Myths, evidence and innovation: a guide to making the most of Free School freedoms

Guidance

Briar Lipson

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About the author

Briar Lipson is a Senior Development Adviser at CfBT Education Trust, taking particular responsibility for the design and delivery of educational excellence in our independent state schools. She is an ambassador of the Teach First programme, having taught Maths in a London secondary school. Prior to that, as a Research Fellow at a leading think-tank, Briar co-wrote reports on economic competitiveness and on education, in particular how to increase the supply of good teachers.

Foreword

This September the first 24 free schools opened their doors. Under the previous government's academies programme it took five years to start this many new schools. With many created from scratch in just over a year, the first free schools reflect both the demand for good school places and the commitment of the parents, teachers and charities who have created them.

By setting out the evidence on key educational issues, this publication is intended to be a valuable resource for those who wish to create a free school of their own. Often this can seem like a daunting process – but it is achievable if the hard work and determination required is underpinned by the kind of evidence-based decision making which this guide promotes.

Given the attention free schools have attracted so far, there is no doubt that their performance will be subject to intense scrutiny. This is welcome, since all free schools should aim to improve standards and accountability within our education system. However, it makes it even more imperative that the first free schools are successful.

At New Schools Network we find that groups developing proposals for free schools often spend the most time and energy on the topics discussed here. By enabling them to make informed decisions on issues such as buildings, staffing and school size, this guide will help to produce more free schools which deliver an outstanding education for the pupils they serve.

Free schools are an example of how our education system can benefit from learning lessons about what has worked in other countries. Presenting case studies of best practice from around the world, this guide can offer inspiration to groups who want to innovate further. In the future, I feel confident that free schools will in turn put our country at the cutting edge of educational thought and performance.

Rachel Wolf
New Schools Network

1. Introduction

There is no direct link between spending on schools and outcomes for pupils. Rather as one might expect, the research shows that what is important is the way the money is spent.[1] This booklet is intended to encourage free school proposers to consider educational evidence, innovation and early free school experience in their own decision-making.

Free schools have an important role to play in driving up educational standards in a number of ways:

- By increasing the number of places in the system, they will help generate a competitive market that responds to what parents and pupils want.
- Like academies, they will use their various freedoms to innovate and find new ways to meet parents' and pupils' needs.
- By empowering parents – not just those with the option of looking to the independent sector – with more choice about where their child is educated, they will help shift the divide between the UK's state and independent schools.

Demand for new free schools is usually driven by one or other, or a combination, of:

- the lack of school places in an area – quantity-driven demand
- the lack of enough quality school places in an area – quality-driven demand.

Clarity about which of these is the driver in your own case will be useful when it comes to determining the vision for the school and designing the educational model. In particular, this will determine the extent to which you might draw on other local schools for ideas and inspiration. If quality is a driver in your application, the Ofsted reports of local schools are a good place to start identifying those areas that may need particular focus if your school is to succeed where others currently fail.[2]

Free schools will not have a monopoly over the best teachers, headteachers, community goodwill or effective interventions. It would be a mistake to expect that, just because proposers have had the enthusiasm and passion to reach a certain point, their school is necessarily going to succeed, particularly in the medium to long term when the founders and their children have moved on and the school must, like any other state school, be governed and managed, only without the back-up of the local authority. Free school proposers need to think long and hard about what it is that is going to ensure their school's long-term success.

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[1] The Sutton Trust (2011) *Toolkit of Strategies to Improve Learning; Summary for Schools Spending the Pupil Premium*
[2] McInerney, L. *The Six Predictable Failures of Free Schools… and how to avoid them.* Cambridge: L.K.M. Publishing.

Free school sceptics are gathering themselves at the sidelines ready to pounce on new schools that
fail – as some undoubtedly will. As Laura McInerney pointed out in her advice to free school groups,
90% of new businesses and 50% of marriages fail.

Most people don't go into business, let alone marriage, expecting it to fail and neither will free school
founders, so what is it about your school that is going to ensure its success? And how are you going
to be able to demonstrate the success robustly to the sceptics?

This booklet synthesises and signposts the relevant research to help you take an 'evidence-based'
approach to decision-making and to see through some of the myths that surround schooling. In
addition, through use of a number of case studies we hope it inspires you to innovate.

Findings from a survey of the decisions made by the proposers of the first wave of approved free
schools are included throughout this document. These provide a relevant context for new free school
applicants, local authorities and policy makers.

Buildings

Education myth:

New schools need bespoke buildings

2. Buildings

One of the most pressing issues that most free schools face is finding suitable premises. In many cases, for reasons of funding and availability, the premises in which free schools may open for business may be fairly rudimentary, and may well not fit traditional ideas about how a school should look and feel. However, provided they meet core educational needs, this is not necessarily a negative, as evidence of the link between the quality of educational infrastructure and educational outcomes is far from clear. In addition, while you will need to consider appropriate buildings for your free school, you are asked explicitly by the Department for Education (DfE) not to enter into any negotiations about premises until your application has been approved.

The evidence

Evaluating the importance of school buildings to the success of a school is challenging. Clearly school buildings must not present safety hazards, and the space must meet the needs of teaching and learning. Once school environments achieve minimum standards, the quantitative evidence of any benefit to pupil attainment from further investment is at best weak.[3] Despite this, most qualitative research finds a *perception* of benefit from capital investment to pupil attainment, motivation and behaviour and to staff morale and motivation, even if the statistical evidence does not.[4]

Things to consider

The success of any building is not only based on levels of investment, it is also contingent on good design. Below are listed some of the issues you should consider when thinking about potential premises:

- All great schools are unique. How do you want your school to distinguish itself and how can you use your building to help achieve this?
- While you may not need much space to begin with, think about how and where you might expand into in the future.
- School buildings, and the work on display inside them, can convey strong messages to children. Where might you have an opportunity to inspire and teach them through the building?
- Do you intend holding large assemblies and other whole school events? If so, where will you accommodate these? If it is the gym, what can be done to create an appropriate atmosphere?
- Where will you hold examinations? Will the space be quiet enough? and if you plan to use a school hall, where will assemblies take place during exam times of year?
- What facilities do you intend to provide in open, recreation areas? e.g. access to ICT might be an excellent idea but will behaviour/supervision in these areas be sufficient to ensure equipment is not damaged or stolen?

[3] **http://www.cfbt.com/PDF/91078.pdf** or **http://www.education.gov.uk/search/results?q=RB242** or Durbin, B. and Yeshanew, T. (2010) *BSF School report: B+ for Attendance but C– for Attainment*. Slough: NFER.
[4] For example, see Green, D. and Turrell, P. (2005) School building investment and impact on pupil performance. *Journal of Educational Administration*, Vol 23 Issue: 5/6

- What kinds of learning do you want to see take place in which classrooms? For example at Wellington College, where in 2010 93.2% of A Levels awarded were graded B or above, staff have adopted the 'Harkness method' for teaching in International Baccalaureate and A Level classes. This emphasises students taking responsibility for their own learning, and teachers acting as facilitators. According to the Wellington College website this changes the way that learning takes place. The method is underpinned by an entirely different classroom layout. Instead of sitting in rows or small groups, being lectured from the front and learning in a passive way, up to 14 students are seated together with their teacher around an oval table to enable interaction and active discussion, and whiteboards are set up on walls around the room to enable everyone to produce notes or drawings for the group. There is no 'head of table' or dominant position and it promotes a more tutorial style of learning.[5]

Traditional model   Harkness model
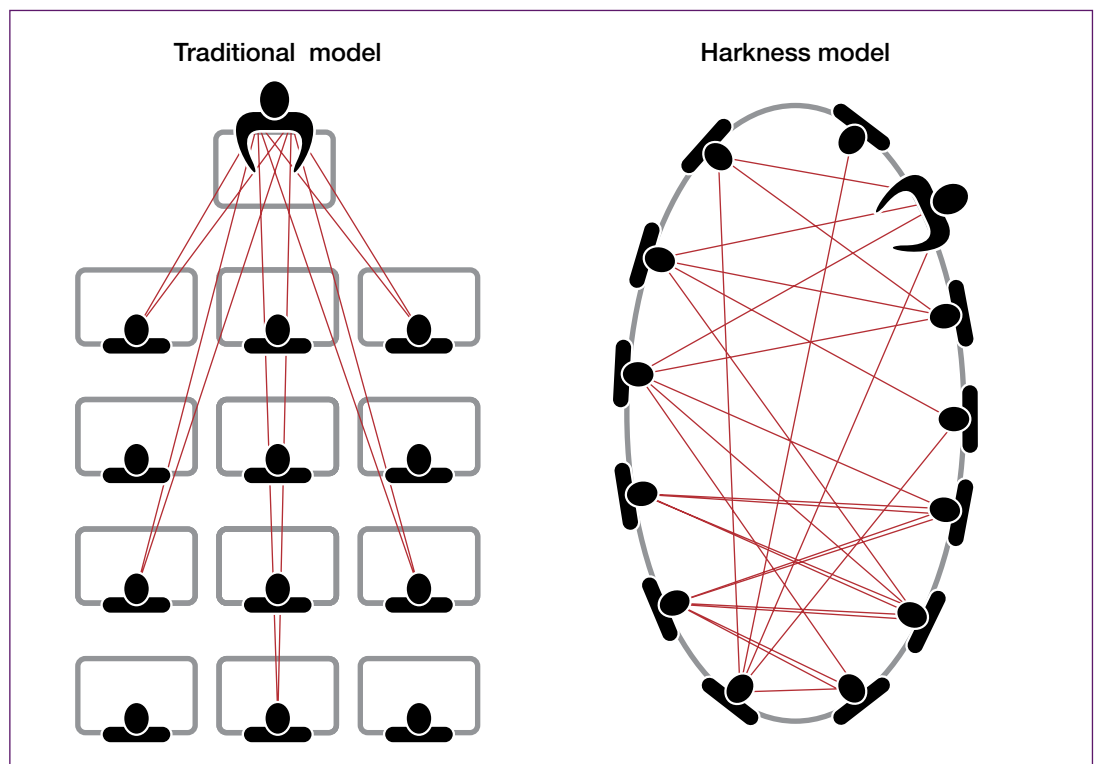
- How expensive will your building be to keep clean and warm?
- How many staff and pupil toilets will you need? Are these pupil areas easily supervised?
- What storage space has been allowed for?
- Where will pupils hang their coats? Will you install lockers?
- Where will staff work when they are not teaching? What kinds of spaces and technology will support this best?
- Think about your building's design; for instance, if you are using a lot of glass, have you some way of ventilating the building during the heat of summer?
- If you use carpet, consider how it will wear following heavy use and also choose the colour carefully. Trodden-in chewing gum can quickly spoil a new carpet.
- Too often in schools we see cables running untidily and dangerously between walls, desks and other equipment. Think carefully about where to install power sockets.

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[5] http://www.wellingtoncollege.org.uk/news-archive/archive/harkness-method

Many of the buildings in your proposed location that could accommodate a free school are likely to be owned by the local council. Therefore while their willingness to cooperate with you and even support your application is not vital, it will clearly be advantageous. It was encouraging to note that in every single response received to our survey of the proposers of the first wave of approved free schools, where they felt that the initial level of support from the local authority had been anything less than supportive to begin with, it had improved between then and now, and where support had existed from the start this had either been maintained or increased.

Pay and conditions

3. Pay and conditions

Professor John Hattie famously grouped the influences on educational attainment into six major areas which between them explain variances in students' achievement. Ignoring the interaction effects, he found that students themselves – incorporating their personal attributes which are clearly influenced by the home – account for around 50% of variances; home, school and peer effects each account for 5–10%; and the remaining 30% of variance is put down to the effectiveness of teachers.

Accordingly, most schools will say they want to attract and retain the best possible teachers. But how can you make this meaningful? Local authority schools must abide by statutory requirements for teachers' pay and conditions,[6] but free schools need not, which provides an opportunity to move away from established pay structures and national terms and conditions of employment if you wish. While it may make sense to begin with a standard teacher contract of employment this should then be reviewed, line by line, in order to identify what could and should be altered in the light of your vision for the school.

Dare to be different?

The majority of existing teachers still work in local authority schools and almost all will have done so at some time, so they will be familiar with the levels, structures, and certainty of the standard pay and conditions. This may go some way to explaining why many independent schools and academies, while technically not constrained by standard pay and conditions, continue to use them.

Education myth:

Teachers will only work within established pay structures and national terms and conditions of employment

In focus:

Standard Pay and Conditions

The School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document 2011 describes the various teacher pay scales including:

- Unqualified
- Main
- Upper (post-threshold)
- Advanced Skills Teachers
- Excellent Teachers
- Leadership.

Within each pay scale teachers move up one point each year unless they are deemed and informed by the 'relevant body' to have been less than satisfactory. The default, no-action position is therefore to move up the pay scale, and cases of failure to do so are rare.

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[6] https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00072-2011

The assumption underlying current pay structures is that experience equates with effectiveness. Yet research suggests that, beyond the first few years of teaching, the majority of teachers maintain but do not increase their effectiveness.[7]

There are a number of ways that free schools might, while still basing pay on the standard structures, introduce more flexibility into the system:

- Introducing long probationary periods into teachers' contracts or even employing staff on fixed-term contracts, thereby removing the assumption of ongoing employment regardless of performance

- Being clear and up-front about their expectation that movements up the various salary scales will not simply be a matter of course, but rather linked to performance management targets

- Ensuring that financially they are in a position to increase the pay of teachers who are highly effective

- Awarding Teaching and Learning Responsibility points (known as TLRs, which are additional payments made to staff for taking on particular responsibilities, for example as the Gifted and Talented coordinator) for fixed periods such as a year, thereby reinforcing the assumption that these are rewards based on performance rather than entitlements based on tenure

- By being transparent and robust about holding teachers to account for their performance, and thereby putting headteachers in a much stronger position when it comes to having to dismiss teachers who are ineffective.

In the US, work has been done on how salary and working conditions affect the quality of instruction in the classroom. The conclusion drawn was that general salary increases for teachers are both expensive and ineffective; and that the best way to improve quality and effectiveness is to lower barriers to becoming a teacher and to link compensation and career advancement more closely with teachers' ability to raise student performance.[8] In short, it is not so much about general levels of teachers' pay, but how closely pay is related to performance.

There is an enormous amount of academic literature on performance related pay for teachers, the arguments from which are summarised below:

Arguments for performance related pay	Challenges to performance related pay
• Attracts talented, highly motivated people into the classroom	• Difficulties in measuring teacher performance accurately
• Encourages less effective teachers to improve	• Problems in identifying who within a school is responsible for a particular output
• Promotes the desirable kind of teacher turnover by rewarding good teachers	• Potentially negative effects of individual performance awards on the collaborative, collegiate culture that can be valuable in schools

[7] http://www.tlrp.org/pub/documents/Day_RB_20_FINAL.pdf#search="teacher+experience+effectiveness"
[8] Hanushek, E. and Rivkin, S. (2007) Pay, Working Conditions, and Teacher Quality, *The Future of Children*, Vol 17 No.1 Spring 2007
http://edpro.stanford.edu/hanushek/admin/pages/files/uploads/FOC_publication%20version.pdf

Performance related pay was in fact explicitly introduced nationally in 2000 in the form of a 'threshold' which represents the gap between the lower and upper teacher pay scales. However, in its first year of operation, 97% of teachers who applied were successful in moving over the threshold, making it in effect just another point on the pay scale.[9] Since then efforts have been made to use it as a more meaningful lever to change and improve teachers' performance. Indeed the research into perceptions of threshold has found that both classroom and headteacher views have changed considerably over time, from initial scepticism and opposition, towards a more positive view, especially among headteachers.[10]

Some academies in England have introduced performance bonuses, but as yet no evaluation of these schemes has been published.[11] This may be because, as in many workplaces, bonuses and pay increases are awarded on a discretionary basis.

If free schools are to move away from standardised pay scales, the ability to assess good or bad performance accurately becomes essential, and this is a key responsibility of the headteacher and leadership team, overseen by the governing body. Their first-hand knowledge of the staff, coupled with effective data and monitoring (see the section on leadership and monitoring) should be sufficient to enable accurate assessment of which teachers deserve a pay rise and which ones need to be supported to improve, or ultimately removed if they fail to do so. Providing a headteacher is in a position to make such an assessment, it follows that he/she should have the freedom to reward and replace.

The importance of the governing body in supporting a headteacher to do this is critical, and governors with experience of performance management in other sectors should be embraced. Pupil level data and monitoring are not so complex that they cannot be grasped, challenged and overseen by a governor without direct experience of working in a school. So long as you have a clear and measurable vision, as described in the section on leadership, there is no excuse for your free school to leave poor performance of staff unchallenged.

[9] Harding, R. *Poverty Pay: How Public Sector Pay Fails Deprived Areas*, Social Market Foundation, April 2007, p 25
http://www.smf.co.uk/assets/files/publications/Poverty%20Pay.pdf
[10] Marsden, D. and Belfield, R. (August 2006) *Pay for Performance Where Output is Hard to Measure: the Case of Performance Pay for School Teachers* CEP Discussion Paper No 747 http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/dp0747.pdf
[11] For examples see the Harris Federation website at http://www.harrisfederation.org.uk/130/joining-our-team

In focus:

Pensions

Remuneration is not just about pay. Pensions are also a key component of the overall package, but as things stand they represent one area where free schools are unlikely to be free to innovate.

As in all other maintained schools, all teachers employed by academies automatically become members of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) unless they elect personally to opt out. The same goes for non-teaching staff in academies, who automatically become members of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) unless they personally opt out. Since free schools are governed by the same rules as academies, it is expected that they will be bound by the same requirement.

The current employer contribution rate for the TPS is 14.1%. The employer contribution rate for the LGPS depends on which of the 99 regional pension funds your school would fall under. The average contribution rate is currently around 14% of salary, but since this is a funded scheme, the contribution rate is subject to periodic review and, as investment returns have diminished in recent years, it would be no surprise if the contribution level was to rise. In some areas of London the rate can be as high as 25%.

It should also be noted that national insurance contributions add around 13%.

Examples of innovative working practices

Examples of innovations in working conditions that free schools could consider include:

- Alterations to the length and spread of the school calendar, or to the working week or day; for example the Norwich Free School's school year comprises six terms, with a two-week holiday between each and a four-week holiday in August

- Introduction of greater flexibility to be family-friendly, or to accommodate part-time working or sharing of staff with other schools

- Facilitating secondments to other schools or to exchange programmes abroad to ensure staff have opportunities to learn from good practice elsewhere

- Reducing teaching load, thereby leaving more time for planning and marking within the timetabled school day and increasing teachers' capacity to make sure every lesson is good or outstanding.

Given the importance of maintaining good behaviour in classrooms, and the impact this can have on teacher retention rates, free schools also have an opportunity to increase their attractiveness to teachers by moulding the behaviour and attitude of pupils.

For example, teachers at a charter school in New York are expected to greet their students at the school entrance, shaking each and every child's hand as they walk in each morning. While this represents valuable teacher time this school obviously believes that it is time well spent in instilling a culture of manners and respect in its pupils.

Some of the innovations already happening within schools are described below:

- ARK Academies offer their staff a generous bursary towards the cost of completing a part-time MA in education. They also offer international development opportunities, including teacher exchanges with schools and education departments abroad.[12]

- The Harris Federation of Academies offers private medical insurance, performance bonuses and a heavily subsidised MA course.[13]

- Practices common in the independent sector include: paying bonuses to school leaders according to key financial and academic performance indicators; providing opportunities for sabbaticals following a number of years' service, paying management allowances for running schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh awards; and offering grants for further academic study relating to a teacher's subject.

- Some schools successfully employ staff on slightly lower wages in return for them teaching for fewer hours per week and therefore having more time to plan effective lessons and keep on top of marking during timetabled school hours. At CfBT free schools teachers will have 20% rather that 10% PPA (planning, preparation and assessment) time. An alternative model is being used at another free school: teachers will not be entitled to any PPA time; however, they will be paid instead on the basis of the number of classes they teach.

Case study:

The Equity Project (TEP) – an innovative pay structure

TEP is an example of a particularly innovative pay model being trialled in New York City in a new 480 student (charter) middle school in the Washington Heights neighbourhood. Its aim is to put into practice the theory that teacher quality is the most important school-based factor in the academic success of students; TEP pays its teachers an annual salary of $125,000 which is equivalent to around £80,000 (or two-and-a-half times the national average teacher salary) with the opportunity to earn a significant annual bonus based on school-wide performance, but it does not offer them tenure. TEP intends to raise most of the money needed through cost savings made possible by the high quality and productivity of teachers. The cost-saving mechanisms they employ include:

- Elimination of leadership roles other than the Principal – with only very high quality teachers additional leadership roles are deemed to be superfluous

- Zero spend on professional development – TEP considers every day and every colleague to be a professional development opportunity

- Zero spend on absence cover – teachers are expected to cover for one another, which ensures cover is of a suitable quality

- Elimination of administrative and support staff such as the attendance coordinator, the parent coordinator and the discipline dean; instead each TEP teacher leads one whole-school process, programme or project

- Avoidance of additional spend on extra personnel for extended-day and other student activities, since these are led and staffed by TEP teachers.

See **http://www.tepcharter.org/**

[12] **http://www.arkschools.org/pages/ark-schools/careers-centre.php**
[13] **http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-496931/Teachers-cheap-carpets-incentive-work-academies.html**

Class and
school size

Education myth:

Size always matters

4. Class and school size

Intuitively, it feels as if smaller class sizes are better for everyone: better for teachers; better for pupils; better for education. Smaller class sizes should allow more individual attention to be given to learners and reduce the workload of teachers. There is a widespread perception among teachers, governors and parents that pupils will achieve better in classes where there is a small number of pupils. In the literature, research around this phenomenon is known as Class Size Reduction (CSR), and it is one of the most studied education reforms of the last century.[14]

Any number of pupils above 30 tends to be seen as unacceptably large, although the research around this particular magic number is scant. The Plowden report into primary education published in 1967 reported that 'almost all our witnesses believe in the value of smaller classes… Some 61% of head and assistant teachers believe that 30 is the maximum reasonable size of class. Of the remainder, the majority favour classes of 25 or smaller.'[15]

Yet current evidence does not support this view. Looking specifically at the 'magic 30', no significant correlation has been found between class sizes of less than 30 and improved standards.[16] In fact the evidence shows that class size makes almost no difference compared to teacher quality, for instance – despite having been a primary driver of policy since 1997-98. According to Eric Hanushek of Stanford University, of 277 estimates on the effects of class size reduction, 15% find statistically positive effects for small class sizes, 13% find negative effects and 72% find no effects or statistically insignificant effects. Dr Hanushek states: 'the broad array of approaches, with different methodologies and sources of evidence, has provided quite a consistent message that broad reductions in class size are unlikely to produce significant improvements in student achievement.'[17]

Evidence of impact on pupils

The evidence strongly suggests that the extra individual attention that teachers can give to pupils in classes of between 25 and 30 and in classes of between 20 and 25 has little impact.[18] It also shows that reducing class size seems to have greater impact in the earliest grades and for students from less advantaged family backgrounds.

[14] Biddle, B.J. and Berliner, D.C. (2002) Research synthesis: small class size and its effects, *Educational Leadership*, 59(5), 12–23.
[15] *Children in Their Primary Schools, A Report for the Central Advisory Council for Education (England)*, Plowden HMSO, 1967
[16] http://www.estyn.gov.uk/publications/Remit_24.pdf
[17] http://edpro.stanford.edu/hanushek/admin/pages/files/uploads/class_size_eepa_1999.pdf
[18] http://www.estyn.gov.uk/publications/Remit_24.pdf

In focus:

Lazear's theoretical class size model

It is not hard to imagine how, the more disruptive the children are in a classroom (where disruption can be anything from asking a question everyone knows the answer to, to fighting) the more the whole class benefits from being small.

To find out how much of the time learning is actually taking place in a given class, Professor Lazear, an economist at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, devised a mathematical model. Lazear multiplied the probability of one particular child not disrupting, by the probability for each of the other students in the class. By assuming the same probability for every student, he can simply raise the probability to the power of whatever the class size is. The results are striking.

If we assume that a class of 30 students is generally well behaved – with each disrupting only 1% of the time, then learning can take place 74% of the time. If the class size is halved to 15, learning time increases by an additional 12% to 86%. In relative terms this is an increase in learning time of 16%.

However if we carry out the same class size reduction in a classrooom where students each disrupt for 3% of the time, then the difference in available learning time increases by 23%, from 40% to 63%. In relative terms this is an increase of more than 50%.

Lazear's model shows that in real terms, reducing class size makes a much bigger difference for disruptive students than for non-disruptive ones, suggesting that decisions about resource allocation should therefore factor in cohort characteristics; and blanket reductions in class sizes are unlikely to be the best use of limited resources.

Lazear, P.E., Educational Production, *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (2001) 116 (3): 777-803.

It is also worth noting that, according to the Independent Schools Council, the weighted pupil/teacher ratio (with each sixth former counted as two) for independent schools was 11.0:1 in 2010, which compares with a ratio of 16.9:1 for maintained mainstream schools in the same year. That our independent schools, where parental choice has long exerted a much more powerful influence, run significantly smaller class sizes than the state sector is an interesting if not telling consideration.

International evidence from the OECD shows that of the ten countries (out of 65) with higher than average class sizes almost all (eight) are in the top 30 countries as ranked by the 2009 PISA data.[19] In fact Korea, Japan, Finland and the Netherlands all have some of the biggest average class sizes and are ranked consistently among the top ten.

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[19] PISA stands for the Programme for International Student Assessment and is the OECD's survey of 15-year-olds in the principal industrialised countries. Conducted every three years, it is able to rank countries according to how far their students near the end of compulsory education have acquired some of the knowledge and skills essential for full participation in society.

Teachers' salaries are related to class size in that if spending levels are similar, school systems often make trade-offs between the two. The OECD's findings from PISA data suggest that systems prioritising higher teachers' salaries over smaller classes tend to perform better, which corresponds with research showing that raising teacher quality is a more effective route to improved student outcomes than creating smaller classes.[20]

Figure 1. Average class sizes compared with PISA reading scores in 34 countries
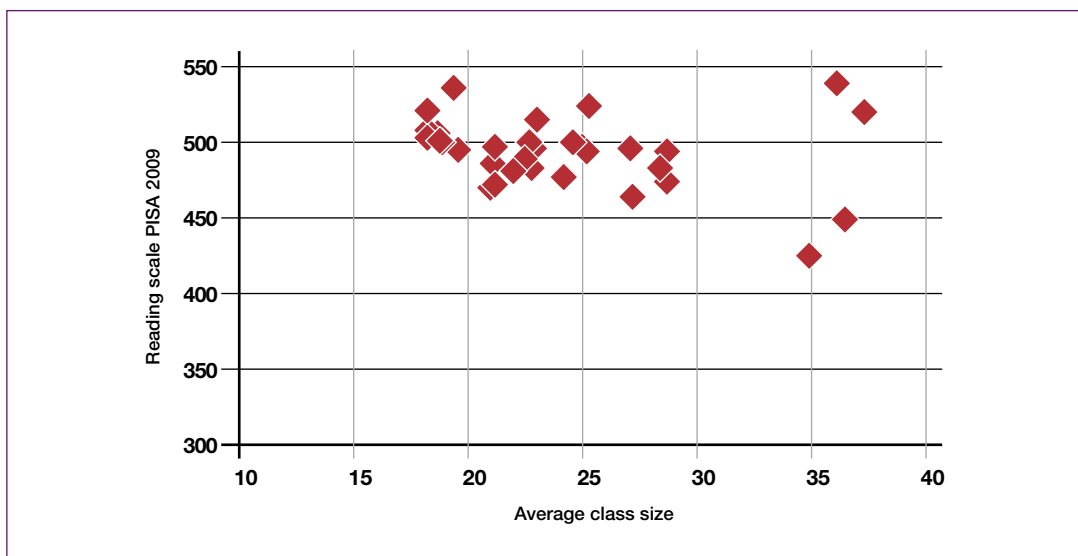
The Department for Education in England has also concluded that, 'overall, there is some evidence that within the resources available, more effective systems tend to have fewer, better teachers through having larger classes but paying teachers more than less effective systems.'[21]

In focus:

Class size legislation

In England national legislation sets out class size maxima at 30 pupils for five- to seven-year-olds, but not for the remaining years of primary (pupils aged seven to 11) or for secondary education (pupils aged 11 to 18+). In post-primary education (pupils aged 11 to 18), the legal maximum for class sizes in practical subjects is 20 pupils per teacher.

[20] OECD (2010) *PISA 2009 Results: What Makes a School Successful? – Resources, Policies and Practices (Volume IV)* **http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264091559-en**
[21] DfE (November 2010) *The Case for Change*

School size

Like many of these areas, the evidence on school size also varies by country, key stage and what we mean by large and small. It is also distorted by results from schools which are small due to their unpopularity rather than a conscious decision to be so. Following is a list of the pros and cons of big schools, for you to consider in light of your school vision.

Advantages of large schools	Disadvantages of large schools
Economies of scale: Refers to the price advantages of being able to buy products and services on a larger scale e.g. toilet rolls, books, ICT equipment and support. **Ability to offer a broader curriculum:** Because a larger school will have more resources and probably more teachers, the chances are that within your staff you will have experts in more areas and you may have enough classes to justify/afford employing specialist teachers for subjects such as Latin or design technology. Also, there may be a link between the number of classes per year group and the number of options it may be possible to offer pupils. Larger schools also tend to have more facilities e.g. a school of 1000 students is more likely to be able to afford a swimming pool or Astroturf than a school of 200. **Headteacher pay is generally higher:** If you think of the cost of employing a headteacher being covered by taking a small amount from the revenue brought in by each child, then the more children in the school the more can be paid to the principal.	**Impersonal:** The smaller the school, the higher the chances that staff and pupils will know one another. If there are 10 maths teachers, a child may well end up with a new teacher every year, whereas if there are only four maths teachers, there is a much higher chance they will be taught by the same teacher. On the whole, the longer a pupil stays with the same teacher the stronger and more productive their understanding of one another and the more easy it is to hold the teacher accountable for the pupil's progress. In a large school it may also be difficult for the headteacher to know all their staff.

There is no right or wrong answer as to size but it is worth considering how you could adapt your model to mitigate the negatives and maximise the benefits of the class and school sizes you aim for. For example, the 'schools-within-schools' model establishes small schools within larger schools, to ensure they benefit from big-school facilities while at the same time having small-school communities, as illustrated below; and some charter schools in the US have established themselves *within* existing schools, taking over empty classrooms that sit directly alongside the original school's classrooms.

Brislington Enterprise Academy in Bristol, which is made up of five separate schools of 300 pupils

In our survey of the first wave of free schools to be approved, of the primary school respondents one was planning to open a school with two forms of entry, and the rest were all proposing schools with just one form of entry. Similarly across all respondents the most common average class size brackets were between 16 and 20, and between 21 and 26. So while the evidence may not always stack up, and the explanations may be diverse, smallness is clearly a factor that remains attractive to parents.

Teaching
assistants

5. Teaching assistants

One of the issues that free schools will have to consider is their overall staffing structure, and in particular the role of support staff. There has been a huge growth in support staff numbers over the last decade, with a particularly large increase in the numbers of teaching assistants (TAs). However, there are differing views on their effectiveness, particularly with regard to improving the quality of teaching and learning.

The increase in TA numbers

Since 1997 the school support staff workforce has doubled in size and the number of TAs has almost tripled. This is at least partly a result of national agreements to reduce teacher workloads through measures such as routine delegation of administrative and clerical tasks to support staff and limitations on the number of hours teachers can be asked to cover for absent colleagues.

As a result, between 2000 and 2010, pupil/staff ratios fell from 14.5 to 10.4 in maintained secondary schools; and from 17.2 to 15.7 in maintained primaries.
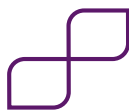
In focus:

Support staff pay

Support staff pay and conditions are not subject to national agreements, but are set at individual employer level. According to the Local Government Employers website, support staff are paid on average between £12,400 and £13,900 per annum, rising to around £16,000 in some areas. Employers are also obliged to offer all their support staff access to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Support staff effectiveness

Various studies have been conducted into the effectiveness of support staff. Conclusions from observation and teacher opinions are generally positive whereas those based on data about pupil achievement and progress are broadly equivocal.

The Class Size and Pupil Adult Ratios (CSPARs) project incorporated both these types of evidence, and focused on a sample of almost 9,000 pupils in Year 4.[22] It found no evidence that the presence of TAs, or any characteristic of TAs, had a measurable effect on pupil attainment.

However, the results also showed clearly that TAs had an indirect effect on teaching, with, for example, pupils having a more active form of interaction with the teacher.

The IOE Deployment and Impact study incorporated a statistical analysis of the impact of support teachers on pupils' progress. In line with other studies, the feedback was mixed: relatively positive reports from teachers, coupled with data that actually showed a consistent, statistically significant negative relationship between TA support and pupil outcomes, even after controlling for pupil characteristics which might otherwise explain lack of progress.[23]

[22] *The Role and Effects of Teaching Assistants in English Primary Schools (Years 4 to 6) 2000-2003. Results from the Class Size and Pupil-Adult Ratios (CSPAR) KS2 Project.* 2007 **http://eprints.ioe.ac.uk/1366/1/Blatchford2007teachingassistants5.pdf**
[23] **http://publications.education.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RR148&**

 In focus:

Special Educational Needs

No discussion of support staff in schools, and particularly the role of TAs can ignore Special Educational Needs (SEN). A significant minority of children are identified as having SEN and, according to the SEN Code of Practice, schools should follow a graduated approach to supporting any child with a learning difficulty, gradually bringing in specialist help when a child is having difficulties.

A 2006 Ofsted report on 'inclusion' (the objective of providing for all children within mainstream schools wherever possible) found that pupils who worked with specialist teachers made greater academic progress than when they had to rely on other types of support, including TAs.

The IOE found that TAs were the principal means by which low ability/SEN pupils received differentiated input, and that this potentially resulted in pupils' separation from the teacher, peers and the lesson, and their increasing dependency on the TA. They also concluded that the benefits of support staff, from a teacher's point of view, stem largely from their function of concentrating on particular pupils, thereby allowing the teacher to spend more time teaching the rest of the class.

Explanations for the patchy nature of research in this area often refer to the way TAs are used. They highlight the importance of training teachers in how to make best use of support staff, in finding time to discuss their lesson plans with TAs, and in helping them to apply the forms of effective classroom practice which qualified teachers have learned from their own training. As such you need to be clear about the purpose of employing TAs in your school; what training they will need; how they will be put to best use; and how you will know whether and how much they are contributing to the achievement of your vision.

Governors in particular should be aware of the implications of the research in this area, and be prepared to challenge and justify the role and deployment of support staff in their school.

Information and communication technology

Education myth:

The nature of learning has fundamentally changed as a result of wider technological change

6. Information and communication technology

Claims for how technology can improve educational performance in schools are widespread and influential, yet the research evidence is extremely weak.

One of the myths propagated by enthusiasts for technology is that the nature of learning has fundamentally changed as a result of wider technological change. They call for a new range of skills, sometimes referred to as 'digital literacy', which has exerted considerable pressure on schools and teachers to change fundamental aspects of their practice. Yet on closer examination 'digital literacy skills' appear to be no more than the higher order enquiry and thinking skills that teachers of traditional subjects have long taught.

Given the weight of evidence, it may be worth beginning with an assumption that any ICT solution or service is highly unlikely to have a direct impact on educational outcomes across key subjects. The teacher is the professional in control and technology is one tool they may decide to use, but their knowledge of their subject is much more important and valuable than what they know about any technology, whether it is a pencil or a multi-user virtual environment.

This does not mean that ICT has no place in schools. The scope for technology, properly used, to make a difference both in teaching and throughout the school is considerable, although highly dependent on the technological capabilities of staff. Many companies who promote computer-based learning tools within schools will not enter into a school-based trial without first gaining certain commitments from staff to manage and monitor roll-out. They recognise that without old-fashioned coordination by teachers, no matter how effective the system is, it is unlikely to achieve its desired outcome.

Case study:

Technological innovation in America

During his time as New York City's Schools Chancellor, Joel Klein was often quoted as saying: 'In any other profession, if you fell asleep 50 years ago and woke up, you wouldn't know what was going on. In education, we've missed the technological revolution.'

His view was that education 'lacks innovation, lacks entrepreneurship, and lacks dynamic thinking.'

To address these problems he was instrumental in setting up, amongst other things, the Innovation Zone (iZone), which is a community of innovative New York City schools committed to personalising learning.

One such innovation taking shape in New York is the 'School of One' which uses sophisticated technology and algorithms to find the best matches between students, teachers and resources, and thereby generates a unique timetable for each student every day. This provides a new level of personalisation for students and ensures they never move on from a concept until they have demonstrated mastery.

Technological innovation in a number of US charter schools in particular, is taking the form of what are known as blended or hybrid models of learning wherein computer and face-to-face learning take place more and more in parallel; Rocketship Education is one such small but growing network of charter schools which is having resounding success serving an overwhelmingly low-income immigrant community in San Jose. Rocketship is at the cutting edge of school reform thanks to its vision for how technology will integrate with, and change, the structure of the school. Their schools incorporate large ICT labs requiring supervision by just one adult – who has experience with children but no teaching credential – to oversee many more than 40 children at one time. This means the school requires fewer staff, which ultimately saves it hundreds of thousands of dollars each year that can be ploughed back into other resources including higher staff salaries and targeted one-to-one teacher-led interventions. So far, even at Rocketship, the linkages between the computer lab and the classroom remain incomplete, but progress is being made and the direction is exciting.

Technological innovation in the charter school movement (similar to free schools) in America has taken time to incubate, and in some states the Government has taken deliberate steps, such as the setting up of the New York Innovation Zone – a community of innovative New York City schools – to promote and encourage proposers to really make use of the available freedoms. The more rapidly government can generate the conditions for innovation, and free schools have the confidence to experiment, the more quickly our free schools will generate a step change in the quality of our entire education system.

http://schoolofone.org/
http://www.rsed.org/

As well as being used as a learning tool, ICT should be thought of as a utility service. A very good example of this kind of use is smartcards or biometrics for cashless catering in schools. The need to move large numbers of children quickly and efficiently through a dining hall has little to do with most educational outcomes but can contribute hugely to the effective running of a school.

Once it is seen as a utility – a means to an end – technology can conceivably assist classroom teachers in many ways, and many teachers will expect their employer to provide an ICT service like any other utility service. In practice this means the basic information exchange and communication functions any modern business relies on: access to efficient internet connectivity, telecommunications, email, printing and copying, all supplied and maintained at a reliable level. But it is worth being clear about whether and how the use of ICT fits with your vision; something of a school's community feeling is surely lost when most conversations take place via email, and children are registered in the morning or pay for their lunch via a thumb-print reader, rather than through interaction with a member of staff.

Leadership
and monitoring

7. Leadership and monitoring

For your free school you will be defining the school's vision and ethos, appointing a headteacher, senior leadership team, staff and governors and identifying a decision-making and accountability structure. Leadership will be key to ensuring your free school delivers the vision and quality of education you want.

Schools need good leadership whatever their circumstances. The *nature* of leaders' tasks and challenges will vary with context, but the need for effective leadership spans the entire spectrum of schools. It is surprisingly common, following a change of leadership, for a school to go from outstanding to just satisfactory within a single inspection cycle.

What is clear from the extensive literature on leadership is that it is a critical factor in explaining between-schools differences in pupil outcomes.[24] A DfE study found that leadership effects explain up to 25% of the variation in pupil learning accounted for by school factors, across schools.[25]

In focus:

National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH)

In 2000 the UK Government established the National College for School Leadership (now known as the National College) to develop and support school leaders. As part of this, the College runs a training programme for aspiring headteachers – the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH).

In 2009 successful completion of this became mandatory for all newly appointed first-time headteachers of local authority state schools. Free schools and academies, like independent schools, are under no such obligation to employ an NPQH-qualified headteacher.

Work has been done to unpick the characteristics and qualities of exceptional leaders, and while inevitably there is no single model of best practice, successful leaders have been found to draw on a common repertoire of broad educational values, personal and interpersonal qualities, dispositions, competencies and decision-making processes.[26] These include:

- Creating vision and setting directions
- Restructuring the organisation and redesigning roles and responsibilities
- Developing people
- Managing teaching and learning.

[24] For example, see Leithwood, K., Day, C. et al. (2006) *Successful School Leadership: What It Is and How it Influences Pupil Learning*. DfES/NCSL.
[25] http://www.education.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR662.pdf
[26] Day, C. and Sammons, P. (2009) *The Impact of School Leadership on Pupil Outcomes*. DCSF/NCSL.
  http://publications.education.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-RR108.pdf

"Leadership is the shaping and sharing of a vision which gives point to the work of others"

Free schools are in the unique position of starting from scratch – a great privilege, but with it, promoters and the headteacher are given significant responsibility. In looking for your headteacher it may be useful to cross-reference this list of broad qualities often considered in the research to be necessary for those headteachers aspiring to be outstanding:[27]

- Moral confidence based on deeply held personal beliefs
- Significant relationships with a wide network of fellow professionals
- A real understanding of how to learn from experience
- A willingness to learn from students
- Clarity and confidence about what works in terms of professional learning
- Openness to learning from the example of other school leaders
- Confidence in learning how to learn.

CfBT's recent study of how schools move from good to outstanding also found that additionally, headteachers need to:[28]

- Have an overall, long-term vision of what the school could be and translate that vision into practical and successful effort on the part of a critical mass of staff
- Know how to appoint excellent people to other leadership positions in the school, and then trust them to do their job
- While encouraging innovation and measured risk-taking on the part of staff, be uncompromising in addressing poor performance
- Promote an atmosphere of confident pride in the school's culture
- Fulfil their role as the principal representative of the school in its relations with the community it serves
- Maintain their credibility with staff by continuing to do some classroom teaching.

Think carefully about how you are going to attract the right candidates to lead your school. According to the EDS Annual Survey of Senior Staff Appointments in Schools across England and Wales, in the academic year 2009/10 40% of primary and 28% of secondary headteacher posts that came available had to be re-advertised.[29] These figures were up from just 22% and 15% respectively 15 years earlier, and suggest something about the difficulty of attracting sufficiently high-calibre headteachers in many parts of the country.

Vision

One attribute of leadership referred to repeatedly in the literature is the ability to establish a clear sense of direction and purpose for a school. Proposers and headteachers must have a very strong and clear vision, which manifestly influences their decision-making and that of the rest of the senior leadership team.[30]

[27] West-Burnham, J. (2009) *Developing Outstanding Leaders: Professional Life Histories of Outstanding Headteachers – Summary Report 2009.* Nottingham: NCSL
[28] Dougill, P. et al. (2010) *To the next level: good schools becoming outstanding.* Reading: CfBT Education Trust
[29] http://www.tsleducation.com/graphics/EDS_26th_Annual_Survey.pdf
[30] http://publications.education.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-RR108.pdf

Most schools have vision and/or mission statements, although sadly, many are vague, leaving the understanding of the school's purpose and success criteria open to conflicting interpretations. By failing to adequately pin down what is distinctive about a vision and how it will be realised and measured, schools miss out on a vital opportunity to provide the direction, leadership and accountability structures necessary to be, and to know when they are, truly successful. So it is important to think about what your school will do to ensure that 10 years down the line, it retains something distinctive and continues to achieve your founding vision.

Case study:

Leighton Park School

Leighton Park School

Leighton Park School is a long-established and popular, selective, co-educational, independent day and boarding school in Berkshire with a clear vision handed down from its establishment by the Quakers in 1890.

According to Leighton Park School's website:

'Quakers believe there is that of God in everyone. They recognise no barriers of colour, class, or gender. They regard honesty and integrity, simplicity, equality and peace as central to the manner in which they conduct their lives.

Life at Leighton Park reflects the school's Quaker foundation and is influenced by Quaker thinking and practice. We seek to create a community of tolerance and understanding within which a balance between discipline, especially self-discipline, freedom and exploration is maintained.'

While only a minority of the school's staff are practising Quakers, the whole staff's day-to-day belief in a Quaker education, underpinned by the governors' steer, perpetuates Leighton Park's distinctive and deeply held ethos. Visitors are often struck by a feeling of calmness in the school and the surprising maturity and gentle self-confidence of pupils.

*"Measure what you
value, don't value
what you measure"*

It is also important to think about those things which your school will not do in order to still achieve its mission. Resources are not endless and difficult decisions will have to be made. By attempting to be all things to all people, you risk becoming nothing very much to anyone at all.

Part of the explanation for why many schools lack a clear underlying vision is that up until now most schools have been run by their local authority, which has broad and far-reaching objectives for pupils, laid down and altered regularly by politicians. By comparison you have an opportunity to create and sustain a school with a more distinctive vision; one that is comfortable with the fact it might be attractive to some but not necessarily all.

Data

There has been a marked increase in the use of data for monitoring and evaluation in schools over recent years, not least as a result of the Ofsted inspection framework. It is important to define what you want your data analysis to achieve and to be efficient in how you collect, record and use it.

Attainment data can be grouped into three categories:

- Raw and aggregated data – looks only at pupils' or schools' absolute scores
- Value added data – recognises that pupils have different starting points
- Contextual value added data – takes the quest for fairer measures of a school's performance (and a 'level playing field' for school accountability) a stage further. It shows whether the school, with the pupils it has, is doing better than, worse than, or broadly the same as, other schools with similar pupil cohorts.

In focus:

Data analysis packages

According to a recent Ofsted report[31] there are three main data packages used by schools for self-evaluation, planning for improvement and setting targets: RAISEonline, the Data Enabler toolkit and a package produced by the Fischer Family Trust.

The various merits of each are described in more detail in the Ofsted report referred to above; however, all state schools in England are issued freely with the RAISE (Reporting and Analysis for Improvement through school Self-Evaluation) reports each year. These detailed reports take Key Stage 1, 2 and 4 data and analyse it in numerous ways to help identify trends and patterns in pupil progress and achievement. Free schools are likely to receive their first RAISEonline report once they have a cohort of pupils who have sat national tests.

[31] Ofsted (2008) *Using data, improving schools.*

In focus:

National Curriculum levels

National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades are the benchmarks of choice in most schools. The general expectation is that children should reach:

Level	by the end of
level 2	KS1
level 4	KS2
level 5/6	KS3

and the broad progress benchmark is that they should make two levels of progress across each key stage.

The table below shows how National Curriculum levels equate to GCSE grades. So, for example, if a child is on level 6 in Maths at the end of Year 9, if they were to sit a GCSE maths test there and then, they would be expected to achieve a grade D. Similarly if, as expected, they make two levels of progress over Key Stage 4, then you would expect them to achieve a grade B at the end of Year 11.

Equivalence table: National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades

National Curriculum Level	6	7	8		
GCSE grade	D	C	B	A	A*

Data is gathered in different ways across subject areas, with some subjects lending themselves more easily to online or formulaic marking. In addition, even though in maths, for example, it might be relatively straightforward to set a test and use a percentage to grade students, while one student may easily score a level 5 in a number test they could struggle to gain a level 4 in a data-handling test, and it is for these kinds of reason that pupils are sometimes given what is referred to as a 'teacher assessment', which is a simply a teacher's best estimate of the child's overall level. So while grading is not a cut and dried science, the challenge to schools is to remove as much of the art as possible, thereby increasing the value of the information for use in performance management and other accountability structures.

Assessment

There are many other ways of externally assessing, benchmarking, tracking and recording students' academic attainment in addition to national tests and curriculum levels, and assessments are increasingly carried out online so they can be easily and cheaply externally validated. Depending on the stage of school you are setting up, it may take up to seven years (at a primary school) for you to have any externally validated national assessment data; assuming your KS2 results are good, unless you assessed pupils' levels on entry in Reception you may still encounter the challenge that the children you educate, because their parents were the first to choose the free school, are not a truly representative sample. So be sure from the outset that you know how you are going to robustly demonstrate that your free school is performing excellently.

Many independent, as well as some state schools in England use additional, non-compulsory testing provided by private organisations, to more regularly track and demonstrate pupil progress. Some examples of the most commonly used of these tests are described in the box below.

In focus:

Attainment tests

- The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) has a formative assessment service designed to support teachers in the assessment of pupils and help them use that information to improve their children's progress. See **http://www. nfer.ac.uk/schools/nfer-formative-assessment-service/**

- ALIS, Yellis, MidYIS, PIPS and InCAS are all computer adaptive assessment systems produced by the University of Durham's Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (CEMs) centre, and which help schools predict and evaluate their performance in A Level, GCSE and Key Stage 3 assessments. One of the main differentiators between these various measures is that while some produce standardised scores (which in isolation mean nothing), others produce what are known as age-related scores – as with a reading age – which are instantaneously understandable. See **http://www. cemcentre.org/**

- Cognitive ability tests (CATs) are used by some secondary schools to indicate the attainment of their pupils on entry to Year 7 and therefore to provide estimates of their subsequent performance at GCSE. See **http://shop.gl-assessment.co.uk/ home.php?cat=310**

In addition to all the academic information, many schools also collect information on pupils' attendance, authorised and unauthorised absence, the rate of exclusions, staff absence, parental satisfaction, school popularity, the numbers of merits and sanctions awarded and so on, that can be useful in evaluating performance. Data about pupils and their local socio-economic circumstances provides information about the context in which the school works and the factors that may affect its performance.

And finally schools are now looking for ways to evaluate their success in educating pupils to have character and to be happy, fulfilled and confident young adults. The box that follows describes some developments in this area in a little more detail.

In focus:

Measuring beyond academics

You can devise your own survey or scoring mechanisms for your pupils' well-being or character, or how well you are achieving your vision, the main advantage being that it is bespoke to your particular objectives; and the main downside will be that you will only be able to compare it with your own results as you accumulate them over time, or between classes or individuals within your school. Alternatively you can employ surveys and scoring mechanisms that are used across other schools or organisations, thereby providing some benchmarks (although depending on the nature of organisations using them they may not necessarily be wholly representative or fair). A few examples of existing attempts to capture data on these broader areas are detailed below:

- **The Knowledge is Power Programme (KIPP)** is a highly successful chain of charter schools in the US with the motto 'Work Hard. Be Nice'. Since it began in 1994, the development of character has been as important in these schools as the teaching of rigorous academic skills, and they have developed a structured approach to discussing and developing character that is rooted in the research of Dr Martin Seligman (University of Pennsylvania) and Dr Chris Peterson (University of Michigan). It identifies 24 character strengths that lead to engaged, meaningful and purposeful lives. Accordingly they have developed a Character Report card; more information can be found on the website: **http://www.kipp.org/academics-and-character**

- When a school is inspected by **Ofsted**, parents are invited to tell the inspector their views, and for this purpose a survey is available at **http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/inspection--forms-and-guides/s/S5%20Insp%20quest_parents.doc**

- **Ofsted** has also undertaken consultation on the proposals for developing indicators of a school's contribution to pupils' well-being.

- **New Philanthropy Capital (NPC)** is a consultancy and think-tank dedicated to helping funders and charities achieve a greater impact. NPC has developed a Well-being Measure to enable organisations, including charities and schools, to demonstrate their impact on the well-being of young people aged 11 to 16. It is an online survey-based tool, which allows you to create your own survey, track its progress and receive a detailed report of results. It evaluate seven aspects of young people's subjective well-being:

  – self-esteem

  – resilience

  – emotional health

  – quality of relationships with friends

  – quality of relationships with family

  – satisfaction with school

  – satisfaction with community.

  See **http://www.philanthropycapital.org/how_we_help/well-being/**

Having gathered all the various kinds of data on your performance it then remains to ensure you use and report it insightfully and appropriately. As well as ultimately proving to yourself, Ofsted, your parents and community, as well as any sceptics, that your school is achieving what it set out to, pupil-level data can be used to hold your staff to account for progress – as described in the section *Pay and conditions.*

To conclude, this section takes only the very briefest look at leadership and monitoring, not even mentioning the importance of good governance. However, hopefully it will encourage you to think about what you are expecting from your headteacher and how you will support them to achieve it. While it is often said that no headteacher wants to be managed, it will be your role to ensure that they are. Even the greatest headteachers need supporting and challenging to ensure they are continually improving. How much scope are you going to give your head to interpret or mould your original vision? And how will you use data to inform your performance management of the headteacher?

Education myth:

The national curriculum is best

8. Curriculum

According to our survey, the opportunity to set the curriculum is the most important freedom afforded to those in the first wave of approved free school applicants. A handful of examples of curriculum innovations – though not necessarily ones that have been evaluated and proven successful – are described in the box below.

Curriculum innovations

- **Happiness and Well-being, Wellington College** – The aim of this course is to promote the flourishing and excellence of the young people at Wellington. Instead of focusing on disaster prevention, they focus education on how their students might capitalise upon their human resources and make the best of their potential.

- **The Royal Society of Art's Open Minds Curriculum** – RSA Opening Minds promotes innovative and integrated ways of thinking about education and the curriculum. Teachers design and develop a curriculum for their own schools based round the development of five key competences: Citizenship, Learning, Managing Information, Relating to People and Managing Situations.

- **Debate Mate** – The first national peer-to-peer debate programme in the UK. This programme incentivises, facilitates, rewards and celebrates youth volunteering in debating.

- **ESU** – **Discover Your Voice** is the English-Speaking Union's schools debate training programme for Key Stages 2, 3, 4 and 5. It works across the UK and overseas to help students gain confidence in speaking in front of people. The programme has been running since 2004 with over 10,000 young people involved.

- **Jamie's Farm** – Its mission is to support the development of vulnerable young people by providing opportunities for achievement, well-being and sustainable change in an agricultural setting.

- **Skills Force** – An educational charity working with 14–19 year old young people in partnership with schools. Their new curriculum, 'Community, Character and Contribution', builds community leaders who are ready to enter adult life.

- **Maryhills preschool** – At the Maryhills preschool in Malmo in Sweden, an internal courtyard with a deep veranda has been purpose built as a place where the children can sleep outdoors during school time in the afternoon. Small sleeping bags keep the children warm and it is believed that the fresh air, even during the cold winter, benefits their health and well-being.

Extended schools – the devil is in the detail

Schools on the whole tend to stick to relatively traditional ideas about the length and timings of the school day. This is in no small part a result of the requirement in teachers' standard terms and conditions that a full-time teacher works for 1,265 hours per year, spread over 190 teaching days, with five additional days for other duties[32] (this works out at just under 6.5 hours per day). There is also a requirement that no teacher be expected to work at a weekend or to undertake midday supervision.

Increased contact time is a recurring feature in the characteristics of many successful schools serving disadvantaged areas, from Mossbourne Academy in Hackney and King Solomon Academy in Edgware to KIPP schools in the US. KIPP teachers, for instance, typically work a 9-hour day, half days on selected Saturdays and three weeks during the summer. They are also available for students to call for help in the evenings. To compensate they are usually paid more than teachers in other schools.

The logic behind these kinds of approaches is that if there is lost learning ground to be made up, more time will be needed, and also that by extending the school day the school's sphere of influence over a child's life is extended. Independent schools also often have a longer school day and even Saturday school.

Case study:

The Free School Norwich

The Free School Norwich is one of the first 24 free schools to have opened their doors in September 2011. The school aims to:

- Provide a truly broad and balanced primary school education for children
- Enable children to identify and develop their individual strengths and interests so that they can achieve their potential in life
- Help increase the economic well-being of children by enabling their parents to work.

In practice the school's plan for achieving the third aim is to ensure the school is open for 51 weeks of the year, providing an extended school service specifically designed to enable parents to work. The provision during school holidays, on one day at the weekend and after the end of the school day is chargeable, though the school aims to keep this to a minimum.

The Free School Norwich has also opted for a differently structured school year comprising six terms, with a two-week holiday between each and a four-week holiday in August. The terms are named Harvest, Christmas, Winter, Spring, Whitsun and Summer.

[32] https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00072-2011

Extra-curricular provision, or extended schools as they were known, began to be actively promoted by Government from 2002. And although the funding has since been swept up into the Designated Schools Grant (DSG) for the year 2011/12, the encouragement to provide extended services remains. An Ofsted evaluation of the extended schools initiative concluded, amongst other things, that schools with the most effective services had integrated the development of their extended provision into their school improvement plans, with a clear focus on improving positive outcomes for children and young people.[33] The report also recommended that schools should evaluate the impact of their services on the achievement and attainment of children and young people.

So, whatever the club or class, the key to success is how it is chosen, managed and evaluated. Some issues to consider are these:

1. What is the purpose of the provision – catch-up or stretch; widening opportunities; community engagement; or offering additional subjects or enrichment activities?

2. Who do you want to attend the provision and how will you ensure that they do?

3. Will the clubs your free school offers be compulsory, and what do you mean by this? Does it mean that all children must attend a particular club/class, or must attend one per week, or one every day? Are some clubs/classes compulsory for some children? Or does it mean that all teachers must run a club? And what is the sanction for failure to attend?

4. Aside from the question of compulsion, do you want to differentiate your extra-curricular provision and extended schooling from normal schooling, or is what you intend actually more like an extended school day?

5. And if you do decide to differentiate the extended provision from other lessons, in what ways will you do this? Is it that group sizes are smaller, or children are allowed to sit where they like? Perhaps certain behavioural expectations are relaxed, or are children are expected to work in silence?

There is a further set of questions around how you staff the extended provision. Some schools find it best to pay teachers extra for running after-school clubs. But even under this model outcomes may vary considerably; most teachers would think twice about 'cancelling' any timetabled lesson, unless there are emergency circumstances; will teachers have the same approach towards after-school clubs/classes? Will the teacher still be paid even when only one student turns up? Will teachers be told what clubs/classes to run or will they choose?

A different approach would be to timetable the extended provision into classroom teachers' working week. This would mean teachers working more hours, or that additional staff must be employed. Another alternative is to bring in coaches and teachers not otherwise employed by the school, or local volunteers. These individuals will, however, need to be managed and supported, and without the right responsibility and feedback mechanisms the value of their employment may be limited.

Some schools have proposed to use their pupil premium money – awarded to all children entitled to free school meals – to provide additional learning time for certain students. While this may be valid, one interesting finding from the DfE's evaluation of extended schools was that pupils eligible for free school meals took up, on average, *fewer* hours of activities per week (1.3 hours) during term time than pupils who were not eligible (at 1.7 hours).[34] Whatever the vision for your school, you must be sure to measure your extra-curricular provision against it, and constantly evaluate whether or not it is achieving maximum benefits for your pupils.

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[33] Ofsted (2008) *How well are they doing? The impact of children's centres and extended schools.*
[34] http://www.education.gov.uk/publications//eOrderingDownload/DFE-RR016.pdf

About CfBT's Evidence for Education programme

Through the Evidence for Education programme, CfBT Education Trust is proud to reinvest its surpluses in research and development both in the UK and overseas.

Our aim is to provide direct impact on beneficiaries, via educational practitioners and policy makers. We provide a range of publications from practice-based intervention studies to policy-forming perspective papers, literature reviews and guidance materials.

In addition to this publication the following CfBT research publications may also be of interest:

Professional educators and the evolving role of ICT in schools

by Joe Nutt

Claims for how technology can improve educational performance in schools are widespread and influential, yet the research evidence is extremely weak and the discourse is often clouded and confused by the motives and interests of some key individuals and organisations. Nonetheless, huge investments have been made and continue to be made across the developed and the developing world. This perspective paper focuses on the use of ICT for teaching and learning, outlining how to position technology appropriately in the school landscape, so that any investment in it relates directly to potential educational benefits.

To the next level: good schools becoming outstanding

by Peter Dougill, Mike Raleigh, Roy Blatchford, Lyn Fryer, Carol Robinson and John Richmond

For some time now in the UK, close attention has been given to schools, especially secondary schools, facing particular challenges in raising attainment. Initiatives have drawn extensively on research into change processes and into the broader principles of school improvement. Policy makers' attention has more recently turned to how to achieve 'great' schools. The issue is critical not only for individual schools, which want to be as effective as they can be, but because the role of outstanding schools as change agents for others is increasingly being recognised by policy makers across the political spectrum. The research that this report documents has been designed to analyse the processes by which good schools move on to be outstanding.

- This research is being continued into 2012 looking at how the move from good to outstanding can be made at the level of the individual teacher.

New models for organising education: 'Flexi-schooling' – how one school does it well

by Paul Gutherson and Janette Mountford-Lees

This guidance report describes and comments on how Hollinsclough School adopted 'flexi-schooling', an approach to education which offers parents who wish to educate their children at home the opportunity for part-time attendance at school. The report is split into three parts. Part 1 is the story of Hollinsclough School. The story is told by the headteacher, by the local authority, and by the parents of the pupils attending the school. Part 2 provides a guide for readers considering adopting flexi-school approaches themselves. This includes the principles that need to be established, and a range of key issues that need to be considered. Part 3 documents the evidence that exists for a flexi-school approach. It has been written following a Rapid Evidence Review methodology and draws on literature and studies from around the world.

Action research at St Mark's Academy

by Lucy Brown, Olivia Douse, Hannah Fahey, Joanne Isiramen, John Meinke, Emma Sadler and Matthew Scrimshaw. Edited by Karen Whitby

This book is the culmination of 'on the ground' practitioner research conducted by teachers at a UK school. It examines the experiences of a group of teachers whose objective was to improve the quality of teaching and learning through their own research undertaken at the CfBT-sponsored St Mark's Church of England Academy in Mitcham, Surrey. The research covered includes:

- The impact of creative curriculum models on student enjoyment and achievement

- Assessment for learning and how it influences student progress and enjoyment in lessons

- An investigation of the factors that influence students' decision to study languages as a GCSE option

- What makes good learning for our Year 10?

- Refining the casual admissions process.