Successful PPA arrangements, including those using staff other than teachers, enrich the experience of pupils and improve curriculum provision while maintaining standards.**
- 4. Foundation subjects, previously felt to be given too little time in primary schools by many headteachers, governors and parents, have been given a boost by PPA arrangements.**
- 5. A considerable talent pool exists in schools and their communities and many support staff are developing new roles and abilities. Such staff relish the new opportunities.**
- 6. Teachers greatly value their PPA time and both they and Heads say the quality of planning in particular has improved and teachers' work/life balance is better.**
- 7. The workload of Heads and Deputies has generally increased and Dedicated Headship Time is not yet in place in many schools. Their roles and work/life balance needs reviewing. Primary and Secondary school leadership teams might learn much from comparing roles.**
- 8. There will be increasing pressure to recognise emerging support staff roles with qualifications, training, pay and preparation time.**
- 9. The enriched curriculum in primary schools has been welcomed by parents and enjoyed by pupils. There have been very few concerns raised by either parents or pupils to non-teaching staff supervising classes.**
- 10. Good practice is emerging in assessing and reporting on pupils' progress when supervised by staff other than teachers but much work still needs to be done in this area.**

## GENERAL FINDINGS

### Primary Schools

1. **Sustainability of PPA arrangements:** where Heads commented on this –
  - a. 15 said current PPA arrangements were sustainable
  - b. 23 unsure
  - c. 10 said unsustainable.
2. As might be expected the later the survey was done, the less uncertainty existed. The Cluster 1 survey, completed in March, shows only 1 Head unsure, with 8 saying PPA arrangements were sustainable and 5 unsustainable – so the ratio of sustainable to unsustainable is consistent with the overall figure. This could be said to be encouraging – in the first year, it is likely about 60% have developed sustainable solutions.
3. On the other hand, there must be concern that up to 40% of schools will have to make significant changes to PPA arrangements to make it sustainable. The sustainability figure also masks issues such as Heads covering PPA (see below). Uncertainty was often caused by concern about falling rolls – many Heads commented that while PPA cover was sustainable with the current number on roll, falling rolls and a smaller budget might make it unsustainable.
4. Cost was the major factor in considering sustainability. Most Heads who commented on this said PPA had cost significantly more than the 1% nominally added to budgets in 05/06. Some had relied on reserves to fund this so needed to change arrangements but many felt the extra cost was sustainable in their budget projections. There are schools which have kept within the 1% increase, largely by careful deployment of Teaching Assistants (TAs).
5. **Use of staff other than teachers** – of 80 schools, the following made some use of these categories to cover PPA time:
  - a. TAs/HLTAs/Nursery nurses - 45
  - b. Coaches (sport, art, music) 20
  - c. Specialist teachers (music, MFL) 12
  - d. Headteacher 16
  - e. Dep Head 10

(Here “coaches” is used for staff who are not qualified teachers (but who may have other professional qualifications) who are brought in to lead a specialist activity. To date these are overwhelmingly sports coaches. In many cases the school’s own TAs act as specialist coaches but they are counted as TAs in the figures above. Similarly, “specialist teachers” refers only to teachers employed specifically to provide teaching in a specialist subject during PPA time, not to the specialist work done by the school’s existing staff.)

6. **The use of Heads’ time** for PPA cover is a concern. Heads see two advantages:
  - a. The chance to spend time in all or most classrooms helps Heads monitor standards and get to know the work of children
  - b. The fact that Heads’ time is already paid for means that PPA costs less if Heads play a major role

Despite this, concerns remain. In reality, Heads’ time is relatively very expensive and if they are using it for PPA cover it is likely important aspects of the Heads’ role will be managed less effectively and their overall workload will increase.

7. **The Deputy Head's role** in covering PPA is also an issue. Some schools would like to create a non-teaching Deputy's post to cover most PPA. Some Heads have given this a great deal of thought and see it as a useful part of a Deputy's role where responsibilities include the curriculum/timetable and/or the performance management of staff. The arguments for and against are similar to those for Heads, with this addition: the role of the Deputy Head is changing and developing rapidly in primary schools and it is important that school leaders review and discuss the issues involved.
8. Only just over half of schools currently use **HLTAs or TAs** to cover PPA – and then often for a small part of the school's total PPA time. In the light of the successful experience of many schools in developing TAs and the issue of cost and sustainability, leaders should consider whether the use of TAs could be extended.
9. In some schools TAs had been redeployed to cover PPA time from their normal class support role. This meant that for part of the week teachers or individual pupils had less support. Heads tended to feel that, on balance, gains outweighed losses – it also has the advantage of being virtually cost-neutral.
10. Only a minority of the TAs covering PPA have gained the Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) qualification. It's likely more will do so and this will bring pressure on schools to create HLTA posts. Already there is an awareness among support staff that TAs in some schools are doing much the same job with PPA as HLTAs in other schools.
11. In some schools HLTAs/TAs covering PPA are given their own PPA time, either weekly or in blocks at the beginning of terms. This is clearly valued – in fact HLTAs say they could not manage without it as they spend considerable time on preparation, taking some work home. In at least one case, all TAs who supervise groups of pupils – small intervention groups as well as whole classes – get PPA time.
12. Several Heads report that their TAs are not of the right calibre to supervise whole classes or are unwilling to do so. While it is true that by no means all TAs will be ready for the additional responsibilities of class supervision and instruction, it is recommended that Heads consider reviewing this judgement in the light of the successful experience of so many schools in developing support staff
13. Where TAs are used, it is most often in KS1, sometimes in Y3-4, rarely in Y5-6. Heads say this is because of behaviour issues and the importance of core subjects in older years. Some feel parents would complain if Y5-6 were taught by non-qualified staff
14. There is much good practice emerging. Generally, TAs/HLTAs enjoy their new work. They feel more challenged but feel this is developing their skills. **They are keen to develop further and some requested that their work be observed like that of teachers and that they also get developmental feedback.** Those who have gained the HLTA qualification feel this was worthwhile. Some HLTA graduates, or those who already held an equivalent qualification, are embarking on Foundation degrees. Some TAs see teaching as a career ambition while some are qualified teachers who prefer to work as TAs/HLTAs. Many bring specialist skills from previous careers or leisure interests. Not all TAs have the inclination or qualifications to follow the HLTA route but still undertake training to develop their skills – for example two TAs worked hard to qualify as swimming coaches and now look after all the school's swimming. All this suggests a considerable "talent pool".

15. Heads using TAs and coaches generally feel **curriculum provision** is better and children have a more enriching experience. Heads interviewed are generally happy with standards.
16. PPA arrangements enrich the curriculum by giving time to foundation subjects and bringing in specialists – TAs or coaches are often more skilled at sport, art etc. than class teachers. (Some schools had surveyed parents asking what was lacking in their children's school experience – foundation / practical subjects was the answer.)
17. But PPA also limits curriculum planning because Heads have to timetable the subjects the TAs/coaches are capable of doing. Some teachers also feel these limitations – they now find it difficult to respond to class weaknesses by squeezing in more time on core subjects because of PPA. On the other hand, time for foundation subjects now has more protection.
18. **Planning and timetabling PPA**, which in many schools involves a complex scheduling of staff and activities, has presented organisational challenges to which leaders have generally risen very effectively. This organisational challenge continues week by week, particularly if staff covering PPA are absent. In larger schools, this organisation is often the Deputy Head's job – rather like the traditional curriculum deputy's role in a secondary school, where complex scheduling of specialist staff and facilities is essential to delivering the curriculum. This comparison is not lost on Heads and some see that the changing nature of primary leadership is bringing it closer to the secondary model. One Head has gone so far as to visit a local secondary school to see how the Senior Leadership Team operates – a path others might consider following. As secondary school leaders have also much they can learn from primary colleagues, a developmental relationship would be mutually beneficial.
19. In one school a member of the admin staff has taken on the role of PPA Coordinator, responsible for the scheduling and administration of PPA, including catering for absent staff. The Head describes this as “the single best bit of remodelling” the school has done. It is a model other schools might consider. Remodelling can support PPA – in another school, savings to fund PPA had been made by developing TAs to take on the SENCO's work with small intervention groups. In this school, TAs do not supervise whole classes yet have had their roles developed as a result of PPA.
20. **Successful use of TAs and other support staff seems to depend a great deal on the culture of the school – where all adults are valued and school leaders want to give everyone a chance to develop, then TAs and support staff are likely to flourish. For example one Head commented “We are here to develop everyone from 3 to 63” and it was clear from interviews that her staff were strongly aware of this and saw it happening in practice. This was typical of schools visited, both primary and secondary.**
21. This inclusive approach sometimes started with a **School Change Team (SCT)** planning PPA, including governors and non-teaching staff among its number. A typical example is at **Cadbury Heath Primary** where a change team was formed consisting of Head, governor, teacher, TA, parent from PTA. It has stayed in existence to monitor PPA and is carrying out a survey of pupils and parents to gauge responses to PPA after 2 terms. This is being organised by the parent rep.
22. There seem to be **very few instances of parental complaints** about PPA arrangements. Communication with parents about PPA varies greatly. Some schools have briefed them fully on PPA arrangements and rationale – others have told parents little on the grounds that they want all parents and their children to see the whole curriculum as equally valid and not to differentiate. As there have been very

few issues with parents whatever the approach, the open approach has more to recommend it.

23. In the schools visited, **behaviour** was not seen as a particular issue. There was a view that children behaved better with a TA they knew than a supply teacher they did not know. There have been some behaviour issues with outside staff, particularly sports coaches, but these seem to have been largely resolved – by Heads insisting on changes of personnel, by training in managing behaviour and by these staff becoming established in the eyes of the children.
24. **Planning** is generally strong and most teachers and TAs who cover PPA time spend time on planning and liaise effectively with the class teacher or subject leader. In some schools this liaison is built into the schedule – for example where one staff meeting each (new) term is devoted to teacher-TA joint planning. Planning done by sports coaches was said by Heads to have improved considerably over the last few months. The most effective model seems to be where staff covering PPA are given a scheme of work or series of outline lesson plans and are then given the responsibility of producing detailed plans for each session which are then checked with the class teacher or subject leader. Support staff may need some training in this but, once in place, they feel empowered by it. Two related issues emerged:
- a. Some teachers are concerned that they have less control over the work done by their class during PPA time
  - b. In some schools, teachers are expected to provide detailed plans each week for the staff covering their PPA time – Heads and Governors should consider whether this is in the spirit of the National Agreement.
25. **Assessment and reporting** arrangements are less well developed. In most schools visited, there was good informal feedback to the class teacher on pupils' work and attitudes during PPA. In some schools, simple grading arrangements (such as "traffic lights") had been worked out for TAs to use. As yet, however, there is little formal assessment during PPA time which is fed back to the class teacher (who remains responsible overall for the learning progress of pupils in the class). Similarly, Heads are generally only just starting to consider how progress in subjects taking place during PPA time will be reported to parents.
26. This year has seen the rapid emergence of good practice in the work of **sports coaching** organisations, including South Gloucestershire's own Sports Development team. The best organisations have adapted to schools' needs, after early teething troubles, and now provide Heads with something close to what they want:
- a. Training for coaches in working with children, managing behaviour and writing lesson plans
  - b. Link coaches who attend every week and can build a relationship with children
  - c. A supply coach whenever the regular coach is absent
  - d. Coaches flexible enough to offer several sports and physical activities
  - e. Close liaison with the school, with coaches following school systems for rewards and sanctions and providing some feedback
  - f. Use of the school's PE SOW and outline plans with the organisation producing detailed lesson plans to fit

Sports coaches interviewed were enthusiastic about their work and had a firm grasp of the good practice factors listed above.

27. **Teachers** interviewed were very positive about the benefits of PPA time for them. Descriptions such as "wonderful" and "a real bonus" were typical. Staff saw PPA as improving their work/life balance, with less work being taken home but also as improving their practice, particularly in the quality of planning. This was enhanced in

the schools where year teachers were released at the same time and could plan together but in schools where this was not possible staff still reported real benefits. Early concerns about losing contact with the class and losing control of part of the curriculum still exist but have lessened as the new arrangements have become embedded and teachers' confidence has generally grown in their colleagues covering PPA. Some teachers miss teaching the section of the curriculum chosen for PPA (one Head was concerned teachers would become deskilled in these subjects) – others acknowledge that it was a weaker area for them. Almost all agree that the benefits of PPA strongly outweigh the drawbacks.

28. There are still some issues about **how PPA time is treated**. One teacher was using her PPA to see individual children for reading, until stopped by the Head (typical of the teachers' work ethic that is deeply embedded in the profession!). Others regularly visited their class during PPA to keep an eye on things and reinforce standards. There was a reported case where coaches were sending children who had misbehaved to their class teacher during his/her PPA – not on the spirit of the regulations unless in a real emergency.
29. There is an issue with **part-time and job-share teaching staff**. One such teacher saw her class for only half the week, then lost a chunk of this for her PPA. She felt this loss of contact affected her relationship with the class and the standards she expected. Other Heads confirmed that this is a common issue – a class with 2 job-share teachers, each with PPA time that might be taken by a number of staff, could be supervised by several different staff during the week. Where possible, Heads faced with this situation should plan to keep the number of staff having contact to a class to a minimum, particularly with younger children. It is worth noting that where job share teachers covered each other's PPA or where their PPA time was supervised by a TA attached to the class, there were no reported problems.
30. There was no consistency about **missed PPA time**. In some schools, teachers who miss a PPA session - through attending a course, a school event or through a half-week at the beginning or end of term - have the time restored later. Other Heads do not do this – missed PPA is regarded as "luck of the draw". It was established with the National Agreement that schools should develop their own PPA policies in consultation with staff to cover the differences outlined above and it may be that the policy of restoring PPA has benefits in terms of goodwill – but it must be pointed out that Heads have no obligation to restore PPA under the National Agreement, as long as they have scheduled regular PPA time, and to do so must be an extra administrative burden and incur additional cost. Heads should guard against staff being de-motivated to attend CPD events, however. Some Heads reported that teachers had become more reluctant to attend Inset – either because it meant yet more time away from their class, in addition to PPA, or because it clashed with their PPA time which they value highly.
31. Two groups of **pupils** were interviewed during schools visits – one KS1, one KS2. This is hardly a comprehensive sample but chimed in with what Heads and teachers generally said about pupils' attitudes to PPA. The KS1 pupils said they had been rather worried at the start of the year about changing "teachers" but soon got used to it. (In one school a teacher reported reception children in tears during the first two or three PPA sessions but they soon settled down.) They said they liked the change of having a different teacher in a different room. They associated the HLTA who took them one afternoon a week with the enjoyable art and craft activities they did with her.
32. The KS2 children (Y3 & 4) also said they didn't like PPA at first because they didn't know the teacher but once they got to know the teacher it was fine. They were in no

doubt they were gaining from PPA because they perceived that the PPA teacher knew a lot about her subject. “We like being with a teacher we know” and “we like being with an expert” was how one girl summed it up.

33. **Dedicated Headship Time:** the situation in South Gloucestershire seems to tie in with the national picture reported by Ofsted – dedicated time for Heads (which governors should have ensured was in place by Sept 2005) has been scheduled in only about half of the schools visited. Where it is in place, it is typically one afternoon or about 2 hours of a morning, once a week. Heads often work at home and report tremendous benefits from being able to focus on “big picture” work free from interruption.

## Secondary Schools

PPA time has not been such a major issue in secondary as primary schools but there are related issues such as the cost of covering for absent teachers and the need to reduce the workload of teachers and to allow them to focus on teaching and learning. These issues have led to interesting innovation in the use of support staff, including:

- **Cover supervisors** – Heads in the few schools employing cover supervisors report it is generally successful, though some have had to overcome problems in the early stages, largely through appointing staff who proved to be ill-suited to the role. The use of cover supervisors works best when good training and induction are given and the supervisors feel valued and supported and see themselves as an integral part of the school. Setting of work is crucial – there needs to be a rigorous system in place where teaching staff or subject leaders set work for classes to be covered. Effective use of ICT can facilitate the work of supervisors by making readily available resources pupils can use while being supervised.
- **Lunch Break supervisors** – at least two schools are employing them for most of the day and extended their duties to patrolling the school, first aid, premises and admin tasks. Here too success depends on staff feeling valued and supported.
- **Student Coordinators/Assistant Year Heads** – schools have appointed (under various titles) support staff to work with the teaching staff traditionally known as Year Heads (whose role has evolved and is best described by a new title such as Director of Learning). The advantage of support staff in such roles is seen as a focus on student issues all day, allowing immediate follow up to incidents, including contact with parents and a reduction in the work load of Year Heads and other teachers. In restructuring, some schools have removed teachers’ Assistant Year Head posts or made Year Heads responsible for more than one year group and the introduction of Student Coordinators is sometimes linked with these changes.

## CASE STUDIES

The schools described in these brief case studies have all developed clear elements of good practice which is worth disseminating. Issues and difficulties are also reported.

### Primary Schools

#### CRANLEIGH COURT INFANTS. Headteacher: Angela Higgs

##### PPA Outline:

- Two HLTAs cover PPA, planning lessons with a practical focus aimed at developing pupils' thinking skills, creativity and group-working skills.
- Parallel class teachers released together
- The Head takes each class for story

##### Key features:

- Head believes the success of PPA is dependent on having very capable TAs, keen to develop and well known to the children (works better than using a supply teacher not known to the children). HLTAs have skills and experience which enriches the curriculum.
- HLTA training seen as a great opportunity – no post was promised so TAs were motivated by development. The development of PPA led to a decision to create HLTA posts. This model provides continuity and consistency for classes and shows governors value the HLTA role.
- HLTAs lead their TA colleagues during PPA. The key to this relationship is that the HLTAs are well prepared and can therefore show authority through knowledge of the curriculum and learning objectives.
- HLTA's paid to attend the last staff meeting of each new term – a 1 hour slot to discuss planning of PPA and other issues with teachers. This has improved PPA – now HLTAs' work is integrated into the teaching week. They are also paid for two afternoons each term for planning and have planning time in short weeks at the beginning or end of term when no PPA takes place. They see planning time as important.
- Head's time: PPA has taken up more time in assemblies (teachers not required to attend unless there are visitors or an "Effort Service") and story time – but **Dedicated Headship Time** has been agreed with governors, one afternoon a week, often taken at home. It is a "fantastic" benefit to have this time with no disturbance – a chance to get a clear picture.
- **Sustainability:** PPA has cost more but will have to be maintained (though this may mean cuts elsewhere). The school could not have afforded to employ supply teachers for PPA.
- Teachers see PPA time as "liberating". It has improved the quality of planning and led to innovation because of the chance to reflect, discuss and work creatively. Parallel class teachers plan together and share tasks. There is regular consultation with HLTAs.
- Pupils were unsure about the new arrangement at first but now enjoy it. They say they like the variety of working with another teacher and enjoy the activities.
- HLTAs use a key skills grid to assess where pupils need development (e.g. fine motor skills). They see the challenges as "thinking on your feet" and developing class management skills – whole class behaviour management training was very useful. They are well supported by teachers.
- The culture of the school creates a foundation for successful PPA. The Head commented "Everyone knows they can develop here – we try to bring the best out of everybody, from 3 to 63." All staff interviewed had the same perception - "any adult is treated the same and respected" - so TAs felt they were encouraged to develop and face challenges and teachers trusted them to do this.

## **PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL. Headteacher: Mark Dee**

### **PPA Outline:**

- **KS1** – all KS1 teachers released at the same time, one afternoon a week
- Cover provided by all 15 TAs (including KS2 TAs) and Lunch Break Supervisors
- KS1 Manager leads joint PHSE session, then children in vertical groups (of about 14) for enrichment activities – e.g. Art, PE, DT, ICT, French
- Children move round activities week by week, TAs offer same activity
- **KS2** – 3 part-time, experienced teachers cover PPA, Leadership and Management and NQT time.
- These teachers cover the same classes each week – the area of curriculum taught is negotiated with the class teacher

### **Key features:**

- KS1 scheme works well. Started by auditing TA/LBS skills and what they were keen to develop (e.g. French taken by TA who is MFL graduate). Also considered what enrichment children needed – e.g. speaking and listening, PHSE (relating, dealing with emotions), fitness, Healthy Schools. Learning objectives have been established for all enrichment activities.
- Advantages – enrichment for children, development for support staff, teachers get planning time together. Vertical grouping means older children support younger ones.
- Disadvantages – No TAs in KS1 for one afternoon a week, KS2 TAs had to become used to younger age group. Feedback to class teachers on PPA activities needs developing further
- Head has built ethos of corporate responsibility – all staff are responsible for solving issues and supporting the school. Doesn't see Head as the keystone so that the organisation collapses without the Head – the organisation is the keystone. The way PPA developed illustrates the principles of distributed leadership – ideas were generated by staff, taken on by the Deputy Head and KS1 Manager and improved
- Staff development is strong – e.g. LBSs have a programme of development, 9 are taking NVQ2 through the school. Some TAs are doing a qualification to become NVQ assessors for the LBSs. Performance Management is in place for support staff with objectives tied closely to training opportunities in LA CPD prospectus
- KS2 scheme very different but also effective. Advantages - teachers known to children, good discipline and liaison with class teachers. They feel ownership of the subjects they teach. Y5&6 benefit from seeing different teachers in preparation for secondary school
- Disadvantages – impossible to release teachers at the same time and cost
- PPA scheme is **sustainable**. KS1 is nil financial cost (involved restructuring LBS hours) – but means less support in KS2. Cost of KS2 balanced by savings made from restructuring for TLRs.
- Difficult to extend KS1 scheme into KS2 because of logistics – has huge space requirements and needs working space for released teachers. Head hopes to move to releasing KS2 year teams together. Also looking at a wireless network for staff laptops so make working space more flexible
- **Dedicated Headship Time** not yet in place. School has non-teaching Deputy Head – valuable support for the Head in dealing with day-to-day issues and strategic direction.

## **EMERSONS GREEN PRIMARY. Headteacher: Jan Isaac**

### **PPA Outline:**

- From Jan 06 PPA time covered by a mix of Deputy Head, part-time teacher and HLTAs.
- Non-teaching Deputy Head takes some of PPA time with most classes
- HLTAs' offer includes Spanish to Y3 & Y4

### Key features:

- PPA launched in Sept 04 to try it out. Tried sports coaches but this was unsuccessful because:
  - Coaches not appropriately trained or prepared
  - Only offered their own sport, so no variety
  - Needed TA with them
  - No skills for inclusion –important issue as school has a resource base and has a high number of children with complex difficulties integrated into classes
  - No reporting so teachers knew nothing about progress in PE

*NB These points are noted as issues for schools to be aware of but the approach of South Glos's Sports Development team has changed considerably and most issues have been addressed – see other school case studies*
- Use of Dep Head for PPA is costly but valuable - it has enabled her to get into every class
- Restructuring gave the opportunity to review the TA/HLTA structure – 3 HLTA posts created (2 have taken qualification, 1 is doing foundation degree). The Head feels they are very effective in their new role. They are more fulfilled and very enthusiastic
- Planning – teachers now do the long-term planning of PPA content. HLTAs then plan sessions within that structure and feedback to teachers
- HLTAs enjoy PPA work. At first they followed teachers' plans but are now planning Spanish with Y3 and Y4 and prefer the ownership this gives. (LA advisers have supported the introduction of Spanish.) There is no problem with behaviour – they know the children and follow the teachers' strategies.
- The HLTAs say the school's culture encourages development and they feel valued and respected
- Issues for them are pay – the step from the top of H9 to the bottom of H8 is inadequate reward for supervising whole classes – and the fact that parents are not fully aware of their role
- PPA has improved Work/Life Balance for teachers (other remodelling initiatives at Emerson's Green include Early Bird – staff leave early on a Friday on a rota basis – and Down Week – one week a term when there are no clubs or meetings)
- **Dedicated Headship Time** is not yet in place but there are plans to establish it with the Head working at home one day a week till 10.30am.
- Issue for school – 2 classes have job-share teachers so with PPA children are taught by 4 adults a week. Some parents are unhappy about this

### THE TYNINGS PRIMARY. Headteacher: Don Sibley.

#### PPA Outline:

- PPA time covered by TAs, part-time teacher and Head
- TAs take Reception and Y1 classes,
- Focus is on foundation subjects – e.g. Art, DT and RE.

#### Key features:

- TAs have really enjoyed their work in reception and Y1. They are experienced and well known to the children. DT and Art afternoons for Y1 alternate each half-term. 2 TAs work together for PPA sessions, one being the regular class TA
- The TAs feel this is going well and they have benefited from the experience. They know the pupils well and all the routines, including disciplinary procedures. They take subjects they enjoy. One commented it was rewarding to lead a session and take responsibility. She uses a camera to record pupil's work and feedback to the teacher.
- The school has a team-working ethos and TAs feel respected by teachers. PPA promotes teamwork among the TAs and gives them the chance to work with other classes

- Teachers produce an overall curriculum plan and learning objectives – the teacher or TA covering PPA then plans their sessions within this and provides feedback to the teacher. There is close liaison with the class teachers
- PPA is seen as a real opportunity for TAs and it promotes further development – e.g. 2 TAs have started a Pyramid Club in Y3 and are very enthusiastic about it. The school's structure plan is to create HLTA posts by 2007
- The Head believes the use of a teacher for KS2 PPA has enhanced provision by giving foundation subjects such as RE an identified slot, rather than their being squeezed by time for the core subjects. This has raised the profile of foundation subjects and improved provision
- PPA time for teachers strongly supports the school's monitoring and evaluation arrangements – teachers now have time to assess effectively the links between plans and outcomes. For the first time, proper assessment data is being provided for foundation subjects
- The school has a School Change Team with parent representatives. Parents are very enthusiastic about the opportunities offered by PPA.
- The Head sees the benefits of his own involvement in PPA as the opportunity to monitor teachers' work and pupils' progress and the new perspective he has gained on planning and assessing foundation subjects. The chief drawback is the difficulty of making a regular commitment and the cost of supply cover if he is out.
- The Head believes oversight is needed when non-teachers are taking classes – in the longer term this would be best done by a non-teaching Deputy who would oversee PPA quality
- **Dedicated Headship Time** – the Head has "SEF time" set aside and works off-site. His view is that Heads and Deputies need to have time together.
- The current PPA scheme is unsustainable in cost and has been changed for April 06. The plan is to use teachers and sports coaches in Y5/6 and TAs, supported by volunteer parents, for other years. It is hoped a parent will be recruited for each activity offered. A possible incentive is to offer NVQ Level 1 training to parents where the LA would meet training costs

#### **IRON ACTON PRIMARY. Head: Jill Bendeaux**

##### **PPA Outline:**

- Carousel arrangement using Head, HLTAs, TAs, a specialist languages teacher and volunteer parents
- School has 3 mixed age classes – reorganised for PPA into KS1 and KS2 (but now reception class taught separately for PPA)
- Subjects covered in PPA time: Art, DT, PE (including swimming), French, Drama + Science for KS2

##### **Key features:**

- PPA arrangements seen as successful and sustainable
- School had "PPA Panel" (i.e. SCT) to plan PPA – included HLTA, Chair of Governors and parents. A questionnaire was sent to all staff, governors and parents asking what the school should do more of – the answers were Art, DT and PE. The Head was also aware Drama and Science AT1 needed improvement and French was not done at all. PPA offered the opportunity to address these "gaps"
- Having KS1 and KS2 together has been beneficial socially, allowing Y1 and Y2 to work together and Y4 with Y5/6. This has developed maturity in younger children. But this arrangement was less successful for the reception class (with some demanding children) which now has separate PPA time.
- French – a qualified teacher brought in from "Le Club Francaise". This works well but could be cut if there were budget difficulties

- HLTA leads Y1/Y2 group, supported by TA, alternates Art and DT each term. HLTA does own planning with learning outcomes clearly identified. She also keeps notes on the outcomes of each session. NB HLTA has her own PPA time – recommended by the PPA Panel as good practice
- Head teaches 0.4 of the week. Her involvement in PPA is part of this commitment so she sees it as no extra burden.
- Parent volunteers help with PPA – a great crowd volunteered at first but some have dropped out leaving a good group, reasonably reliable. They sign up for a 6 week stint, offering their own specialisms – e.g. photography, cooking, textiles. (Head has ensured that PPA arrangements still work if volunteers do not turn up)
- A teacher interviewed saw clear benefits for her with better planning and less work to take home. Pupils get a broader curriculum with time allocated to subjects that might otherwise be squeezed out. The drawback has been less flexibility for the class teacher – e.g. can't extend time to finish off a topic – but teachers may get used to this and plan around it. On balance, she feels the overall benefit for pupils has been neutral.
- The Head sees the benefits as great staff development, with staff taking year groups other than their own which helps with job applications and promotion.
- Staff also take classes across the school for the subjects the lead – e.g. the reception teacher is the science coordinator so take KS2 science during PPA.

### **MEADOWS PRIMARY. Head: Jon Barr**

#### **PPA Outline:**

- PPA covered by 2 HLTAs, sports coaches, specialist music teacher, music coordinator, part-time teacher and Head
- Music coordinator takes each Key Stage together for singing, supported by 2 TAs in KS1 and by Head in KS2 (in a 7 class school)
- Teacher from LA music service takes Forseth recorder lesson
- 2 coaches from S Glos Sports Development take after-school clubs to coincide with PPA afternoons
- HLTAs cover PHSE, RE, handwriting and story

#### **Key features:**

- The Head's priority in setting up PPA was to enrich the experience of pupils. He believes this has happened with particular enrichment identified in music and sports coaching. Teachers interviewed strongly supported this view. They referred to a culture with high expectations where everyone is "very professional and accountable" and where the Head looks after staff and wants them to grow.
- Sports coaches have been trained in school procedures, planning etc and give a good service. A cover coach is provided if one is absent. Coaches need to be flexible and offer several sports to enhance children's experience.
- Coaches are employed 1.45-4.30pm to include after-school clubs. Parents are charged for these.
- The school's PE Coordinator line manages the coaches. She monitors their work, occasionally observing and giving feedback. She initially provided coaches with an overview of the scheme of work but now gives them lesson plans – she feels this will improve the quality of the sessions. She takes photos to build up a portfolio of PE work
- A coach interviewed stressed that S Glos coaches have had training in National Curriculum requirements and are always advised to work to the school's systems and schemes of work. Most coaches have expertise in a range of sports, enriching children's experience.
- The Music Coordinator feels the quality of music provision has improved with PPA because she as a specialist engages with all pupils. This broadens the range of music covered and ensured music is regular and valued.

- There were teething troubles at first with music in PPA because the coordinator did not know all the children. It works well now with support from the Head and TAs. The music AST also gives some support
- There are clear measures to show music has benefited – the quality of singing is better, more complex music is being done and the take up of peripatetic lessons has increased.
- Recorder lessons using the Forseth technique are also beneficial – no notation is used so the whole class is engaged with all playing instruments.
- The main drawback for the music coordinator is leaving her own class for delivering PPA and her own PPA – makes for a fragmented experience for some children. This issue she feels underlines the need for consistency across a school so anyone covering PPA has the same expectations
- A job share teacher, while appreciating the benefits of PPA and believing provision in music and PE had improved, was unhappy about the effects of PPA on her own class. Having her own PPA time taken out of the half of the week she worked meant she couldn't "get into a rhythm" with her class – and the pupils had 2 afternoons of PPA cover because both job share teachers needed PPA
- Another issue she felt is that the PPA curriculum is constrained by what HLTAs can offer – would this mean too much time on story/handwriting/RE etc? Producing lesson plans for HLTAs was also time-consuming
- Teachers saw PPA as a "fantastic resource," improving planning and reducing work taken home. A full-time teacher thought PPA arrangements worked well with HLTAs, well known to the children, doing a very good job. She was happy to provide PHSE lesson plans to the HLTA and received good feedback – quality work was being done.
- Assessment and reporting systems for work done in PPA time were still being developed
- HLTAs interviewed found their new role worthwhile but more stressful because of the additional responsibility. They saw the HLTA qualification as a natural progression as they had always sought development opportunities. The LA Adviser had been very supportive. There was a good relationship with teaching staff – they met teachers at the end of each (new) term
- HLTAs felt the choice of activities was important as it had to be things HLTAs are capable of doing. They were happy with current activities. They did some of their own planning and relied on teachers' plans in other areas which they found useful. They were both sure that as time went on their confidence would grow and they would take on more planning. They appreciated the PPA time they were given but felt this was essential - they still did some work at home
- The Head sees the PPA arrangements as sustainable (using only teaching staff would not have been). PPA runs smoothly – the initial timetabling is complex but once set up the system runs smoothly without needing much management
- The Head does not yet have **Dedicated Headship Time** but a governors' sub-group is looking at the issue. He attends KS2 singing sessions and tends to cover for absent staff during PPA. The Deputy Head line manages the HLTAs and checks PPA plans with them but is a class teacher with only Leadership and Management release time. The Head sees the ideal as a Deputy with 0.5 class contact, creating leadership capacity to support the Head
- Remaining PPA issues for the Head are – space for teachers to work during PPA, discipline with older children and the inflexibility created by the tight PPA timetable.
- Other benefits are the "empowering" and increasing skills of TAs, who are learning routines and procedures previously done by teachers

## **RAYSFIELD JUNIOR. Head: Jon Bird**

### **PPA Outline:**

- PPA (+ L&M and NQT time) covered by a mix of part-time teachers and sports coaches.
- Two part-time teachers take music, PHSE/Citizenship and RE for all classes. One is a music specialist.

- One part-time teacher is the PHSE/Citizenship subject leader and teaches these subjects to all years.
- Two S Glos sports coaches work two afternoons each week.

#### **Key features:**

- The Head was determined to use PPA as an opportunity for development. 2 part-time teachers (0.4 each) were moved from class duties to cover PPA + L&M and NQT time.
- Clear guidelines were developed – that the class and PPA teachers liaise over what is taught, that the PPA teacher take charge of whole units and teach to their strengths.
- The standards of music were too variable but one part-time teacher is a music specialist so this was an ideal opportunity to raise standards. The other teacher took over PHSE and Citizenship.
- Remodelling created leeway to fund PPA – the new SENCO became a class teacher and TAs were developed to take on work with small intervention groups previously done by SENCO. This means PPA is sustainable in the short term but not in the long term with falling rolls.
- The Deputy Head line manages all TAs, organising their timetable and ensuring each has PPA time in proportion to the time they are responsible for groups of pupils.
- Two sports coaches take PPA, one attached to the school throughout the year. The Head prepared the children for this, reinforcing his status as a teacher. He went through the school induction process.
- The coaches work within the PE scheme of work. This has been adapted so that coaches look after sports and class teachers take other PE activities (so each class has 2 sessions of PE, one with coach, one with class teacher).
- S Glos Sports Development is now introducing a system of end-of-year reports. The Head favours a traffic light system – red for pupils making progress below expectations etc.
- The school tried a private sports coaching firm last year – less reliable and more expensive than S Glos have been this year.
- Most children respond very well to PPA sessions but behaviour has been an issue with a few. This has led to a new behaviour policy for whenever the class teacher is not present. This new yellow card/red card system has already reduced incidents.
- A group of pupils from Y3 and Y4 were interviewed – they were very positive about PPA. They had been wary at first because they didn't know the staff involved but once they got to know them it was fine. They commented that it was good if the teacher taking them was an expert in the subject and they could see this was the case with PPA.
- Future developments – one TA now has the HLTA qualification and specialises in dance. The Head sees potential in using this specialism for PPA but would only wish to use HLTAs for this specialist role.
- **Dedicated Headship Time** is not yet in place though governors recognise the need. The Head takes time at home occasionally to work on the SEF. Ofsted saw self-evaluation as a strength which the Head feels reinforces the need for leaders to have time for reflection

#### **ELM PARK PRIMARY. Head: Helean Hughes**

##### **PPA Outline:**

- TAs provide PPA cover in KS1 and Y3-4.
- Y5 has 2 job-share teachers who provide most PPA for each other.
- The Head provides PPA for Y6 and some of Y5.
- Provision includes ICT/Science in Y1/2, ICT/Sports in Y3/4.

##### **Key features:**

- Bringing in supply teachers unknown to the children was found not to work. Now the Head takes Y6 and in Y5 2 job-share teachers who cover each other for PPA.

- Head feels a drawback with PPA is the danger of deskilling teachers because they are no longer taking certain subjects and therefore losing these from their experience.
- The curriculum content of PPA was designed to fill the gaps in provision identified in the School Development Plan (about which parents were consulted). Then needs were matched to the talents of TAs or by bringing in sports coaches.
- The School Change Team included parents. Parents have raised no issues about PPA – all the feedback has been positive. (The Head feels, however, that parents might be less happy if core subjects in Y5/6 were affected by PPA.)
- The model of using TAs and coaches in all but Y5/6 is going very well. One TA has considerable ICT skills and is going through the HLTA qualification process while the other is a qualified teacher and is now an HLTA. The TAs know the pupils and the class routines.
- PPA has worked best where staff taking it have their own slice of the curriculum so that they feel ownership and take responsibility. It does not work so well where TAs are finishing off work started by a teacher.
- A questionnaire has been used to evaluate PPA. This revealed that pupils are unaware that PPA is different and that they enjoy their ICT and Sports activities. It also revealed that teachers, initially concerned about standards and behaviour in their absence, are now very happy about these issues. A teacher confirmed this and trusts the TAs and coaches to deliver her lesson plans effectively. She believes children benefit from the input from staff with expertise but is not yet sure whether overall standards have improved.
- Teachers in PPA time work on-site – the Head sees this as ensuring all staff are treated the same. Both the Head and a teacher felt the quality of teachers' planning had improved.
- No PPA happens in incomplete term weeks – then TAs are given PPA time. The Head also takes assembly every Monday so that teachers and TAs can plan together.
- TAs were at first anxious about PPA but they have now grown into the role. They felt they needed more support so their monthly meeting became weekly (chaired by HLTA) and the Head attended for the first term. The Head is pleased that the meeting is beginning to look at development issues rather than day-to-day business and has noted how TAs outlook and motivation has become more professional. They have asked to be observed and receive feedback. They have been given access to appropriate courses (e.g. Art for one TA).
- The ICT course led by a TA (very experienced and with a business background) is producing clear high quality results with very positive feedback from parents.
- This TA was interviewed and showed an encouraging grasp of learning concepts such as accelerated learning and VAK which are included in her lesson planning. TAs attend INSET days. She stressed that the clear ethos of the school is to see all adults as of equal value. She enjoys the challenge of taking greater responsibility but also feels the narrow pay differential does not adequately reward this responsibility.
- The school first used a sports coach who proved unreliable but now use a private firm which provides a good service. Coaches use the school's schemes of work and assessment sheets, share their lesson plans and report at the end of each new term using a traffic light system. They also run clubs – parents are charged for after-school clubs but the school pays for lunch clubs (including girls' rugby).
- The Head did joint observation of coaches with the firm's managing director. He listened to her feedback and put things right.
- The PPA scheme looks sustainable – though costs are well above the nominal 1%. If TAs had not been used, the cost of PPA would have meant redundancies.
- Further developments – an admin assistant has been appointed to look after classroom displays as TAs enhanced role means they can no longer do this. 3 TAs have been through MFL training and the Head hopes they can lead MFL sessions in the future.
- **Dedicated Headship Time** – setting this up was one of the Head's Performance Management targets. Wednesday afternoon was identified – but the Head admitted it

was not always taken. Planning and coordinating PPA has taken a significant slice of the Head's time. Now it is up and running it could be delegated to SLT.

- Teachers produce lesson plans, including differentiation and resources needed. TAs then adapt the plans and prepare resources. TAs feedback to teachers who will produce end-of-year reports. Day-to-day planning needs to be handed increasingly to the TAs.

### **HANHAM ABBOTTS PRIMARY. Head: John Taylor**

#### **PPA Outline:**

- PE/Healthy Schools Coordinator and 2 TAs take year groups for Games for one hour each (releasing year teachers together).
- Another teacher fills this role when the PE teacher's year group has games so that he can have PPA at the same time as his colleagues.
- The PE/Healthy Schools Coordinator receives additional non-contact time for planning for each year group.
- The same TAs also take children swimming, creating more PPA time. Transport to the pool is supervised by other TAs and adult volunteers.
- The rest of PPA is covered by support teachers.

#### **Key features:**

- Two experienced TAs have been trained and developed to take on sport and swimming. They attended a year-long swimming course (including weekends) and have also taken short courses in other sports. Both were pleased with the additional responsibility of PPA and saw this as a natural progression for them. They feel they have developed, becoming more confident and assertive.
- Both had been involved in taking pupils swimming for some years – they felt the key difference now was that teachers were no longer with them but this was not an issue. (NB the Head is present at the baths during swimming to provide back-up but is not actively involved in the sessions which are taken by the TAs and an instructor.)
- They do not find discipline an issue – they know the children well and use the school's system. Most children respect this. Y5 and 6 were the most difficult but are getting used to the arrangement.
- The same TAs take a PE session for 4 afternoons a week, working with the teacher who coordinates PE. He provides outline lesson plans – the TAs then draw up their own plan. They were fully aware of the importance of including learning objectives and the skills to be covered. The teacher and TAs take a class each, meaning a whole year group has PE together, releasing a team of teachers for PPA together.
- The TAs feel that this arrangement offers greater consistency for the children – teachers' interest and skill in PE varies from individual to individual. Consistency is possible because the PE Coordinator "has moulded us".
- Classes return to the class teacher who dismisses them at the end of the day. This allows the TAs to give feedback to the teacher on good or poor performance.
- The TAs use skills level charts to assess pupils' progress in swimming. The issue of reports is being discussed but is not yet resolved.
- The TAs are paid an honorarium for their PPA work but it has now been agreed they will move to the next grade on the Hay scale for all their work. The Head feels that split contracts are appropriate to differentiate between TAs' PPA work and other work and that the LA should make this available to schools, as is the case in a neighbouring LA.
- He also believes the LA should provide model job descriptions for these new roles and provide access to accredited qualifications other than HLTA, which is not always appropriate for a role involving sport only.
- The Head feels PPA arrangements are working well but it has meant an increased workload for the Head and Deputy and he has found some teachers more reluctant to be released from the classroom because they believe they are missing too much time with

their class. Some parents are unhappy that the PE Coordinator is missing his class while he runs PE sessions.

- **Dedicated Headship Time:** Governors are happy for the Head to work at home. Attending swimming takes him out of school for 3 hours a week but gives him uninterrupted time to work.

## Secondary Schools

PPA has been less of an issue for secondary schools than for primaries because non-contact time for teachers was already in place. However, Heads have had to look at ways of reducing the cover teachers provide for absent colleagues and in several schools this has led to the development of support staff roles. There are other innovations too, with support staff providing pastoral care or extending traditional roles such as supervising lunchtime into other areas.

Some secondary schools are also providing specialist teachers and facilities to support primary schools during their PPA time, a provision often linked with specialist school status.

### **BRADLEY STOKE COMMUNITY. Head: Dave Baker**

#### **Support staff roles:**

- Cover for absent staff is provided by Learning Resource Centre Supervisors.
- The role of Lunch Break Supervisors has been developed into Student and Premises Support staff who work from 10.15am to 2pm and undertake a range of premises and admin duties in addition to supervision

#### **Key features:**

- Teaching support is offered to local primary schools for **PPA** time. Currently one primary school sends 3 classes to Bradley Stoke for swimming, science and music (and swimming in the leisure centre next door). Also secondary music and MFL teachers provide specialist sessions at a primary school. Primary heads have given very favourable feedback on the impact of specialist teaching. Next year the specialist schools' grant will support this provision.
- **Cover for absent teachers** in Bradley Stoke is provided by 2 staff who supervise the Learning Resource Centre (LRC). These are not qualified librarians but were appointed for their more general skills in supporting children's learning. Specialist library support and advice is available from the LA's library service and network of librarians. Both LRC staff have enrolled on a course to further their library skills, commencing in September.
- Pupils are brought to the LRC for cover lessons or the LRC staff go to their classrooms, as appropriate. The system is at its most effective when teachers set up work using research or ICT which pupils can do using the LRC's computer suite and book resources. The LRC staff have the expertise to support this and find they take some ownership of the work (for example, some artefacts produced by pupils following online research work in History were displayed in the LRC).
- To develop the system, the school aims to increase the bank of suitable cover lessons provided by each subject teacher and held in the computer network's shared files facility. These lessons will form part of the schemes of work, but once planned, can be accessed as needed. A recent CPD session showcased the resources some staff are producing and has inspired others to produce similar lessons.
- The Head feels the system is a very good model because pupils continue to learn when teachers are absent and the LRC staff know them well. There will be demands in space as the school grows and another Learning Resource Centre environment will need to be created.

- The Head has set out to create a clear ethos that “adults are one body” and that pupils respect them all. Support staff interviewed confirmed this ethos existed. They felt valued staff – “No-one looks down on me,” one said. They said training opportunities were freely available to them.
- An LRC supervisor interviewed had been a primary school TA for several years and felt this had been useful experience. She enjoyed the challenge of setting up a new space. It gave her some autonomy and the chance to use her organisational skills.
- She believed cover supervision of classes assists her library role, especially in the purchase of relevant books (content and age appropriate) and keeps communication with subject teachers open.
- She felt it was a great advantage to know all the pupils which helped her with behaviour and differentiation issues. She and her colleague use the school’s rewards and sanctions system and are included in all teacher briefings. Knowing the pupils would be more difficult as the school grows – she felt all new cover supervisors should start with Y7 and Y8.
- They are encouraged to observe teachers (a minimum of once a term) and find this valuable. They are observed themselves during cover lessons and the Information Literacy Sessions which they plan and deliver. The school plans to link them with different subject departments to increase their expertise.
- The main drawback was the need to balance cover and library responsibilities and this would need to be addressed.
- The LRC supervisors found that membership of the LA networks for both librarians and cover supervisors provided useful support.
- Bradley Stoke also has 2 **Student and Premises Support staff**. These are essentially lunch break supervisors (“MDSAs”) whose hours have been extended so they can take on a range of other tasks and responsibilities. The focus of these is the school’s extensive lettings – one who was interviewed said they “ensure everything the client wants is there for them” which might mean arranging furniture, refreshments etc. They also take on a wide range of other tasks from displays to locker keys which might be extended in the future by training to do electrical testing.
- The person interviewed took a whole school view, appreciating that lettings bring in sports clubs which then offer coaching for pupils. She herself offered swimming in the school’s enrichment programme. She said she knew the names of all pupils and liaised with all staff – school morale was high.

### **CHIPPING SODBURY. Head: Philip Lidstone**

#### **Support staff roles:**

- Cover for absent staff is provided by a team of three Cover Supervisors.
- A Student Coordinator supports a Head of Learning responsible for 2 year group (i.e. a member of the support staff is filling an “assistant year head” role in support of a teacher in a “year head” role). Two more Student Coordinators have been appointed.
- The school has a team of 5 Patrol Officers – a role grown from that of Lunch Break Supervisors (MDSAs).
- The school also has a Business Manager, looking after finance, premises and event management, and a full-time ICT Network Manager.

#### **Key features:**

- The Head is convinced that the **cover supervisors** “have impacted positively on how students respond when their teacher is not in the classroom”. This is because they are known to the pupils and effectively treated as teachers. Far fewer agency supply teachers are now needed – “Two years ago the school was full of strangers”. Now complaints from pupils and parents about supply staff have ceased.

- There have been no savings in overall cover costs – but pupils’ learning has benefited because behaviour is better. The school is paying a higher rate to cover supervisors than that advised by the LA to secure good quality appointments.
- The system (agreed with union representatives) is that cover supervisors are used for the first 5 days of absence, then a specialist supply teacher is brought in.
- Supervisors are flexible – e.g. two can work together with a difficult class and they support the Y11 mentoring programme.
- The Cover Supervisor interviewed said she and her colleagues work a 32.5 hour week and she felt it important to be available all day. She is covering most lessons but if there are gaps she has made a point of visiting Y7 classes to get to know pupils as well as possible. She felt knowing the pupils was very important.
- Each morning they are given their paperwork and collect the work to be done (she had never had an occasion when work had not been set). They receive a class list with symbols against pupils’ names if they have behaviour problems, learning difficulties etc.
- She felt they had the same authority as a teacher in the school and use the same rewards and sanctions system. Most pupils respect them but if there are problems teaching staff give strong back up.
- Cover Supervisors had a thorough one month induction during which they observed lessons and met people in a range of roles. The one interviewed felt too little training was available outside the school – for example, classroom management courses were aimed only at teachers.
- Restructuring has led to combining 2 Year Heads’ posts into one Head of Learning post, starting with Y8 and Y9. A **Student Coordinator** post was created to support the Head of Learning.
- When interviewed, the Student Coordinator saw the chief advantage of her role as being available all day. This meant that when pupils cause or have problems there was an instant response. She works with pupils, contacts parents and outside agencies such as the EWO. She is working to build up a network of support agencies and develop a range of strategies. Teaching staff were very supportive.
- The Student Coordinator also organises parents’ evenings and PSP review meetings. She works closely with the Year Councils and celebrates pupils’ success by writing home to parents.
- Training – she attended an excellent Child Protection course but would like training in running social skills courses for pupils. The LA Adviser had put her in touch with the Learning Mentors’ network.
- The Student Coordinator’s background was as a TA in both secondary and primary. She had also done a counselling course and had always had a pastoral interest. She was “very excited” by her new role.
- The remit of the **Patrol Officers** is to patrol the school, checking areas such as toilets, walking the corridors and escorting pupils who are ill or misbehaving. They have radios to contact each other or the teacher on duty.
- The Patrol Officer interviewed loved working in the school environment and felt they were helping the school and pupils. She felt they related well to pupils and were working hard to build up a relationship of trust. A small number of pupils were challenging but this was improving and teachers and senior staff gave immediate back-up when required.
- She said their induction training from the Deputy Head on how to handle teenagers had been very good.
- The team of 5 Patrol Officers work split shifts – two work 9.30-1.30, two 10.30-2.30 with the Senior Patrol Officer covering both shifts. They are line managed by the Business Manager. Overall costs are more than £20,000 a year but the Head believes this is a good investment – the Patrol Officers have had a real impact and the climate round the school has improved.
- The school has a strong sense of community where everyone is treated with respect. The support staff interviewed confirmed this – they feel valued and receive strong support from teaching staff.

## **THE CASTLE SCHOOL. Head: Melanie Warnes**

A visit to the school was not possible but the following details were provided by the Head:

### **Support staff roles:**

- An Attendance Officer serves the five year teams
- Learning Mentor – currently works with SEN
- Pilot this year – member of support staff is Assistant Year Head. This model is being rolled out to other year teams (see below)
- New structure for support staff – TAs attached to the three core faculties, HLTAs to lead on literacy

### **Key features:**

- Through restructuring, Year Heads have developed into Leaders of Student Progress (LSP), leading a team of tutors.
- A member of the support staff, originally appointed as a Lunch Break Supervisor, was observed to have good interpersonal skills and became admin support to a Year Head
- In 05/06 a pilot has involved this member of staff taking on the role of Assistant Year Head (traditionally filled by teaching staff) supporting one of the LSPs.
- The pilot has been successful and will be rolled out to other LSPs in 06/07. The Assistant Year Head has helped to draw up job descriptions for the new posts and will take part in the appointment process.
- A working group is now looking at building a development programme for all support staff.

Tony Cleaver  
April 2006