



Federation News November 2020

**Incorporating the
Annual Report
2019 – 2020**

SLF Annual Report 2019-20
Newsletter November 2020

Directors and Institutions, 2019-20

Mrs A Semple, QEstudio School

(CHAIRPERSON: 2019-20)

Mr P Blackburn, John Ruskin School

(VICE-CHAIR: 2019-20)

Mr A Lund, Appleby Grammar School

Ms S Beestone, Cartmel Priory School

To be Appointed, Dallam School

Mr K Nash, Kendal College

Mr P Hyman, Kirkbie Kendal School

Mr G Hartley, Kirkby Stephen Grammar School

Mr A Cunningham, the Lakes School

Miss C O'Neill, Queen Elizabeth School

Ms S Campbell, Settlebeck School

Ms K Fox, University of Cumbria

Members and Institutions, 2019-20

Dorothy Lownds, Cartmel (CHAIRPERSON)

Mark Williams, Appleby Grammar School

Alan Gerrard, Dallam School

John Murray, John Ruskin School

Naomi Brown, Kirkbie Kendal School

Barbara Dowson, Kirkby Stephen Grammar School

Bill Smith, The Lakes School

Ty Power, Queen Elizabeth School

Myles Ripley, Settlebeck

Introductory remarks from Mrs A Wilkinson

SLF Chair 2019 to present

This is my second of year of writing to you as chair of the SLF. The decision was made by the Board that I should continue in the role to bring some continuity and stability to the organisation in what has been an extremely turbulent twelve months.

In the context of a worldwide pandemic, the continued opportunity to collaborate with colleagues who have a genuine regard for each other, has once again proved its outstanding value. Dealing with the implications of the pandemic has been all-consuming for all of our leaders and the occasions when we have been able to meet, albeit in a virtual context, have offered us the chance to exchange concerns, seek reassurance and share good practice. The focus has remained the young people in our schools but we have also had to consider the mental-health and well-being of our staff, more than ever before and leaders have had to dig deep into reserves of resilience.

The educational challenges have not gone away of course: curriculum reforms leading to a 'forgotten third' due to the insistence on comparable outcomes; rearranging of the vocational landscape; serial underfunding of education leading to curriculum cuts and increasing class sizes. All of these issues were apparent last year and remain with us, exacerbated by the existential implications of the pandemic.

The schools in our Federation are well led and optimistic in spite of these issues: a great deal of that aspiration and determination comes from the support and collaboration afforded school leaders by the Federation.

We have been fortunate to welcome Elaine Sargent who is now leading Appleby Grammar School after the retirement of Andrew Lund; the school is set to strengthen and develop further under her leadership.

Another of our schools, Dallam, has been guided safely, on a temporary basis since the beginning of the year, by our long-time colleague, Julie O'Connor. Julie had previously been Head of School at Dallam before she left to lead another Cumbrian school. It was a happy coincidence when Dallam School quickly needed a competent leader, that Julie was happy to postpone her retirement plans. She can now look forward to fulfilling those plans at the end of the year when Rachel Williams will take up the Headteacher role in January.

We have very recently received the news that Phil Hyman at Kirkbie Kendal School is retiring at the end of academic year 2021. Phil is the longest serving headteacher in Cumbria and by the time he finishes will have been at KKS for 17 years. We wish him well. Governors at the school have indicated that they would appreciate the SLF's advice during the recruitment process which means that there has been SLF involvement in virtually all of the headteacher roles in the Federation.

It is therefore very reassuring that we have dedicated and experienced colleagues who are helping us to maintain our collaboration and plan for the future. I am grateful to Miriam Bailey and Steve Houghton for their work in supporting and guiding us. Their warmth and dedication set the tone for our organisation and we thoroughly enjoy working with them.

We are also supported by great colleagues in Ian Walker and Adrian Hall who bring expertise straight into our schools, challenging us without ever undermining us - a difficult but essential balancing act. Jane Henderson is a flexible and indefatigable colleague when it comes to teacher training and the development of our future work-force: if we are going to have growth we need to pay a great deal of attention to this aspect of our collaboration.

We have continued with our trio review process with Spring reviews taking place early in the year and more recently the Autumn term reviews which have been conducted virtually and adjusted to suit the current climate. The review process informs the more formal programme of support we can give to schools, often through the deployment of Ian Walker and Adrian Hall with other creative solutions using the strengths we have within our schools. The sustained support over time afforded by this approach is far more likely to lead to meaningful changes in practice.

Ofsted inspections and monitoring visits invariably refer to the positive impact the SLF has had in affecting school improvement. Long may it continue.

This is a very important year for us as we consider the future direction of the SLF. Steve Houghton is determined to start his retirement this year and we must recruit someone who can take over the reins of the strategic leadership of the Federation. There has never been a time in education when collaboration between schools was more important and I for one am determined to do all I can to make sure that the Federation continues to thrive.

School to School Support: Reports Steve Houghton

In the Autumn Term 2019 we undertook our regular cycle of peer review visits for all our schools. The visits play a key role in:

- Helping schools, through professional dialogue with Head colleagues to reflect on performance and priorities for further development.
- Complementing schools' own self evaluation process by providing an external perspective on developments
- Identifying where schools would welcome support from partnership colleagues to shape or implement improvement priorities

- Sharing good practice and resources between partnership schools.

Increasing numbers of governors have attended our peer review sessions and we hope that they have found them useful in enhancing their knowledge of the schools they represent.

As a partnership we have been keen to provide more "hands on support" for our schools and once again we have been fortunate to secure the services of Adrian Hall (former QES colleague now working part time for the Maths hub) and Ian Walker (Deputy Head and Head of English for John Ruskin School) for the equivalent of one day per week each. In addition to their subject specialisms both colleagues are well versed in leadership development, teaching and learning and coaching strategies. As well as providing support within our schools both have contributed to our Teacher Training and NQT programmes.

As a partnership we have also been keen to support governing bodies with the appointment of senior staff including Headteachers. We recognise that the appointment of a Headteacher is one of the most important decisions a governing body makes, and we have been pleased to act as advisers in that process.

Naturally, the pandemic, which surfaced in Spring Term 2020, has curtailed the normal school improvement services we provide. However, during the lockdown period and beyond we have developed our IT skills and managed to retain a "virtual" connection with our schools through Email and meeting platforms such as zoom.

Our Chair, Alison Wilkinson has represented the partnership in multi-agency Covid-19 meetings acting as a conduit to relay vital information to SLF colleagues. In addition, Alison has represented the SLF in communiques with professional associations and Tim Farron to report our frustrations with A level / GCSE reporting in August which initially had such a detrimental impact on significant numbers of our students.

At the time of writing we are witnessing an upsurge in reported cases and so it is our intention to continue to meet via zoom and to have scaled down peer review meetings in Covid-19 safe environments rather than visit each other's schools. The meetings will be pastoral in tone aiming to share resources and good practice in relation to

things such as mock exams, parent evenings, digital learning and the full spectrum of safeguarding issues thrown into sharp relief by the current pandemic.

We will do whatever we can to support our schools, students and staff during these most difficult times.

Leadership Development: Reports Steve Houghton

As reported in a previous newsletter we successfully completed the delivery of two nationally accredited Middle Leader programmes in October 2019.

In the current situation it is not appropriate to hold leadership development sessions across our partnership but thanks to Adrian's excellent "zoom skills" including the use of virtual break out rooms we have been delivering an online leadership programme for colleagues who are new to leadership posts or who are contemplating applying for leadership roles in the future.

We have a group of 12 colleagues from across our partnership who have signed up for a ten session after school programme in the Autumn Term.

Curriculum & PD Group: Reports Steve Houghton

A virtual meeting for the group is being scheduled for later this term with a two-item agenda:

- How to promote effective teaching and learning within the constraints of the most recent Covid-19 guidelines
- The development of digital learning resources within our partnership

Governor Training: Reports Miriam Bailey

The AGM held in November does not allow much time for training

Although there was a training session for governors scheduled for May 2020, this unfortunately did not take place. The decision was reached to cancel it as, although there was a possibility of producing something 'virtual', it was felt that governor teams would be feeling the pressure of having to deal with the repercussions of the pandemic in their schools, supporting their leadership teams and staff.

Depending on circumstances next year, a training opportunity has been calendared for Thursday, 20th May 2021 at 5pm.

OfSTED Updates: Reports Miriam Bailey

Ofsted inspections were suspended for half of the last academic year, from March onwards, but some of our schools were inspected in advance of this:

- Appleby Grammar School: monitoring visit, Oct 2019 – requires improvement
- John Ruskin School: Section 5, Nov 2019 – Good
- The Lakes School: Section 5, Jan 2020 – Good
- Settlebeck School: monitoring visit, Feb 2020 – Good

A new OfSTED framework was implemented from September 2019. There is less focus on data, outcomes, and compliance curricula than previously.

It is understood that OfSTED have resumed their inspections and although the schedule has been adversely affected by the pandemic, some schools in our partnership are expecting to be visited sooner rather than later.

Subject Networks: Reports Miriam Bailey

Our network groups continue to work together, sharing good practice and ideas and collaborating on finding solutions in taxing circumstances – and that was before the pandemic. As has been previously reported, the SLF cross-partnership training day which usually takes place at the end of the first half term in October, was designated an in-school opportunity for staff to work together on the implications of the September 2019 reviewed Ofsted framework.

Network groups met instead, at a designated time when the time was used fruitfully and with a particular emphasis on how the latest Ofsted framework impacted on individual subjects, especially if that subject was chosen as the focus of a 'deep-dive' scrutiny.

Meetings were again scheduled for the Spring and Summer terms, but events overtook us and the decision was made to leave the network groups to function as they saw fit during the lockdown. Undoubtedly, there were some very useful communications between members of the groups, usually on a less formal basis, via email, than using designated meeting times. In the summer term, however, a couple of the subject groups took

advantage of the technology available and held virtual meetings.

Now that colleagues are comfortable using a range of meeting platforms, we are scheduling meetings for the Autumn term. In fact, it will probably mean that colleagues will be able to access more meetings since the need to travel sometimes significant distances to attend meetings will be negated.

As our partnership evolves, we are delighted that one of our colleagues from Kirkbie Kendal School has proposed to lead a new group of those who have responsibility for ensuring appropriate provision for disadvantaged children. It is anticipated that this group will convene during the Autumn term of the current academic year.

The decision has again been taken, this time in light of the pandemic, to allow schools to take advantage of the usual October training day to hold in-house training for their staff.

Inclusion Advocates: Reports Miriam Bailey

The Inclusion Advocates group is comprised mainly of deputy and assistant head teachers, school based education welfare staff (most of whom are the designated safeguarding lead in their home schools), representatives from Cumbria LA and our local Pupil Referral Unit in Barrow. I am pleased to report that we have had attendance early in the year from the Youth Offending Service and we have a police representative who has been unable to attend virtual meetings in the past but who has stayed in touch. We also now have a contact with new personnel from Social Care and I am hopeful of having representation from the Child and Adolescent mental health Service.

Inclusion Advocates meet at least once a half term, usually monthly.

The main purpose of the group is to:

1. Agree school places for 'hard to place' pupils such as the permanently excluded or those who have been out of education for some time or who are moving into area – there are a county-wide set of agreed criteria.
2. Consider applications from schools for a student placement at the Pupil Referral Unit, (PRU), in Barrow.
3. Consider strategies for managing those at risk of exclusion.

4. Agree managed moves of students at risk of permanent exclusion between the Federation schools.
5. Disseminate best practice in inclusion.

This group plays an active role in ensuring that young people can access their educational entitlement.

During the period of lockdown, the group continued to meet virtually, with a particular emphasis on the well-being of colleagues, it was an opportunity to talk about strategies that were being used in schools as well as an opportunity just to release some pressure. Undoubtedly, many of this team of people were actively involved in monitoring the safety of the young people on their school rolls. However, there were some young people who for a range of reasons, needed to be placed in a school and a number of these were successfully achieved (see data below). Meetings continue to be virtual, covering our usual agendas.

At the beginning of the year, colleagues from the PRU continued to offer a six-week Outdoor Education course as alternative provision. This has taken place on one day per week and a small group (maximum 6) of young people have been led through a range of outdoor education activities. Initially it was targeted at KS4 students, but curriculum time and exam pressures have meant that the offer has been extended to KS3. Those who have participated have clearly derived enjoyment and success from the programme; the idea is that if young people are given the opportunity to engage and enjoy something, they will be able to 'take this with them' into the school setting and have positive repercussions on their attitude to learning. Of course, because of the physical nature of this programme, as well as the transport issues, this has been suspended since lockdown started and our PRU colleagues rightly, have been required to support other colleagues in the unit. Our schools are grateful to the PRU for providing this facility and it is hoped that as soon as it is feasible, that the programme will be reinstated.

Sadly, our only other alternative provision, the Art group, was folded last summer as there were no students that schools felt able to release to take advantage of the therapy. In light of Covid-19 it would not have been possible to run the course during lockdown.

The original purpose of the PRU was to offer short-term early intervention for those students who were not doing well in their schools. Unfortunately, mainly due to curriculum pressures and lack of funding. The majority of young people who attend the PRU continue to be those who have been permanently excluded. During the last academic year, the PRU was exceeding its capacity due to the number of young people who had been permanently excluded from the Barrow area and the South Lakes. Eleven children were permanently excluded from our schools during the last academic year. An additional two went through the managed transfer process; they had been permanently excluded for a serious one-off misdemeanour and it was recognised that they would benefit from moving directly to another school, rather than having to attend the PRU. They were sent to separate schools and are successful in their new settings

In the last academic year (2019-20), twelve young people (of which three were reintegrated from the PRU) from both the local area and outside the county, were accommodated in South Lakes schools through the Fair Access Protocol.

Three young people had a successful supported transition from one local school to another through a managed move.

Children's Services has been looking for some time to establish an appropriate 'alternative provision' and have been considering various options. Although in my last report, I shared that there was to be a new build on Walney, this idea was ultimately deemed inappropriate and plans are now going ahead for a new build at Channelside which is close to the Furness College building. The new provision is anticipated to be open in January 2022.

The location of alternative provision in Barrow is not an ideal location for South Lakes children. While the Local Authority are aware of this, there are currently no plans to locate any alternative provision in the Kendal area. The Kendal Tutorial Centre is used to provide for Home and Hospital Tuition students.

Pastoral and Safeguarding Group: Reports Miriam Bailey

This group continues to meet following on from Inclusion Advocates, although it is the same group essentially, it does allow for a wider conversation

around the issues that face schools and has been the main element of the meetings during lockdown.

There has been less opportunity for visiting speakers to attend this year, but we access information via emails and webinars. There was an online conference to launch a new Cumbrian initiative called 'It's not OK' which aims to ensure collaboration between all services to ensure the safety of young people in our communities. There was a focus on child exploitation whether, criminal, sexual or online. The resources from that conference have been shared with colleagues in school.

This remains a strong group who offer a great deal of mutual support and are an outstanding example of SLF collaboration; it is a privilege to work with them.

Initial Teacher Education (ITE): Reports Jane Henderson

Although the early months of 2020 presented us with many unprecedented issues relating to the end of our ITE training for 2019-20, the launch of Dallam Teaching Alliance (DTA) in September 2020 has afforded us with the opportunity to introduce School Direct trainees back into our SLF schools.

Sue Leech from Dallam School, successfully recruited 14 SD candidates to be our 'newly professional qualifiers' in English, Maths, Science, History, MFL and Art. The University of Cumbria remains the validating body for the DTA trainees and other providers, who we will continue to use in our schools, include local TS alliances and of course the University themselves.

Many of our lead staff in SLF schools have enabled trainees to access the latest insights into effective teaching and learning and provide training and guidance in principled-teaching and leadership. The new developments in 'blended learning' have enabled many of the trainees to 'hand back' skills to the school straight away. The use of virtual learning as the new domain in our classrooms was contributed to by many of the trainees who supported departments with their virtual learning skills to make this an effective model for us to move forward within our new 'blended classrooms'.

So many of our planned developments in the area of ITE have been put on hold in recent months. However, we need to take this opportunity to thank

all of our schools for the commitment they have shown under such difficulties to make sure training remains a significant aspect of supporting prospective teachers, many of whom expressed anxieties in the completion of their training or who are new this term to our profession.

The new Ofsted framework for ITE is now in place but being part of the University of Cumbria's Stakeholders group has informed us of what changes to expect and how to prepare for this. Skilled mentors and new subject mentors are being advised of the changes and the new assessment protocols.

It remains even more important for us in the current climate to recognise how much we value SLF staff and the support trainees are given by them at all stages of their training.

Making it possible to support our trainees has led to us employing innovative practices in school experience and just by 'being there' to listen to those new to the profession who need support whilst so much uncertainty remains of what might be the new 'normal' classroom. It has certainly been a time for youth and experience to work together.

Provision for Newly Qualified & Recently Qualified Teachers (NQT/RQT): Reports Jane Henderson

13 of the 2019-20 cohort of 16 NQTs registered with us as an appropriate body became successful members of the teaching profession. Several of the others have continued their induction with us.

The October 2019 Conference event was once again a great success. The programme for the Conference supports our induction programme and remains one of the most useful professional development tools for staff in our schools both as participants and presenters. A comment from one of the NQTs said: *"Just whilst I get a spare moment to collect my thoughts this morning, I am sending this email to thank you for yesterday's conference! I had an excellent day and took a great deal away with me. Not only did I leave with new ideas and strategies to implement into my own practice but also inspired with a positive buzz to get back into school today and a big smile on my face."*

The introduction of the Early Career Framework for all new staff from September 2021 will necessitate us developing a two-year induction programme for future years.

From September 2021, schools may be required to reduce the timetable allocation of those in their second year of teaching by a required 5% to comply with the new Framework. Our anticipated recognition of this enabled us to host a very successful RQTs Conference in November where participants shared and reviewed strategies for Assessment for Learning; considered how 'Teaching to Remember' remains so significant for us in our classrooms and how the need to have a workload balance remains so important. Comments from RQTs said "Learning so many new strategies ...(having) inspiring and captivating presenters with good ideas helps to confirm things you are doing well and highlights ways of improving."

In September 2020, we signed up 28 NQTs.

Supported by a formal structure ensuring that the support needed is available for all during their school induction, we are either using Zoom or Microsoft Teams to visit our NQTs during these early months of the induction period and following required school protocols to make face-to-face meetings whenever we possibly can.

Our priority remains to work together to meet the challenges of teacher retention and bring together expertise from established teachers aiming to improve and share their classroom teaching skills and quality experiences for all our NQTs and RQTs. It has provided us with many challenges this year, not least the need to compensate for the unfinished training for so many beginning their first jobs in September 2020. However, with frank and effective conversations with our skilled mentors in schools, we are assured the quality of our new teaching staff reflects the collegiate working ethic supporting induction in all SLF schools.

Concluding remarks from Miriam Bailey

The last academic year has probably been the most challenging anyone has had to face and not least our schools. From the many conversations we have had it has undoubtedly been made more manageable knowing that there are colleagues in the same situation, dealing with the same challenges and seeking acceptable outcomes.

This has happened through the outstanding collaboration that the SLF facilitates and encourages.

From September 2020 SLF staffing is as follows:



Executive and Inclusion Officer:

Miriam Bailey (1.5 days)

- Facilitation of Board and Executive
- Calendar
- Inclusion officer
- Network groups
- Link with Barrow PRU serving on the Management Committee
- Representation on LA inclusion and safeguarding groups

Lead on Progress and Development:

Alison Wilkinson (1 day secondment)

- Co-lead on PD and Curriculum groups
- Trio Lead for Dallam, KKS and KSGS
- Chair

Training Officer: Jane Henderson.

- Lead on our links with Initial Teacher Training providers such as the University of Cumbria.
- Lead on NQT assessment through The Teaching School.
- Lead on Special Educational Needs, PHSE and Careers groups
- Support for a range of network groups

Director of Quality/Development: Steve Houghton (2 days with one funded from the Teaching School – until March/May 2021)

- Lead on school improvement
- Delivering bids for extra funding
- Co-lead on PD and curriculum groups
- Trio lead for JRS, CPS, Settlebeck, QE Studio, QES, AGS and TLS

Finance Officer: Sarah Platt (2 days)

- Accounts and finance
- A range of other important administrative roles eg. the website
- Admin support for other colleagues

English / Teaching and Learning: Ian Walker

(1 day secondment)

- Support across a range of schools, specialist leader in education
- Support for English network group

Maths / Teaching and Learning: Adrian Hall

(1 day SLF; 1 day Maths Hub; 2 days AMSP)

- Support across a range of schools
- Support for maths network group