



partnerships for schools

building schools for the future

This case study focuses on the education vision for Sunderland which encompasses vocational training, collaboration between education providers and professional development opportunities for the workforce.

It also demonstrates 'any time, any place' learning in action with look at a week in the life of a typical Sunderland student of the near future.

### Key project information

**Local authority:** Sunderland City Council

**Schools:** 17 in total, seven in Wave 1

**No. of pupils:** 16,584 in total, 6,245 in Wave 1

**BSF Wave:** Wave 1

**Project cost:** £120m (Wave 1)

**First school to open:** First BSF school to open in September 2009; Quick Win funding school opened in June 2007

## Sunderland's education vision: new ways of working for learners and teachers

### Project description

Sunderland is one of 13 local authorities in the first wave of BSF which embarked on its BSF programme in 2004. Sunderland's vision for teaching and learning in the area's 17 schools was developed by Sunderland City Council, in consultation with stakeholders, over an 18-month period.

Central to Sunderland's philosophy is that BSF is not just about buildings and equipment. The local authority and its partners believe that BSF is a transformational programme which is about bringing learning into the 21st century. That is why the BSF team has spent substantial amounts of time working with each school to help to identify their values and vision, and assisting with curriculum design according to their core objectives.

Sunderland's partnership model provides a commitment for all stakeholders to work together for the good of all young learners and communities in Sunderland. Through the 'Sunderland Model' - where the Council is a co-sponsor in each Academy - collaborative governance agreements with lead sponsors have been reached. These include

agreements on admissions, exclusions and joint sixth forms to maintain Sunderland's collaborative approach to the delivery of education.

There are seven secondary schools in Sunderland's first BSF wave and 17 schools in total including community schools, academies, faith and foundation schools all pooling expertise and funding. All have signed up to common principles of transformation, 14-19 delivery, post 16 practices and the development of co-located services with the local authority.

Sunderland was Highly Commended in the 'Most transformational learning strategy' category in the *Excellence in BSF Awards 2008*.

### Vocational training and collaboration: opportunities for all

Through pooled funding from the BSF programme and Dedicated Schools Grants (DSG), the partnership has funded two vocational training centres. These are open to all students in the city, and are central to the diploma delivery strategy.

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Sunderland has also developed:

- four joint school-college collaborative sixth forms with innovative shared governance arrangements;
- two post-16 vocational centres to which all sixth forms have access;
- two 14-16 vocational centres to which all schools have access;
- shared courses between schools;
- agreed timetabling across 17 schools;
- inclusive 14-19 Collaborative Curriculum Planning;
- Sunderland Model Quality Assurance and Protocols for Off-site delivery;
- pilot for Partnership Staff Development (Diploma delivery) through the TDA;
- a model for Diploma Delivery agreed through Diploma Delivery Network Groups (Specialist schools are leading on diploma design with 10 Diploma Development Network Groups in operation);
- effective transition projects across the city;
- and co-location of service and provision.

The partnership offers diploma, apprenticeship, vocational and academic accreditation in programmes personalised to student need.

The visioning and building strategy for Sunderland's BSF schools has transformed the notion of what a school is and who it is for, with each school or academy offering courses to the city as well as their own students. The curriculum offer for students is now extensive.

## Workforce professional development

There has been a focus on high-quality transformational Continuing Professional Development (CPD), with an emphasis on building teachers' capacity for self development. Much of the activity should be school-based, with a focus on improving learning and teaching, but not forgetting the daily or routine practices of teachers since it is here where change is most difficult but also most needed. Teachers need to be able to choose the practices they change and the techniques they use. Importantly, they need to see unfamiliar new practices being used, and to be coached and supported as they manage the transfer of knowledge and skills.

## The Education Leadership Board (ELB)

The ELB represents a partnership which aims to secure excellence through collaboration for the city's schools and wider education community. Meeting regularly, it takes a keen interest in the city's BSF programme and the innovative Sunderland Model. Chaired by Baroness Estelle Morris with business support/representation

from the three academy lead sponsors, Sunderland University, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), the ELB has investigated ways to use business expertise to develop collaborative training programmes for the city's education practitioners.

## Embedding ICT into the life of schools and communities

As with other BSF schemes, Sunderland is using the possibilities offered by new technologies to open up the world as an unlimited resource for learning, facilitated by leaders of learning. Students will become producers as well as consumers of digital media; E-portfolios will be common to all schools enabling students greater opportunities to learn across a number of learning centres. Wireless and cable connections in the schools will allow learners to learn anywhere via access to the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), with automatic centre attendance and achievement tracking. Sunderland will employ digital media professionals to work with teaching staff to further populate the VLE. All materials created will be shared by all schools.

Common Management Information Systems (MIS) offer real time and accurate monitoring and intervention programmes which are accessible to schools, students and parents. These systems will also reduce administrative workload in schools.

The VLE will function as a central resource for teachers and students alike. It will also function as a storage and access point for learning resources created by the collaborative efforts of teachers and media technicians. This will support the local authority IT vision of community empowerment, enabling access for information, learning and services. One network with differentiated levels of secure access will assist the school to lead in developing the capacity of its community to handle change positively.

The schools will take advantage of designated key points within the buildings for video conferencing and multi-media recording facilities to share good practice across the school and partnership schools.

## Implementing 14-19 reforms

Sunderland's approach to implementing the 14-19 reforms has resulted in genuinely collaborative arrangements and a shared ownership and responsibility for providing high quality 14-19 education across the city. The 14-19 Steering Group, which monitors the implementation of the plans, has senior representatives from the LSC, local authority, schools, City of Sunderland College (COSC), Work

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Based Learning (WBL), voluntary sector, University of Sunderland, Youth Offending Service (YOS) and Connexions. The 14-19 Partnership has secured significant increase in participation and achievement. It has radicalised curriculum planning and approaches to the tracking of young people, such as agreed shared data arrangements. It has established a comprehensive range of resources to deliver a personalised curriculum.

Practice includes:

**14-16 Centres** - collaboration between partners has led to the development of an unparalleled level of co-operation and trust, especially between headteachers. This led to a pooling of resources enabling the development of two industry-standard 14-16 Centres, now operating with over 300 pupils engaged in BTECs in Construction, Engineering, Hospitality and Catering, Hair and Beauty, Logistics (Manufacturing) and Motor Vehicle. The Steering Groups, which oversee the management of these arrangements, again have representation from all key

partners. Delivery in these centres is by staff drawn from schools, College, WBL providers and employers.

**16-19 Vocational Provision** - delivered from two centres of COSC and by 13 WBL organisations provide direct progression routes for the city's pupils. This has raised the profile of work-relevant subjects, enabling a truly comprehensive and equally valued approach to post-16 education.

Collaborative sixth forms are jointly governed and managed by the local 11-16 schools and the COSC. Sunderland headteachers are all Associate Principals of the college. These innovative arrangements have received national recognition.

**Extended services and SEN provision** - these integrated services are managed inclusively by the Education Improvement Partnership and the local authority. New buildings include unprecedented levels of access for students with a range of needs. Sunderland's first BSF build has increased community use from 800 to 1,500 users each week.

## Personalised learning: a student's view:

Alex is studying a diploma in Creative and Media. Alex is a student at a school in the east of the city, however her diploma is managed and delivered by one of the three Performing and Visual Arts colleges. Therefore she does not have what we would currently recognise as a typical school day or week. On **Monday** she is visiting a print company based in Washington to check on the final print run for the school brochure she has designed. She meets regularly with the MD to discuss her project plan. They have kept in constant touch via email and video conference. In the afternoon Alex is back at her own school where she is completing English coursework. Not quite getting it finished, she opens her VLE account at home, completes the final section and lets her teacher know with a quick message that it is ready for her to download and mark. Alex quickly checks her other emails, the MD confirms the print run is finished, a French assignment comes back marked and the VLE points her to the next task.

Alex spends all day **Tuesday** in a Performing Arts College. She is managing the construction of the publicity website for the Christmas production of 'Scrooge'. After an early meeting, she works with the ICT teacher on the design of the site. The evening is a rehearsal. She has a small part as a ghost. The mask she wears was designed on a computer and stitched with a CAD/CAM sewing machine. She gets home late to find a confirmation that her coursework is fine and needs only minor adjustment.

Having worked late the night before, Alex spends the morning at home and takes the chance to use the Maths VLE test material to revise for her functional skills test in the afternoon. This is her second attempt. She just failed it last time. However, the diagnostic feedback she got back from the online test told her exactly what she needs to do and where to find resources to help.

**Wednesday** is spent on the Quay Side in Newcastle. There are meetings with staff from both the Sage and Baltic [art/performance centres] to find out about the job opportunities and career paths in the Creative and media sector. Alex records sections of the meeting on her 'Flip' video recorder and, using the computer room at the Sage, logs on to her VLE account and uploads the video to edit when she gets home. All of Alex's evidence is held in an e-portfolio that she constantly updates and her tutor regularly checks and advises about improvements.

**Thursday** Alex spends in her own school. She has a day of English, Maths, ICT and French lessons. This is much more like a normal school day. All the resources and lessons are posted on the VLE. This is just as well because Alex was unwell last week and missed school. She was able to pick up the work when she felt better and do it over the weekend with help from fellow students in her 'learning chat room'. She got stuck at one point but an email to a teacher soon helped.

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On **Friday** Alex has a tutorial where she goes through her progress throughout the week as well as how far she has got with her major project. Next week's diary is sorted and is available to Alex's parents through their online access. Through this they can also check Alex's progress, attendance, load up her lunch card and order more uniform. They are also able to communicate with Alex's form tutor to inform her of a dental appointment Alex has next week.

Alex has a work placement at the Empire [theatre] that requires her to be there on **Saturday**. She is able to go home early and spends the time talking to her French friend via a secure blog. Just when she thought she could relax a text message remind her that her last ICT assignment is overdue. Reluctantly, Alex logs on, loads up her (incomplete) PowerPoint and starts work. She knows the weekend will be very busy and decides to get it out of the way. Meanwhile her tutor can see she is logged on and doing the work so feels she can leave her to it.

Alex's parents also have access to the schools management information system and can check her latest reports, grades and attendance when they wish to. They can also keep in regular contact with the school in this way.

## Top Tips

- The education vision is just that – your vision for how you want learners to learn and teachers to teach in the future, it goes much further than what buildings look like
- Think about the possibilities of where and how learning can take place, and that students don't necessarily have to be sited together and working on the same things at the same time
- Think about who can help students to learn. While there will always be a role for subject teachers, students can learn a lot of skills and gain experience by working with professionals – either in person, via email contact or through placements
- Consult local residents as well as the school community about the extended services appropriate to serve their needs – Sunderland has seen community use of school facilities almost double as a result of providing the right facilities and the right access

## Key contact

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## Further information

Sunderland City Council's BSF website includes latest news about the programme across the city, as well as videos and pictures of new school buildings: [www.sunderland-bsf.org.uk/](http://www.sunderland-bsf.org.uk/)