

SWALSS NEWS



Issue 5
December 2011

Chair's Welcome

It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to write a few words of welcome to the December 2011 edition of our **SWALSS** newsletter. I hope that you will find in the pages that follow a full and informative account of all that the organisation has been up to over the last few months.

Underpinned by the boundless energy of our Chief Executive, Paul Holland, we have maintained our traditional offer of high quality conferences for senior leaders in special schools: details of the programmes for Headteachers (January 2012) and Deputy Headteachers (March 2012) are in schools now. At the same time we have continued to push out into a range of new initiatives that we hope will support senior colleagues in special schools throughout our region. Our Leadership in Special Schools course, for instance, is now in its second year, supporting the leadership aspirations of 56 excellent middle leaders. We are hoping that our proposed training programme for teaching assistants in special schools and our alternative to the School Improvement Partner programme – both discussed in this newsletter – will be equally well received.

At a time when, nationally, school partnerships are being dismantled (such as those that have flourished with the support of specialism or High Performing School funding) and the ground rules for future joint working are as yet unclear (Teaching

Schools?), school leaders clearly have a need for support from established and trusted collaborations. Membership of **SWALSS** over the last year, for instance, has grown considerably – we are now an organisation of well over 100 schools across the south of the country. For me, the attraction of **SWALSS** lies in its transparency: it exists only to provide support to its members, everyone except the Chief Executive (3 days per week) and a little admin/finance support is a volunteer and all profits are used to support **SWALSS** activities. To steal a catchphrase, we really were doing 'By Schools, For Schools' long before it became fashionable!



Andrew Penman,
Chair of **SWALSS**

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Andrew Penman



Ten Tors Jubilee Challenge 2011

Chief Executive's Report

It is December again and I am sure you are all extremely busy preparing for your programme of Christmas activities. I have been asked by two schools to be Father Christmas – so I guess I know my place!

It is my pleasure to provide a brief update on **SWALSS** development and planning for 2012 – as approved by the Executive Committee.

Leadership in Special Schools 2011 / 2012:

The **SWALSS** / National College course for aspirant and existing middle school leaders – commenced in September with a total of 55 delegates at 2 venues: Rowdeford School, Devizes and Ellen Tinkham School, Exeter. Our thanks to both headteachers for their cooperation – Ingrid Lancaster-Gaye and Jacqui Warne.

Following the excellent 2010 / 2011 course, the demand for places was extremely high and unfortunately a significant number of colleagues were unsuccessful.

The accreditation option with Bath Spa University is available: Certificate (60 credits), Diploma (90 credits), MA (180 credits). The cost of £490 per student is paid to the university in 2 instalments.

SWALSS is indebted to the on-going backup and guidance as provided by Chris Mitten, Regional Officer, National College.

Following a July meeting in Guernsey with the Heads, Officers and Principal EP, dates have now been confirmed with the Leadership Course running in Guernsey on 6 days (3 x 2) in 2012. Nick Hind and Andrew Penman will be the lead presenters. Guernsey intends to include a number of SENCOs from primary and secondary schools plus 2 EPs in the delegate list.

An enquiry has been received from other regions and the **SWALSS** Executive has decided to put these on the 'backburner' for the time being. There is a full and extensive programme of CPD initiatives planned for 2012 with little or no capacity for additions.

The **SWALSS** Executive has established three task groups to investigate a set of emerging developments including TA training, school evaluation partnership (SEP), future role and strategic vision for **SWALSS**.

TA Leadership and Management Training:

The Task Group aims to set up a bespoke training programme to commence in September 2012 at 2 venues – North and South of the region. **Further details will go to the schools in March 2012.**

School Evaluation Partnership (SEP):

Following the end of SIP, **SWALSS** was invited to set up a similar programme in the South and West for special schools. A draft framework was sent to schools in May and 16 practicing heads declared an interest. The development work continues under the leadership of Paul Donkersloot. All schools will receive further information by April 2012 with a September 2012 timetable commencement.

Role and Strategic Vision for SWALSS:

Emerging from the planned review and development exercise is the significant contributions that **SWALSS** makes to the running of successful special schools; a role that is acknowledged by the DfE and the diminishing LAs. A not-for-profit organisation with low overhead costs, focusing on CPD.

Our thanks to the 2 key members of the Operations Team: Finance Manager, Issy Johnson, Baytree School, Weston-super-Mare and Admin / Marketing Assistant, Imogen Lisle, Southbrook School, Exeter.

A reminder to please make sure your school benefits from the **SWALSS** membership concessions when your membership has to be renewed in January 2012.

I hope you have a most enjoyable and relaxing Christmas and New Year holiday – Merry Christmas.

Paul Holland, SWALSS Chief Executive

Website address: www.swalss.co.uk

Bursars' Conference Report:

This was our 7th Conference and it was another successful two days, full of information, excellent speakers and positive feedback from everyone who attended.

'Great Conferences again, I made some good new contacts and one with a similar school and ideas to us, a couple who have just had new builds and given me some good ideas to take back for our new build starting soon'

The theme of the Conference was 'The Impact of Change on School Management' and Nick Hind who has been leading on the **SWALSS** Leadership Programme in conjunction with the NCSL started off the morning with 'Collaboration and Team Working'. He gave the whole Conference a positive start with excellent feedback such as *'the best speaker I have ever encountered. I really felt he understood a Bursar's role....and frustrations!'* The rest of the first day concentrated on academy status, and the questions of what it looks like, and how it feels to change status. We also had Chris Davies and Tracey Mullinder discuss the legislation and reduction of services offered by Local Authorities.

The evening was very entertaining and everyone joined in the annual quiz and we managed to raise £107 for the Childrens Hospice South West.

The morning of the second day was about 'Health and Well Being' which was led by Isobel Clark – Training Consultant. Isobel brought along two colleagues Carol and Louise who led a number of workshops and the feedback from the morning was excellent – *'Brilliant speaker and great workshops – more in the future would be good..'* and *'Longer sessions next year please...'* and *'Brill, Brill, Brill'*.

The afternoon was extremely informative – sessions from both Hays (**SWALSS** Sponsor) about Rights of Temporary Employees, Jill and myself discussing SFVS and the final speaker being Andrew Carter OBE discussing 'The Impact of Change on School Administration' – feedback being *'Excellent – well done: inspiring and food for thought'...*

The Committee received excellent feedback and we look forward to planning and shaping another interesting programme. Thank you to all those who attended and hope to see you next year.

'Really enjoyed the conference – very informative.....'

'Well done – I want to come next year. Great experience to meet new people who face very similar experiences/pressures and to share strategies etc..'

Issy Johnson – Chair of SWALSS Bursars Committee

The Impact of the **SWALSS** Leadership Course on my Work at Alderman Knight School

I started the **SWALSS** course in October 2010 and was quite apprehensive about what I would learn and achieve after completing the course. However, I had nothing to worry about as the course was fantastic! From the first session through to the end I found my views and thoughts about education being broadened and my leadership skills being strengthened. I have been on other leadership type courses in the past but to attend one that was specific to leading within special education was much more worthwhile and it has really made me a better leader within my school.

After completing the **SWALSS** course I was successful in gaining a promotion to Key Stage 4 Co-ordinator and part of the Senior Leadership Team. I feel that the skills I learnt through completing the course aided me greatly in gaining this promotion.

After gaining the new role my first job was to help the school review, amend and adapt the existing behaviour system. It was necessary to do this review in the light of the changing and increasingly complex needs of the pupils at Alderman Knight School so to ensure we are addressing their needs. My notes and handouts from the course were invaluable in aiding me in this job. I picked out all the information that directly related to either behaviour or key leadership ideas when trying to implement a new idea/initiative. My notes helped me in the planning process, in analysing the old behaviour system and embarking on adapting it.

The adapted behaviour system has been successfully implemented within the school. I do not think I would have had the confidence to have embarked on such a big initiative if I had not learned so much on the **SWALSS** course. I am so glad I attended the course and I urge anyone who is looking to progress in leadership within a special school to attend the **SWALSS** course in the future as you will not be disappointed!

Zoe Blackton, Assistant Headteacher Alderman Knight School Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire

Annual membership fee for each school / college is £95.

Membership benefits:

- 10% discount on delegate fees for residential conferences and day workshops, including leadership in special schools course
- Membership plaque
- Newsletter: December and June
- 10-15% reduction on service costs from HAYS Education Services
- Concession rates from Strictly Education who provide 'back-office' services to schools
- Opportunities for networking and professional links
- Leisure and hotel concessions, updates

SWALSS's is a not-for-profit organisation with a modest operational cost underpinned by membership fees and sponsorship as provided by **HAYS** and **Strictly Education**.

SWALSS purpose is to provide quality, custom built CPD programmes for professionals supporting children with special educational needs within a range of educational and care setting in the South, South West, Wales and Channel Islands. Recently, membership has been taken by special schools in the Midlands, South, East and Home Counties.

"Excellent value when I have members of my team attending conferences, workshops and an Assistant Head on the Leadership Course. Value added is the networking benefit of personal contacts in other LAs"

– Headteacher, Plymouth

National College South West update

Succession Planning and Middle Leadership Development Programme

SWALSS must be congratulated for securing Succession Planning funding to support the development of middle leaders in special schools. The launch events in Exeter and Devizes were seen to be very well received by participants. A further opportunity for ensuring a strong talent pool across **SWALSS** schools might come from considering the College's Middle Leadership Development Programme, MLDP. Clusters of school's that commit to delivering two cohorts of MLDP are offered a range of middle leadership materials, with the College providing free training for the two nominated Cluster facilitators. The MLDP seeks to enable the two Cluster facilitators to build their own programme to meet the leadership needs of their group and so help build leadership capacity across the local alliance of schools. This training is through an initial four day event with a further two days following completion of their first MLDP group and would provide accreditation to the cluster once the two facilitators passed the assessment process. Further information is available through the link:

<http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/middle-leadership-development-programme>

Teaching Schools

With the application round for the second cohort of Teaching Schools recently closed we will soon have additional Teaching School alliances looking to deliver school led support for ITE, school to school support and leadership development across their locality. The College is providing a Building Capacity grant for schools seeking to apply in the cohort three or four windows. This grant is available until December 16th. Currently Teaching Schools are looking to recruit Specialist Leaders of Education, who will be able to add further capacity on school improvement work. Regular updates detailing news on Teaching Schools can be accessed through the link:

<http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/index/professional-development/teaching-schools>

National College Associates supporting local delivery

Support to schools across the South will continue to be provided by a small team of part time Associates. Whilst each Associate will have a cross cutting theme across their region, such as Special Schools or Succession Planning, their main work will be as part of a team of two in their sub-region. Much of Associate work will be responding to local need, supporting Teaching School development and encouraging further system leadership capacity. The list of Associates, with contact details is available through the link below:

<http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/index/networking/networking-your-region/networking-south.htm>



Teaching Schools

The first cohort of just over one hundred Teaching Schools was established on September 1st. There are currently seven special schools designated of which three, Montacute, Fiveways and Fosse Way Schools are within the South-West region. Fiveways and Fosse Way Schools are a "job-share", sharing funding and role.

A Teaching School is expected to collaborate with an "alliance" of schools in the leading of teacher and leadership training across the five areas of; Initial Teacher Training, Continuing Professional Development, Leadership Development, School to School Support and Research & Development. This obviously presents a significant challenge! Pump priming funding is available for the first four years, although this tapers down, particularly in the last two years. By Year Five the Teaching School is expected to be self-supporting. The reality is that overheads will be in the tens of thousands, so "business turnover" for each of the eventual 500 Teaching Schools will need to be of a high magnitude in order to maintain viability.

However the opportunity for the profession to take on responsibility for its own development through a Teaching School "collaborative" is a truly exciting development and a great opportunity for the special school sector to influence Initial Teacher Training programmes and work more closely with mainstream colleagues.

David Gregory, Executive Headteacher, Fosseway School, Radstock

BARCLAYS Barclays in the Community

Following a series of meetings with Sean Oliver, Regional Manager and Gavin Tompkins, Manager Devon and Cornwall; Barclays Bank has made the new Barclays in the Community Project available to **SWALSS** member schools from January 2012.

We are extremely grateful to Barclays for this opportunity and details for the 'small job' project are summarised as follows:

- Community teams comprising Barclays employed staff
- Region: South West
- Tasks may include:
 - Painting and decorating work
 - Playground equipment repairs
 - Erecting a shed or fencing
 - Cupboards / storage
 - School garden / allotment
 - Other
- Duration: 1 / 2 days
- Barclays provides materials and labour and covers insurance and CRB checks

Schools are expected to produce a job plan that includes estimated costs of materials. Some preparation work at the school may be required. Barclays would like the local press to be involved.

Application forms can be obtained from Imogen Lisle from January 2012 (imogen.motley@virgin.net)

Dates for your Diary

Conference dates at the Grand Hotel, Torquay

26/27 January 2012:

Heads / Principals

5/6 March 2012:

Deputies / Assistant Heads

15/16 October 2012:

Business Managers / School Administrators

Further details will be sent to each school / college well in advance of conference dates.

A Day in the Life: a Special School Teaching Assistant

A quick check that the individual schedules are ready before the children arrive and we are ready for the day.

“What are we doing today, Jenny?”

“Wait until Circle Time, Nathan, then you will find out. Now look in your bag for your reading book.”

“Jenny, the clock says two minutes to nine. My watch says four minutes to nine. We need to change the clock.”

“OK, thanks Nathan. Now go and hang your coat up.”

“Jenny

“Go and hang your coat up, Nathan.”

Quick note to self: change Martin’s schedule as his bus is late today. Finding Circle Time on his schedule and then discovering he has missed it could be a trigger we don’t need.....

The day follows a rhythm of supporting a very mixed group of children in their huge range of activities and tasks:

- ☺ holding a pencil
- ☺ manipulating scissors
- ☺ stepping into trousers and pulling them up
- ☺ bringing under control an almost overwhelming desire to run around the classroom
- ☺ deciding to not shout and push over chairs
- ☺ waiting patiently for your turn
- ☺ matching two fish to two cats and counting to two
- ☺ resisting the temptation to eat the playdough
- ☺ pressing a switch to choose between a yoghurt or a drink
- ☺ using kind words and kind hands
- ☺ framing questions (some easier to answer than others):
 - o “Have you got Toy Story One, Two and Three?”
 - o “How many pubs are there in Wootton Bassett?”
 - o “Where is heaven?”
 - o (anything else Callum can think of that will elicit a response from me)

- ☺ not getting too excited in the game of chase
- ☺ making the right choices
- ☺ enjoying deep pressure massage
- ☺ singing the school song
- ☺ listening quietly to a story on the beanbag
- ☺ and much, much more besides

Before we know it we have reached Quiet Time and another fun-filled, action-packed day as a teaching assistant in a special school has whizzed by!!

Jenny Harris

(All names have been changed)



Villa Holidays On-line

In my travels this term, I have spoken with four colleagues who experienced summer holiday problems through booking villa / gîte holidays in France, Spain and Portugal – on-line and directly with the owners.

By coincidence, I recently met with an old mate who is a consumer adviser in the travel trade and I asked him for some guidance for **SWALSS** members, to ensure booking risks in the future are reduced.

I have extracted action points from the information he provided which I pass on.

Property Checks:

- Advertisement
- Review of previous renters
- Possibly making contact if any concerns
- Maps, google.com to confirm location and on-line pictures
- Owners checks
- Speak personally with the owner and get postal address
- Details about the property re: advertisement
- Local contact person(s) for emergencies – within the cost
- Cleaning arrangements
- Pool maintenance (if appropriate)

Payment Check:

- No payment until contract / agreement received
- Check deposit refund clauses e.g. cancellation
- Explore damage-waiver insurance cover
- Discuss payment arrangements with your bank as wire transfers can be untraceable

Villa:

- On arrival and departure tour the villa and grounds with the owner or the representative
- Take photographs of any existing and any damage caused during your visit
- Where deductions are made from security deposit – ask for proof (receipts)

Travel insurance:

- Ensure you have taken out a comprehensive insurance to cover travel, medical, personal injury, legal, theft (money), luggage et al

Clearly, when doing your research and if you have any doubts, do not proceed and look elsewhere.

Paul Holland

ATTENTION ALL DEPUTY HEADS, ASSISTANT HEADS AND SENIOR LEADERS
“PROGRESS: Moving Forward in Special Schools”

SWALSS Conference: The Grand Hotel, Torquay: 5th and 6th March 2012

(Renowned Speakers including Penny Lacey and Pauline Pitman
Key and Current topics including Thinking Skills; Progression Guidance; Achievement for
All; and Teaching Schools

Book a place and join your colleagues for an opportunity to develop your leadership skills,
with a focus on progression for our disadvantaged and vulnerable learners.

Cost will be similar to 2011- further details in schools by the beginning of December)

Further information has been sent to your school.

OUR SPONSORS


HAYS Recruiting experts worldwide

Hays Education can offer a wide range of temporary, contract and permanent staffing solutions in Specialist Educational Needs settings. All staff are interviewed in a local office and meet stringent compliance and vetting procedures including full references, Enhanced CRB and Overseas Police Checks in accordance with Department for Education guidelines.

Additional services include career transition, management of total permanent recruitment packages including full advertising and video marketing, website design and implementation, work related learning and online training for safeguarding and child protection.

Your local point of contact is **Samantha Leach** who can be contacted on 01392 459421 / 01752 667587 or email samantha.leach@hays.com.

Samantha can provide further information or arrange a time to meet with you to discuss future opportunities.



Strictly Education

Strictly Education is an independent national company specialising in support to schools in Human Resources, Payroll, Finance, Property, ICT and Academy advice and guidance.

As specialists in Academy conversions, we work with over 80 schools including VA, Special, Faith and Community schools, assisting them in making a considered decision to convert, and helping them through the process and beyond.

We are experienced in a range of Trust arrangements from the most straightforward to highly complex multi-school Trusts.

Strictly Education offers:-

- Experience - an extensive track record working with converting schools
- Seamless ongoing support- once Academy status is attained
- One stop shop- all aspects handled through one contact point
- Bespoke solutions- tailored to your particular circumstances
- Simple budgeting- a fixed capped cost against a clear support specification
- Confidence- a DfE recommended supplier
- Expert legal advice- through our legal partners
- Full project management - and a dedicated Project Lead who will co-ordinate the transition support

To listen to Strictly Education's exclusive podcast – The New Academy – please visit www.strictlyeducation.co.uk and click on the link on the right hand side.

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