



Case Study

Leadership support for a school in TISP

Hazeldown Primary School in Teignmouth



What was the challenge?

Hazeldown Primary School in Teignmouth received an Ofsted judgement of Requires Improvement and was placed in TISP (Targeted Intervention and Support Programme). This was a difficult time for the school and Stuart Ludford, the head teacher, did not feel that the school improvement support that he was receiving was going to move his school forward quickly enough.

A school that is part of the TISP process can receive very conflicting messages, coming from different advisors, HMI and different school improvement officers. This can be overwhelming and, even though Stuart Ludford knew that he had the capacity within the school to achieve what he needed to achieve, some other support mechanism was needed. He considered different models of support but settled on joining the ECTSA and buying into various support services. Unlike the previous example of the collaborative maths project, this collaboration was not about working with other schools to secure rapid progress but rather with a partnership for school improvement.

At the start of the spring term of 2015, Stuart Ludford had a new leadership team (including two new assistant heads), a completely new teaching team in KS2, and new governors. He needed to build the capacity of his team to pull together quickly, in order to secure better outcomes for the children in his school.

The project. How did it start?

Stuart Ludford approached some of the head teachers in the ECTSA and had an initial meeting about what support the ECTSA might be able to offer. They decided that, rather than support across the board, what Stuart really needed was the guidance and mentoring of a serving head that was currently walking the walk and who would be able to help him untangle the confusion of actions plans, priorities and mixed messages that he was receiving.

They made a successful bid to the NCSL for £10,000, which was granted, and this allowed him to choose the support that he wanted to buy into. Hazeldown Primary School joined the ECTSA and Stuart secured Martyn Boxall (Executive Head teacher of Montgomery and Wynstream Primary Schools) as a mentor. Martyn was then able to

help him map out and clarify the support needed to achieve rapid progress and move out of the TISP process by the next inspection.

What did the project involve? What happened?

Through the spring term, Martyn worked with Stuart, at Hazeldown, sometimes for half a day, sometimes for a whole day per week. They worked in classrooms, looking from the bottom to the top of the school at an aspect of learning and / or curriculum, identifying key actions to take and who was going to take those actions. Stuart was also able to access ideas and resources from other schools within the ECTSA, including Martyn's, which showed him what the elements under discussion might look like.

The school also received the support of key SLEs (Specialist Leaders of Education) in specific areas. One SLE was providing general teaching and learning support to two NQTs, in order to raise the standard of teaching. Two other SLEs worked with middle leaders within the school, with the aim of moving their leadership skills from good to outstanding, in order that they might move their teams forward more quickly. These leaders needed to become more consistently outstanding themselves before having the capacity to move their teams.

All of this support was about building capacity in order to make rapid progress.

One key element that needed to change was the way in which the staff and the leadership team were tracking data. All staff needed to be much more knowledgeable and confident in their ability to articulate progress. Stuart introduced some large data boards – an idea observed in one of Martyn's schools – and these became the data 'nerve centre' of the school.

Stuart and his leadership team also started using leadership journals as a way of having everything they needed at their fingertips and keeping ideas and messages straight.

Staff at different levels also accessed support and CPD training from various ECTSA services (for example, RQT courses, NQT courses, Learning to Lead, Early Headship training) and all were coming back to school buzzing with new ideas and messages that were consistent with what Stuart, with Martyn's support, was trying to implement.

What has been successful about the project? Why has it worked?

Stuart knew that he and his staff had the capacity to achieve good progress and outcomes for children but the mixed messages and imposed agendas had wrought confusion and overload. The real success of his collaboration with ECTSA has been that it has brought much-needed clarity and clear-headed prioritisation. He has then been able to build the capacity of the leaders and the teachers in his school around these key priorities.

The ECTSA offers a very powerful tool for school improvement because it is a very different kind of person coming in to support: someone who is already doing the job well and has the answers to questions because it is there in their schools. This model has been both effective and confidence-boosting to Stuart and to his whole staff. He and various other key staff have been able to go and visit schools where these areas for development are happening successfully, to see what it can look like. When Martyn, as an advisor, has wanted to exemplify what he means, he has been able to show Stuart, which enables a much faster journey to reach a specific goal. This is the real strength of the ECTSA model of school support.

What were the barriers to the success of the project?

Despite collaborating with Martyn and ECTSA, Stuart was still part of the TISP process and was still accountable to the various advisors and, of course, to HMI. The different messages that were being received made the process more complicated, at times, and could mean remaining stuck on the same issues, rather than moving with the development of the school. Other than this conflict, however, Stuart did not find that there were barriers to collaborating with the ECTSA.

What are the main outcomes and key points of learning that have come out of this project?

- The most important outcome is that the school is now out of TISP and has received an Ofsted judgement of Good. They made really rapid progress over a short period of time (two terms).
- Hazeldown Primary School is now part of a group of schools and leaders who are, at times, prepared to step outside the norm, in order to secure the best outcomes for children, and Stuart finds this a very welcome and secure place to be.
- Stuart and his team now have the courage and the confidence not to listen to all advice that is given to them. They remain focused on the learning of *their* children and, if they feel that part of a suggested unit of work is not valuable or a particular strategy isn't working, then they now have the confidence to do what they think is right, rather than what they think they should.

How will this project be taken forward? What's next?

- The school now finds itself in the next phase of development. It needs to sustain and embed the improvements made and begin to move towards outstanding. This second phase can be more consultative with staff and parents and there is more time for listening to people talk about what is working for them. Sharing good practice and collaborating, within the school and within the wider community of the ECTSA will enable greater ownership of the professional development process.
- The school would like to buy into a package to support the School Review process – as it becomes available from ECTSA. This model of school improvement partnership will enable the same team of people to review, set targets AND support the journey to reaching those targets.