



The Worshipful Company of Educators

Education Committee

Members' Initiatives Evening

Tuesday 28 February 2017

The evening was held at the Coventry University London Campus and an audience of Educators and guests were treated to two very different presentations.

The School-Home Support (SHS) Membership Package

The opening presentation was given by Jan Tallis (CEO) and Maggie Mitchell (Manager of Services). Jan introduced the audience to SHS by outlining role of the organisation and how it came into being. SHS describes itself as:

An education charity with extensive experience and expertise in attendance, parental engagement and safeguarding for disadvantaged children and families, with proven success in increasing attendance and reducing exclusions.

School-Home Support gets children back into school and ready to learn. Whatever it takes.

The concept of SHS was first developed by Bridget Cramp, an Education Welfare Officer, at Langdon Park Secondary School in Tower Hamlets. Together with staff at the school, she identified issues with parental engagement and poverty. Visits to homes began and practical help was offered to enable families to overcome issues and encourage children to make the most of their time at school. Good results from this work soon began to emerge and other schools became interested. This led to the East London Schools' Fund being established which, following further developments and mergers, eventually became School Home Support.

SHS practitioners working with schools and families can intervene to help and support students. In their turn, the practitioners have supervisions and are kept safe. A national programme of pupil support advisers was introduced but, because of the cuts in the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review, this was much reduced.

SHS also offers a Troubled Families service where families are offered more intensive support. This is based in the home and helps children into school ready to learn. SHS has found that they are in many ways more successful than local authorities because they do not carry the threat or possibility of removing children from their parents' care. There is also a welfare fund which allows the purchase of appropriate assistance for families, such as help with school uniform, extra-curricular trips or buying washing machines or fridges.

The SHS Membership Package was launched in 2015 and brings more than thirty years of experience of working in the field to the national scene and especially when more and more responsibility for early intervention and safeguarding is being devolved to the individual school level. The government's current target for school attendance means that, on SHS's estimate, that over a million pupils are persistently absent which represents about one in seven of the school population. The negative impact of persistence absence on pupils' attainment is well known. Safeguarding is also a priority for schools and there is a greater emphasis on schools' role in managing cases from the outset. There can often be, of course, a link between absenteeism and safeguarding concerns.

Following feedback after the 2015 launch, SHS increased its offer to schools. This consists of access to resources and services that support schools working with families. The membership package includes:

- Casework supervision (individual or group)
- Accredited City & Guilds training in Working with Parents (Level 3)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education Toolkit, including City & Guilds accredited course
- Online training and best practice resources
- SHS Case Manager to record, monitor and report on interventions
- Case file audit
- Safeguarding audit
- Full day INSET workshops in schools

Maggie and Jan then led a discussion of some of the issue they had raised. They were asked about SHS's expertise in improving attendance in schools. They described how SHS uses school data to enable focused interventions and the data from schools shows that in 72% of cases school attendance improved. What was critical in these gains was working with the pupils' homes and families.

They also described how SHS commissions staff to carry out ad hoc work with schools and these staff are supervised in line with professional guidelines. At the moment SHS does not use volunteers but would not rule it out for some time in the future.

There was question about whether Ofsted evaluates the work of SHS. There is no direct evaluation of SHS by Ofsted but there are often references in school inspection reports. SHS operates in different ways in schools according to each school's identified needs.

Funding was vital to SHS developing its work and income comes from trusts and charities. Livery Companies have also given grants, for example the Worshipful Company of Drapers. Other sources of income are always being investigated.

One questioner wanted to know how SHS could manage to expand its work to other places in the country. The Gatsby Foundation had been a first funder for this expansion and subsequently. This had enabled the work to be extended to Yorkshire, Bristol, Nottingham and Essex. Each new location needs to be able to justify a sufficient number of practitioners together with a local manager.

Another member of the audience recognised that SHS's work on safeguarding in schools meant that the designated safeguarding governor would be involved but wondered how other governors might be involved. Maggie explained that often the challenge was to encourage headteachers to allow SHS practitioners to talk to the whole governing body. There was a concern that the national funding formula that was currently being discussed could impact on individual schools such that SHS practitioners' contributions could be reduced or cut altogether as school struggled to balance budgets.

Jan and Maggie were thanked for their fascinating insight in to the very important work that SHS undertakes and its positive impact on children's and young peoples' lives.

Further details of the work of SHS can be accessed at: www.schoolhomesupport.org.uk

High Performance Learning

The second presentation of the evening was given by Professor Deborah Eyre in which she described a thriving new social enterprise which had been established some 18 months ago – and in which she invited everyone to become involved. Past Master John Leighfield was already playing a part. High Performance Learning had been established in response to the evidence that suggests that far more students could perform highly and it seeks to re-calibrate the school landscape to recognise this.

Her ambition was to make a fundamental change in education to ensure that all children and young people have access to high performance learning. Critical to this was a theory of change which was predicated on some core principles:

- Advocating for a mind-set shift within the education system, based on specific principles of Higher Performance Learning
- Building a critical mass of professionals with an understanding of the approach, who can give each other the confidence to pioneer it in their own practice
- Supporting a diverse, growing cohort of leading schools to succeed by exemplifying the approach (and they commit)
- Leveraging these schools to be a model and a resource for the system and the profession

Adopting these principles would lead to the achievement of the vision that:

- The education system will set universally high expectations and promote schools that are agile and nimble enough to achieve them in their own unique contexts
- Teachers will have the body of professional knowledge and techniques to develop high performance and the confidence to apply them in their classrooms
- Everyone will leave school having achieved the highest academic standards and developed the values, attitudes and attributes they need to succeed in their future lives.

Deborah emphasised the particular importance of universally high expectations, schools being sufficiently agile to achieve within their own contexts and ensuring that there is a mass of professionals who are committed to working in this way. She noted that there are already some Pioneer schools working in this way. By and large these are led by brave and courageous headteachers who have been in their schools for while or are in their second or third headship.

Deborah explained that she had become interested in advanced cognitive performance as a teacher-researcher and had become involved in the education of children identified as gifted and talented. In about 2005 she had realised that there was mounting international evidence, which was both challenging and compelling, of the increasing importance of the nurture side in the nature-nurture equation. Research had shown that advanced cognitive performance can be replicated. In High Performance Learning individuals' potential is interlinked with appropriate opportunities, support and the right motivation to produce high achievement.

High Performance Learning was summarised thus:

- High performance should be seen as an attainable target for everyone
- We can systematically teach students how to be 'intelligent' and how to succeed in school
- We want to produce students that are high attainers but also intellectually and socially confident, work-place and life-ready with a global outlook and a concern for others
- There are 20 generic characteristics which students need to develop if they are to be high performers in cognitive domains (ACPs) and 10 values, attitudes and attributes (VAAs) that develop the wider learning dispositions needed for cognitive and lifetime success
- Schools can only become world class by fostering a professional community of practice among their educators – no quick-fix, governance model, instructional technique or technology can substitute for this

There was then an opportunity for discussion. One member of the audience asked whether, if it were possible to have more high performers, the education system be structured to ensure this. Another noted that in the UK barriers to children's learning were recognised but wondered if this actually put a limit on aspiration.

Deborah explained that in 2010 she had been invited to put forward her ideas in a paper on the more able for the Policy Exchange think tank, entitled '*Room at the Top*'. When it appeared it was hugely unpopular because people were too concerned with different pathways for children and young people. Skills and knowledge go hand-in-hand and it was wholly unproductive to polarise academic and vocational routes. In addition, there were many vested interests involved. She felt that the current educational climate was now more receptive and she drew attention to Carol Dweck's work, well-known in many schools, on fixed and flexible mind-sets and their influence on learners and teachers and how this body of research aligns with High Performance Learning. There was a moral imperative involved in ensuring as many people as possible achieved good educational outcomes but our current education system doesn't yet allow this and could be viewed as a form of rationing of educational success. We also know that good educational outcomes are not only highly desirable for individuals because it improves their life-chances but also are significant for improved social mobility.

Educators and guests present were interested in finding out what High Performance Learning looked like in schools. It was being road-tested in a number of schools, for example the 35 British international schools that were part of the Nord Anglia group. Deborah outlined the series of competencies that had been developed. Learners would be at different levels of performance within the High Performance Learning structure and these ranged from Novice to Expert. This was found to be empowering for students. The results of the pilot project were very surprising: there was a significant rise in performance in all competencies and this led to improved exam results.

Internationally school improvement is plateauing and the focus in the UK is on teaching and learning as well as pedagogy.

In response to a question about how this might all be achieved, Deborah explained that schools needed to be more ambitious, identify the barriers to students' learning and address these. She emphasised that for her the evidence demonstrated that more learners can perform at a higher level than currently.

A member of the audience asked what was the trigger or fuse that connects students to the aspirations that she had outlined. Deborah responded that the challenge is motivation and the centrality of an expectation for high performance for all learners. There was a need for the competencies that had been described to be practised and the opportunities for this to happen needed to be made available on a regular basis. Teaching using the principles of High Performance Learning would enable students

to become independent learners. Deborah emphasised that what she had described was not a programme but a lens through which people could develop. There was a last question on how learners' motivation could be maintained and Deborah explained that there was no silver bullet to ensure this because it was a very complex area. However, a sharper focus on pedagogy was at the heart of motivating students. Finally, Deborah strongly encouraged everyone to become involved in the project (details available at: www.highperformancelearning.com). She was thanked enthusiastically for introducing the Company to High Performance Learning and explaining its potential.

In thanking the contributors Martyn Coles (Lower Warden and chair of the Education Committee) noted that a mark of the success of the evening was that there had been a keen interaction between the audience and the speakers and that discussions had to end only because of time constraints. Once again, the Members' Initiatives Evening had demonstrated the vast range of Educators' expertise and experience, one of the important strengths of the Company.