



partnerships for schools
building schools for the future

This case study looks at the education vision for Knowsley which will see the creation of seven new Centres for Learning with personalised learning, 14-19 provision and community access at its heart.

Knowsley was winner of the 'Best transformational learning strategy' category in the *Excellence in BSF Awards 2008*.

Key project information

Local authority: Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council

School type: Seven Centres for Learning (four community and three faith secondary schools)

No. of pupils: 8,100 paces

Project cost: £250m

School open: September 2008

Future Schooling Knowsley: a transformational learning strategy

Project description

Knowsley established its 'Future Schooling in Knowsley' strategy in 2003 with the clear intent of transforming education for its young people and improving economic and social outcomes.

The Knowsley BSF programme sees the closure of 11 secondary schools and their replacement with seven new Centres for Learning delivering 11-18 education, children's services and community access. This approach has enabled a borough-wide review of all aspects of the school system, in particular teaching and learning.

Project aims

The transformation of teaching and learning and its contribution to raising standards is at the core of the Knowsley vision. This vision is characterised by a shift towards a personalised model of learning.

The BSF team looked to move away from: uniform and controlled progression through the system, with choice

limited to specific moments that coincide with age and not progress; achievements solely measured in standard numerical ways; learning happens at the beginning of life and only in institutions; and a system that requires the child adapts to it.

In its place Knowsley is in the process of implementing a personalised system, consistent with national legislation, that supports progression on the basis of readiness. Learning professionals are working together to seek the most appropriate combination of learning methodologies, supporting learners to choose how, where, what and when they learn, developing a richer picture of achievements, establishing an ethos of 'everyone learns all the time' and it can happen any time and anywhere.

Knowsley looked to move away from traditional approaches of a teacher and a class of 30, to a system which adapts readily to the needs of the learner. To do this Knowsley has commissioned buildings and technological systems designed to be responsive, alert and flexible, and which are able to accommodate changing pedagogy.

Future Schooling Knowsley

In summary: the Knowsley approach

- Tackles head on the need to question limited and self-imposed pedagogy and teaching practice;
- Is built purposely on the work of international education experts such as David Hargreaves and Professor Stephen Heppell in advocating an enlightened and democratic approach to learning;

Responds to the challenges of the 21st century to the school system rather than reverting to a traditional model;

- Unequivocally asserts that current teaching and learning practice can only achieve limited success in areas of economic deprivation and historic under-attainment;
- Looks to establish a model whereby the education system adapts readily to societal and economic change.

Personalised learning

Headteachers in Knowsley have worked in partnership to further develop the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust's approach to personalising learning and adopted the "4 Deeps" as a useful construct for managing implementation of new pedagogy. A number of key strands emerged, such as classroom dialogue, using students as researchers and the use of new technologies to support learning.

The output specification for the new buildings emerged directly from a move towards personalising learning with a resulting emphasis upon flexibility and adaptability to offer a range of learning environments and so facilitate different approaches to learning. Similarly out of the specification for the BSF ICT solution emerged a 'Personalised Learning Environment' that would support students in accessing their learning throughout the new building as well as from home and other Centres of Learning.

Knowsley is one of the leading exponents of 14-19 across the country and a combination of local partnership working both among schools and between schools and colleges provides a variety of pathways to learning for young people at 14. Knowsley is a pathfinder for some of the new diplomas and the BSF designs anticipated their emergence.

The commitment that the school system would respond to the needs of every learner has resulted in a strong emphasis on the development of individual learning plans. These will support learners in planning and presenting their work, whilst the assessment functionality will ensure that intervention is accurately determined and carefully monitored.

Enhancing 14-19 provision

Knowsley is working towards developing a 'system' curriculum offer that enables quality provision to be planned and delivered in a way that is accessible to all learners across the borough.

It is within such a system offer that Knowsley wishes to further their specialist schools network by transferring current specialisms to the new Centres for Learning and developing federative lead centres in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science to support the raising of attainment and achievement. Diploma development is being similarly 'system-led', focusing around current and developing specialist expertise that will ensure learners across the borough have full access to all of the 14-19 diplomas, at all levels, whatever their homebase of learning.

The offer will be focused at three levels across the system - at institutional level to meet the needs of learners within a home centre; within a federated cluster of schools which will meet local area need and bring efficiencies to the constituent centres; and at a system level where learners are able to access any component within the overall borough offer. Such system transformation will ensure that the changes that are being worked through with the current workforce are built into new ways of working and so become embedded as the legacy of Future Schooling in Knowsley.

BSF and community access

Knowsley has also purchased from the PFI provider a total of 25,000 opening hours annually. The delivery of formal schooling requires around 12,000 hours. In practice this means that the new BSF Centres for Learning will be open until 10pm daily, over weekends and school holidays. This will provide ample opportunity to develop extended schools and widespread community use. This has been funded upfront by the local authority and represents its commitment to learning for all.

Working with stakeholder groups

The whole programme is monitored by a Future Schooling Programme Board, chaired by the Executive Director of Children and Family Services, which itself

Future Schooling Knowsley

feeds into the Children and Young People's Executive. Education transformation has brought together working groups of headteachers and local authority colleagues to develop a range of projects that focus on sustainable developments. The projects have been brought together within a programme framework and are being contributed to by classroom practitioners, senior leaders and other members of the school workforce.

Stakeholder engagement has been a hallmark of the Knowsley approach towards transformation, starting at the bidder engagement stage. Fifteen stakeholder groups were formed early in the BSF programme and covered groups such as primary-aged children, secondary-aged children, parents, members of the local community, elected members, associated services, teachers, headteachers and governors. The stakeholder groups were brought together over several months to learn about the design process, visit educational establishments at home and across Europe and meet with the prospective bidders to discuss local expectations.

Change management

Through the BSF programme, Knowsley has developed a Pedagogical Framework that presents a set of principles that guide teachers towards the local vision for 21st century teaching. An audit tool for individuals, departments and the whole school accompanies the framework and will support targeted CPD to ensure transformation is sustainable. The framework has been used as a benchmark against which the proposed curriculum models for the new Centres for Learning can be tested for their fitness for purpose.

A massive workforce training programme has also been implemented, taking forward whole authority initiatives and complementing these with approaches tailored to meet the needs of individuals, departments and future Centres for Learning.

Key contact

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Further information

For more information about the extensive programme of students, staff and community engagement work in Knowsley, see the **student engagement** section of this website.

Knowsley has placed great emphasis upon its change management strategy and has invested in staff development to introduce approaches to programme management that have been critical to project implementation.

From September 2006 a Secondary Partnership Programme Board was established with headteachers and key local authority officers to oversee secondary education transformation. Chaired by a headteacher, the group has steered education transformation, receiving regular feedback on the implementation of projects.

In September 2007, this activity joined other strands of Future Schooling in Knowsley as the programme extended across other directorates within the authority.

The biggest change management process has been that of education transformation in the classroom. The pedagogical framework has been a key driver in guiding classroom practice, but the development of the Test Model Environment promises to be the real opportunity for trying out those new approaches.

The three successful City Learning Centres in Knowsley have been remodelled to offer a flexible space that will offer a range of linked learning environments. These allow teachers to work in a realistic learning environment that reflect the type of learning spaces that are being built in the new Centres for Learning. Here teachers are able to explore the frontiers of pedagogy and space, whilst students test out different types of furniture and the use of new technologies in supporting their learning.

A leadership development programme has been established for new principals and an 18 month programme planned for second and third tier staff. Additional Council funding has also been secured to support Education Transformation with an additional £0.5m in place for 2007/08 and approximately £0.75m for 2008/09.