

PEGS

(Peak Edge Group of
Schools)



Case History

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Background

For many years, New Mills, and its environs, has been the home for a significant number of diverse schools. The 12 schools, within a three-mile radius of each other, include a nursery school, a primary with a nursery, a secondary school, a Catholic school, a C of E school, an infant school, and numerous smaller primary schools. Two of the schools are situated just metres from the neighbouring authorities of Cheshire East and Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council. Each of these schools has its own ethos and serves different sectors of the local society. Many parents will travel from one side of New Mills to another, passing two or three schools, in order for their child to attend the school of their choosing, and others come across the borders from the neighbouring authorities. All primary schools feed into New Mills High School but some parents invariably choose to send their children to secondary schools further afield. The local area is served by the two state nurseries mentioned and a variety of other private pre-school establishments which in turn feed into the 10 schools within PEGS (Peak Edge Group of Schools) around New Mills.

The schools in and around New Mills formed a local cluster over 15 years ago and have a history of working well together across a number of areas from sport to shared resources. As headteachers have come and gone, new heads were welcomed into the cluster and to an informal collaborative method of working.

Political context

In 2010 Michael Gove purportedly gave us more freedom in schools. With that freedom came increased accountability for all of us. When 'The Importance of Teaching' came out that November, it promised to 'increase freedom and autonomy for all schools...and allow all schools to choose for themselves how best to develop'.

In the five years that followed, we have seen the demise of the role of Local Authorities as austerity cuts significantly affect their capacity to support schools. In many places the traditional Local Education Authority is not coming back, but in Derbyshire we still have ours. DCC is actively supporting AMoL (Alternative Models of leadership).

We have seen stringent funding cuts and there are many more to come, particularly for small schools. DfE class any school with fewer than 200 pupils as a small school. A fair national funding formula has still to be found.

It is becoming seriously hard to recruit headteachers, especially in small schools, and many experienced heads are taking early retirement as a result of local and national pressures. There are recruitment challenges in schools all over the country.

Everything points to the fact that the era of the stand-alone school is rapidly coming to an end.

However, groups of schools working together will have both a greater appetite and a greater capacity for autonomy than smaller schools working alone. But if collaboration is to be successful, it has to be through choice so that everyone buys into the vision.

The NAHT says 'it will be the central task of every school leader in the next five years to create a local network of schools, with strong mutual accountability, shared support services and the regular exchange of staff on coaching and professional development activities.'

Working together as part of collaboration can be of huge benefit to the profession, particularly for those in leadership positions, whether that be middle leaders, coordinators or class leaders. Working within a trust of like-minded people, strongly supportive of each other, is one of the most inspiring ways of working. It creates more job opportunities, opens up succession planning, enables specialisation and builds networks of support.

Identified Need

As the original cluster continued to grow and develop and new school members joined, a need to vary, develop and strengthen the cluster's approach towards school improvement across the community grew. Long established headteachers had a variety of ideas with regards to ways in which the cluster could be developed in order to increase the value placed upon it by the whole school community. Not only was there a need to ensure that the curriculum coverage was sufficient for the locale but also a great desire to expose all the children of the community to a range of opportunities that highlighted the importance of teaching and learning together.

Headteachers and Governing bodies wanted to ensure all schools were part of a collaborative structure that offered mutual support, accountability and development.

In New Mills, our particular PEGS model hopes to echo that of The Cooperative Trust by promoting community and parental involvement through a membership approach. PEGS is infused with a clear set of British values and a strong sense of what education is for. Our 12 school Headteachers have committed themselves to a process of significant change. We have no imposed set of strategies; instead we have flexible minds and resources that, between us, can be shaped to meet the distinctive needs and priorities of each school. As professionals we wish to make this vision a reality, ensuring no school in the community is left out. PEGS headteachers wish to shape the future rather than react to it and to evolve to meet the ever-changing demands of the educational system. Together we can do so much more and actually own our own 'New Mills' story.

PEGS has formalised what has already been a successful informal collaboration of some 15 years. This formalisation gives enormous and sustainable strength to the local cluster of schools. PEGS, which started life focussed on providing collaborative vocational education across the area, now supports leaders at all levels in its schools,

with opportunities to share good practice, receive peer support and engage in constructive challenge on a wide range of issues.

With the educational landscape currently changing more quickly than ever, PEGS will continue to look to the future and to its role in supporting systems leadership across this area of rural Derbyshire, in order to positively influence the education of children in the wider community.

Our Vision



PEGS: our sharing, caring community; stronger together

The aims of PEGS are to:

Build our capacity to raise standards of teaching and learning for all pupils in all our schools aged 3 -18 through:

- offering high quality, inclusive and enriching learning experiences
- creating a supportive, collaborative community that promotes professional development
- driving improvement in all our schools, creating a strong culture of collective responsibility
- using the economies of scale of PEGS to achieve cost effective services, including training and development and maximise use of resources

Existing Schemes (Pre-Formal Collaboration)

In order to highlight the progress that we have made in achieving our new vision, listed below are some of the successful joint projects to date and planned.

Joint inset (increased buying power)

Combined stationery orders

Moderation

Gifted and Talented days

AFA (Achievement for All)

Sports comps and festivals

Coaches/ trips/ residentials

Midday training

First aid training

Cluster meetings (Did you know...have you seen)

Ict disposal

Bonding days for transition

Current and Future Developments (of the formal collaboration known as PEGS)

Joint schools' children's Parliament – HPKC (High Peak Kids' Council)

PEGS Bank account/finance and funding stream for joint ventures

Joint Governor training

Middle leadership-led sub-groups - PEGS has the following working groups that meet regularly:

- Heads' Executive Group
- Governors' Group
- Subject Groups (English, Mathematics, Science)
- SEN/Inclusion Group
- EYFS Group
- Year 6/7 Teachers' Group
- Safeguarding Group
- Admin staff Group

Joint Moderation – all years and all core subjects

Standards files

PEGS termly development meetings

Joint INSET

Joint HT Observations and learning walks

Peer-to-peer cross school observations

Peer to peer reviews of key school priorities e.g. impact of pupil premium spending

HT appraisal

Shared Governance

Data sharing and benchmarking

Joint child led summer fair

Transition work

Joint Arts projects

AWOL research team

Sharing Self-Evaluations and SRRs

Cross-phase partnerships between the primary schools and secondary school to ensure that Key Stage 3 teachers build on pupils' prior knowledge, understanding and skills

Policy writing and review, e.g. online safety and absence

Joint bid writing

Teacher's Q and A blog

Website link for all schools

Communal use of Dropbox for all docs

Review of Memorandum of Understanding

Impact and outcomes

The aim of the PEGS vision is to achieve the following outcomes:

- Savings will be made to all school budgets as a result of sharing resources and using the group's collective procurement powers.
- Expertise and skills of individuals will be utilised across PEGS to benefit all schools.
- CPD will be enhanced in all schools through sharing training and working together.
- There will be a greater awareness amongst headteachers and leaders in PEGS of the health and wellbeing concerns and issues of all staff, and a greater capacity to deal with them.
- Staff will feel empowered and valued through working collaboratively with colleagues in other schools and having a voice in decisions that lead to school improvement for every school.
- Staff morale will be improved and all staff will feel part of a cohesive and supportive team.
- Systems and procedures will be streamlined across PEGS, thus reducing workload.
- The professional development of staff will be enhanced through collaborative working with PEGS.
- Teachers will feel more confident in their ability to more accurately assess, and moderate assessment of, children's work.
- Staff understanding of the importance of effective cross-phase transition will be improved, which will lead to better outcomes for all pupils.

- Sharing school priorities and working on common areas for improvement will lead to greater professional development of staff and better outcomes for all pupils.
- Sharing school priorities and data, and working on common areas for improvement, will lead to better outcomes for all pupils in PEGS.
- Sharing impact of pupil premium spending will lead to the most effective strategies being adopted by PEGS and better outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- Keeping abreast of the current national picture in education will enable PEGS to focus work on improving outcomes for all pupils.

The last year has been a real success for PEGS in terms of striving to meet our new vision for community collaboration. There is no doubt that the value placed on PEGS by the whole New Mills schools' community has increased considerably as a result of the efforts put in by the various school staff.

As the extensive list of projects contained within this case history shows, the combined school staff has worked incredibly hard in order to provide the children with a huge range of varied opportunities. These opportunities have benefited the children in many different ways and the whole school community have definitely become more aware of the prospects that formal collaboration presents.

Through projects such as the joint Schools' Fair, the PEGS profile has been improved as community awareness of PEGS has increased and its successes have been celebrated. The children have come together with others from 12 local schools and this has had major impact for the pupils as they have met new people and worked hard to take part in PEGS projects of which they can be proud.

PEGS has brought a togetherness that is in keeping with every school's ethos. At times when different events are shared across the schools, the children unite as this powerful collaboration gives them the opportunity to express themselves and work together in a way that is comparable to no other. The children's engagement and motivation are obvious. They are not only engaged but appear to thoroughly enjoy the opportunities that they are given. HPKC is a fine example of this powerful collaboration

As time has progressed, the benefits of the PEGS vision and attempts to achieve it have become increasingly obvious. There have been notable benefits and signs of development in both the children and all staff. Their ability as leaders has improved, the staff knowledge and understanding of the profession, and all it can offer, has increased and they have all become more confident as teachers and learners.

Way Forward

Over the past year, the developments that have taken place in order to achieve our new PEGS vision have been a pleasure to witness. Not only have the children been provided

with a vast array of opportunities but staff in all schools have felt empowered and more valued, and the whole community has benefited from coming together.

Now, as we recognise the impact that our vision has had, we intend to continue our hard work in maintaining and developing PEGS - our sharing, caring community; stronger together.

PEGS:

Buxworth Primary

Combs Infants

Furness Vale Primary

Hague Bar Primary

Hayfield Primary

New Mills Nursery

New Mills Primary

New Mills Secondary

Newtown Primary

St George's CofE Primary

St Mary's Catholic Primary

Thornsett Primary