Peer Review Case Study- Chelmsford Education Network Written by Marie Staley- Head Teacher at Moulsham Junior School Context of the Partnership

We are currently a growing partnership of 24 infant, junior and primary schools with a wide-ranging school size; our smallest setting has just 70 pupils on roll with our largest expanding to 630 in September.

The partnership has been established for around 15 years initially as a source of finance support evolving to established, quality CPD and school to school support in many forms. We operate in 4 (loosely) geographic clusters who each lead on a yearly research project as well as an ongoing cycle of peer review. Termly Heads meetings provide information updates, sharing of good practice as well a yearly inspirational conference.

Over the last 5 years we have developed a peer review model to support and challenge ourselves. What started as "You can have a review if you would like one..." has become a yearly part of each schools monitoring and evaluation systems and it is clearly understood that all schools are expected to both undertake a review and also support their partner schools in the process. In this academic year, the commitment to reviews was set as a Network Objective and has been higher than ever, with two-thirds of reviews having already taken place.

Key Issue/s that your partnership identified to overcome?

At the start we needed to establish trust; each school needed to feel that the peer review would be supportive of school improvement, a partnership approach and not a 'done to model.' Our reviews are school-led ranging from a specifically focused area for review such as "Is our new approach to writing impacting on standards for our most vulnerable pupils?" to a full blown "Mocsted." The important thing is that the school decides the focus.

We have embedded a protocol for our reviews which includes:

1. School chosen focus
2. External facilitator for QA
3. 3 HTs (including the review school)
4. Utilisation of an Improvement Champion
5. A written report
6. Pulling together the outcomes of the reviews for sharing across the Network (this is in development)

Every school has benefitted from participating in peer reviews, whether as the school undergoing the review, or the review/improvement champion participants; all have given positive feedback about the process and the impact it has had on school improvement.

What did the partnership learn from undertaking the peer review?

We have learnt about the importance of follow up; what are our next steps as a school and as a partnership. We have recognised the vast differences within our schools and the huge amount of strength/skill within the network and we have had the opportunity to recognise some common areas of challenge. We now need to pull on these further to support which ever schools are most vulnerable at any given time. We had to train more Improvement Champions to cope with the growing demand for their input. If we are to truly be part of a school to school supported future our most successful schools need to support the challenged and all schools need to be willing to share experience and expertise. The

opportunity to work closely and share observation experiences in each others' schools can also prompt cluster-level feedback on future CPD areas/network speakers. It is also important to recognise that schools dip in and out of vulnerability! For example two of our Improvement Champions have gone on to Head of School roles. This is great but a loss to the role.

What was the Impact and benefits
For the Partnership as a whole by undertaking peer review

Build Trust and strengthened collaboration- as a result new working relationships have been formed beyond HTs. We have developed leadership at many levels particularly through the Improvement Champions who have had many opportunities to work in different schools with a range of contexts, supporting an array of development areas.

For individual school leaders

When taking part in a review there is always something to bring back to your own school (sometimes to the annoyance of your team!) It may be a new resource, a method of working or (the one the team like) an assurance about what you are currently doing.
A chance to sharpen your own self-evaluation tools. Are we truly 'good' at this? Could we do better? Is that still 'good practice?'
For school leaders when hosting a review, the impact is that Quality Assurance- 'We think this is going really well?' Check it out- is it having the desired impact? "Even better if's"

On the staff of the process

Staff get used to *visitors* thus hopefully chipping away at the worry that can be observed during an inspection. My team (mostly) enjoy having external validation of their great work. It is also refreshing to have new input via the Improvement Champions who facilitate the follow up workshops enable teams to explore new ideas and approach challenges with a fresh independently-mediated approach – this can help staff at all levels feel more "bought- in" to the planned outcomes/actions, as they have been so actively involved in the process.

On school improvement/outcomes of peer review

The best way to share this with you is through my own school's journey:

Autumn 2014- LA review- new HT- outcomes were indicating that MJS would become a coasting school. Some SLT in the school knew this and took a proactive approach but others were not convinced. The LA review was a 'Mocsted' the lead was fair, and this gave the new HT a validation of her concerns and more 'evidence' to back the need for the school to change tac. Had this been an inspection it is likely that it would have been deemed inadequate.

Lots happened here but not to do with peer reviews!

Spring 2016- Ofsted- Good Behaviour, Good Leadership, RI Teaching and Learning, RI Outcomes. The report stated a need for consistency in teaching so that over time children received quality first teaching. The foundations were there but consistent good teaching was not the norm throughout the 20 classes.

Autumn 2016- Peer Review- School lead focus- 'Insisting on Consistency.' Post Ofsted the SLT had developed a consistency document which clearly sets out the expectations of leaders, teachers and pupils with regards to learning. We wanted the peer review to test- were our carefully planned intentions happening in practice? We invited back the LA review leader as our external partner. The review outcome report was a simple; Strengths and Areas for Development and was overwhelmingly positive.

An extract from the report:
Strengths

The development of a consistent approach has been carefully managed by leaders at all levels to ensure consistent expectations, whilst enabling teachers to develop their own pedagogy and style of teaching. This supports pupils to make progress and secures their engagement with learning. The effectiveness of the work that the school is embedding is perhaps best summed up by the pupils who made comments such as: 'The best thing about the school is that teachers and LSA help us to learn' 'Teachers help us by giving us feedback. If we're not challenging ourselves they encourage us to take on the challenge and take ourselves further'. 'A pen passport means you've upgraded your writing.'
The Heads of Year know their year groups well.
They have a commitment to developing consistency across the school and how this supports pupil progress.
They are ambitious for the school and want to do the best for the pupils at Moulsham.
They are clear about actions taken and impact thus far.
They know the areas for development for their team and actions going forward.
They understand school improvement and the cyclical nature of school improvement.

Areas for development

Heads of Year need to secure their understanding of consistency of marking/presentation within their year group and use their knowledge to secure that consistency in all classes.
Review how models to support learning are presented to pupils - Could the support materials be organised in a simple 'package' rather than lots of individual pieces?
Ensure that working walls are always relevant and that they have clarity/accessibility to support pupils to use effectively
Revisit Marking- at times teachers over mark, pupils do not always respond to marking when required, pupils' response is not always acknowledged. In some books there was too much general praise rather than skill specific feedback. Consistency of marking is stronger in English than Maths.
My team felt so proud of how far we had come.

Autumn 2017- Peer Review- School-led focus 'How well do we reshape the learning?' With the same team (except for one HT change) we set about looking at how our teaching had evolved yet further; were our AfL systems having the impact on learners within lessons and from lesson to lesson? The Improvement Champion then delivered a follow up workshop to my teaching team to maximise their impact via marking as well as lightening their work load- this was a popular bit of CPD! The CPD focused on:

Review feedback policy to ensure that it is consistent in providing pertinent feedback to pupils and pupils have the time and opportunity to respond to teachers' marking. (Also consider strategies to support teachers to reduce their own workload e.g. excessive comments – 'try this now' 'give this a go' repeat of Learning Objective/success criteria)
Review and discuss AfL techniques and how these are used to re-shape learning, particularly the use of the coloured cups – what are their purpose? How can they be used?
Sharing of good practice, modelling and coaching to support consistency

Impact on outcomes for MJS

Year	RWM combined	Comments
2014	68%	First year of new HT in post
2015	68%	Restructure

| 2016 | 52% | New SATs and HoY 6 acting up as DHT |
| 2017 | 72% | HoY 6 back in role/ DHT back from maternity leave! |

What is your partnership going to do next based on the learning/impact of the Peer Review?

Next steps for our partnership are as follows:

To bring greater consistency to the peer review "look-back" process – currently this varies from school to school and feedback is not collated at partnership level; to ensure maximum understanding of the impact of the review process and the opportunity to share school-level best-practices, we aim to develop our review process to include feedback to the network at a set period after the review. Questions would focus on the impact of the review – how has the school applied the review outcomes/actions, has there been further evolution, has there been the opportunity to expand the impact further across the setting, etc, as well as practical observations – how could the review process have been even more impactful/improved. What worked well? What didn't?

To collate the outcomes of our peer reviews, in a manageable way, so that we can analyse the strengths, developments and trends across the partnership, allowing us to plan future CPD and best support all schools. We plan on doing a post peer review survey- capturing the strengths and areas for development. Can schools with shared focusses benefit from working together so that impacts/outcomes can benefit a greater number of schools? Is there a potential opportunity for partnership research/a need to engage inspirational speakers/can we share our strengths outside of the partnership? Our aim is for all schools to be Good or better- we are confident we will get there!