



The Missing Two Thousand

How independent and
state schools work together to
help the most disadvantaged
students achieve their aspirations

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About the **editors**

Educated as a King's Scholar at Eton, Tom spent the early part of his career working in comprehensive schools in Park Barn (Guildford), Chelmsley Wood and Ladywood (Birmingham). He returned to Eton in September 2016 as Eton's first deputy head for partnerships. In this role, he oversees Eton's core relationships with Holyport College and with the London Academy of Excellence, as well as with the Thames Valley Learning Partnership. He also oversees the school's widening access programme which brings 90 talented boys to Eton on free places.

He has also been chair of the Schools Together Group and has been committed to improving partnership practice through creating its *Partnerships in Practice* series, which began with *All Together Now: Best Practice in Music cross-sector partnerships* in June 2018. He sits on the Education Committee of the London Academy of Excellence (LAE), is a governor at Holyport College and is a director of the Slough and East Berkshire Multi Academy Trust (SEBMAT).



Tom Arbuthnott

Anushka is assistant head (academic) at the London Academy of Excellence, a leading state sixth form in Stratford, London. A central part of her role involves oversight of the school's careers and progression programme and its Oxford/Cambridge provision. A former barrister, she specialises in giving state sector students the best possible preparation for top universities, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The school was rewarded in 2020 with 37 Oxford or Cambridge offers from a year group where 30% were eligible for free school meals, one-third were from backgrounds of real disadvantage and 54% were in the first generation of their families to go to university. She works very closely with six independent schools in devising this programme, including Brighton College, Caterham, Eton College, Forest School, Highgate School and University College School Hampstead. Anushka is also a governor for Haggerston School in Hackney.



Anushka Chakravarty



About the **Schools Together Group**

*Harnessing the power of partnerships for the
benefit of children*

The **Schools Together Group** is a discussion group for individuals from both state and independent schools, in primary and secondary schools, who are responsible for running partnerships.

The group organises termly events based on themes of interest to partnership coordinators, such as measuring outcomes and funding models.

The group works closely with the Independent Schools Council, Department for Education and System Partnerships Unit, providing expertise and helping to shape meaningful collaborative initiatives.

To subscribe to the Schools Together Group mailing list, for information on events and activities, please email info@schoolstogether.org.

Please contact the group if you would be interested in serving on the steering committee or one of its subcommittees, or if you could offer to host a future meeting.





Introduction – the missing 2,000

by Tom Arbuthnott and Anushka Chakravarty

In 2010, fewer than 40 students from the whole of Newham progressed to Russell Group universities and only three achieved places at Oxford or Cambridge from Newham schools. In fact, only 330 Newham sixth formers took A-levels through Newham providers, with most children in the borough leaving the area to take A-levels. It was undoubtedly an educational ‘cold spot’.

By 2020, the cold spot was appreciably warmer. One school, the London Academy of Excellence, received 37 Oxford or Cambridge offers in 2020, equivalent to 15% of its cohort. Meanwhile, aspiration and standards were being driven up across the borough with another school in Newham increasing its offers from one to over 50 between 2014 and 2020.

How has this happened? Somehow, clear aspirational and operational principles have been established. Students throughout that part of London now aim for the top universities and have a choice of schools that can help them make it happen.

One of those schools, the London Academy of Excellence, presents an innovative model for social mobility. This state school has been founded on a model of **partnership between the state and independent sectors**, with committed educationalists from both

sides working together to create a pathway for the most disadvantaged students into the best universities. In five years, over **850** students have earned places at Russell Group universities, **95** have gone on to study medicine, dentistry or veterinary medicine, and **68** have taken places at Oxford or Cambridge. Given Oxford's target of admitting 25% of its students from disadvantaged backgrounds by 2023, irrespective of school type, this type of partnership work shows huge potential in supporting students in getting where they want to go.

Seven years ago, this 25% (equivalent to 850 students) would have been part of the ‘missing 2,000’: 2,000 students every year who, with appropriate interventions, would have a good chance of applying for, receiving an offer from, and finally entering our top universities - but who were not accessing this opportunity.

How do we reach the number 2,000? The Social Mobility Commission calculated in 2014 that, of a cohort of pupils born in 1991-2, 7,853 pupils from the most disadvantaged homes achieved well in school aged 11. Of these, only 906 made it to a highly competitive university, defined as Russell Group or equivalent. Taking the same size cohort from the top 20% of families in socio-economic terms, 3,066 of these children made it to these universities. Something happened between the age of 11 and the age of

18 that meant these 2,000 (or, to be precise, 2,150) children went missing.¹

So how can the “missing 2,000” be reached? The thrust of policy for the past few years has given the responsibility to universities to develop coherent and effective outreach programmes which succeed in reaching into disadvantaged communities. Some extraordinary organisations, including The Brilliant Club, Villiers Park and IntoUniversity, have worked really hard to support their efforts, sometimes with great success, sometimes not. But while some progress has been made, there is a great deal more to be done.

In this country there is a group of institutions which is committed to social mobility and which cares deeply about the life chances of disadvantaged children. They understand, with professional clarity and with an unrivalled record of success, how to work with children aged 11-18. These institutions – independent schools – are spread around the country, with all counties and large cities containing at least one. These schools were often the historic providers of education in their regions, especially to less privileged boys and girls. Surely it is sensible to see this group of institutions as key to the national challenge of widening access to top universities?

But instead, independent schools are generally seen as part of the problem, particularly in crude media analysis. The headline figure in unquestioning news reports simply features the relative percentages of state-educated and independent-educated pupils making it into Oxford or Cambridge. This often cloaks the fact that many independent-educated candidates are on bursaries or that many independent schools are keen to partner with and promote social mobility in state schools as part of a mutually beneficial enterprise. It also cloaks the rise of tutoring, with over 27% of children now receiving additional private help with their studies, irrespective of whether they attend a state-sector or independent-sector school². Indeed, the independent sector is very successful at supporting students from more disadvantaged backgrounds in preparing them for competitive undergraduate programmes. As the Oxford University press office put it in 2011, "Of students coming to Oxford University with household incomes under £25k, who then automatically qualify for a full Oxford Opportunity Bursary, 31.6% are from schools in the independent sector." Louise Richardson, vice-chancellor of Oxford University, was quoted in the *Daily Telegraph* on 18 July 2019 saying, "The reality is that independent schools are identifying these smart, poor kids. They are bringing them in, giving them scholarships and educating them, and then they apply to us, and we take them."

This publication aims to show that partnerships between independent schools and state schools are part of the solution in reaching the missing 2,000, coming up with innovative and forward-looking projects to support the universities' outreach efforts. If we can (using the Schools Together Group's strapline) *harness the power of*

In this country there is a group of institutions which is committed to social mobility and which cares deeply about the life chances of disadvantaged children. They understand, with professional clarity and with an unrivalled record of success, how to work with children aged 11-18.

partnerships to the benefit of children, then we can make progress. This will require embedded partnerships between independent schools, grammar schools, comprehensive schools and universities which take a long-term approach consisting of a series of interventions. We hope that partnership professionals in both sectors will read this booklet for ideas for collaborative projects, which can be easily set up and replicated. We are trying to address the question of widening access in a systematic way: whatever resources a given school has, primary or secondary, state or independent, there will be a project somewhere in here that they can reproduce or adapt to local circumstances.

Most of the ideas in this publication emerged from a symposium, hosted at Eton in the Tony Little Centre in May 2019, which brought together 20 educators from both sectors, all of whom are focused on trying to improve their practice in cross-sector partnership. In addition, we have tried in this publication to feature the words of students alongside the words of schools.

Finally – a word of apology. Despite having absorbed over 2,000 projects on the Schools Together website, having convened a symposium and invited over 300 partnership professionals to participate in this project, there is no doubt that we will have missed some excellent practice out there, which should have been part of this compendium. If it's your project that we have missed, then we apologise: and we would ask you to contact t.arbuthnott@etoncollege.org.uk with information. Going forward, we plan to launch a new magazine, *Partnerships in Practice*, and we hope to include your initiative there.

Emerging from this booklet are some questions: if we were trying to design a suite of activities that well-resourced schools, state or independent, could adopt in order to maximise their impact in supporting more disadvantaged students in reaching university, what would those activities be? Where should schools start in constructing this suite of activities? And how do they demonstrate, effectively, their impact and importance?

Structure

We want all partnerships to find useful ideas in this publication – and each current partnership starts from a different place. The structure, therefore, of this publication follows a typology, ranging from the **easiest** interventions for independent schools to start with to increasingly **complex** interventions. The hope is that partnerships can examine their current practice, and then look for projects which might be appropriate to their local contexts.

²<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/09/25/quarter-secondary-school-children-now-have-private-tutors/>



How can these ideas help us make partnership projects more **effective**?

If we replicate the projects in this volume across the country, we will begin to make a difference. However, we do understand that, for many schools and partnerships, there is a long way to go. While inter-school partnerships have enormous potential to improve practice across the educational

commonwealth, many partnerships are only just starting out. Schools committed to partnership sit on a spectrum from ‘emerging’ to ‘established and sustainable’: but we are still learning how to move our cross-sector partnerships into the right hand column and beyond.

	Characteristics of ‘emerging’ partnerships	Characteristics of ‘established and sustainable’ partnerships
Leadership	<i>Led by teacher</i>	<i>Led by senior leader / dedicated partnerships co-ordinator</i>
Planning	<i>Reinventing the wheel with each new project</i>	<i>Informed by successful projects elsewhere</i>
Finance	<i>Run on a shoestring</i>	<i>Aware of funding sources and models</i>
Coherence	<i>Fragmented</i>	<i>Cohesive with clearly articulated goals</i>
Communication	<i>No time for communication</i>	<i>Communicated to alumni, parents, students and potential donors in an organised way</i>
Impact assessment	<i>Not assessed for impact</i>	<i>High quality and reflexive</i>
Sustainability	<i>One off</i>	<i>Iterative and repeated</i>
Targeting	<i>Working with ‘state sector kids’</i>	<i>Targeting pupils who really need support, e.g. SEND, the most able or pupil premium</i>
Balance of the relationship	<i>Perceived as patronage</i>	<i>Mutual and reciprocal</i>

As we have put this booklet together, several themes have emerged which can support partnerships in living up to their potential.

Guideline #1. Seek to move from the *ad hoc* to the planned. Most partnership projects in the realm of widening participation start with an individual request involving an individual student, or the ‘opening up’ of an activity which is already being

run in one school. These are welcome ways of beginning a partnership. However, to maximise the benefits of the partnership, we need to move to planned activity that reflects the needs of both partners in a spirit of mutuality and reciprocity.

Guideline #2. Target activities most closely on the students who really need our help.

Those running partnership programmes (and, indeed, financial aid programmes) in independent schools need to become savvier about the tools that can be used to help us reach students who really need our help. It is telling that only 15% of the country's AAA grades are achieved¹ by students from the 40% of postcodes which cover the country's most disadvantaged areas. Common tools used include:

- **POLAR (Participation of Local Areas).** This is a freely available index which uses a simple postcode check to identify how likely students in given postcodes are to go on to higher education. By repute, it is less reliable in London than outside: but is a useful guide, which is particularly easy to use. Go to <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area> (or Google 'POLAR data') for more information.
- **Acorn.** This is a more nuanced measure, used as a primary measure by Oxford University in terms of assessing disadvantage. Visit www.acorn.caci.co.uk/ for further details. This has a cost to it.
- **IMD (indices of multiple deprivation).** Cambridge University uses this dataset, which is more comprehensive and may need more skill to navigate. Go to www.gov.uk/guidance/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019-mapping-resources for more information.

Guideline #3. Use a 'theory of change' in planning partnership projects,

which seeks to articulate with complete clarity how the intervention is going to make a difference, and which plans a series of connected activities that work together to make that difference. 'Theory of change' projects conclude with a rigorous analysis of success, using clear indicators. Partnerships often start from a statement of the obvious ("it's obviously a good idea to do this") but do not often develop the skill of self-criticism ("it would have been even better if...")

Guideline #4. It's all about the relationships: they may take time to develop.

Cold-calling, in partnership activities, rarely works. Without a relationship in place, school leaders are unlikely to authorise visits out of school; teachers will be unwilling to bring students (or will not make the most of activities that *do* go ahead); and students may be uncomfortable about visiting another school that they may have preconceptions about. Build relationships slowly and involve partner schools as much as possible at the planning phase of an intervention.

Guideline #5. Make sure the students feel comfortable. Children, particularly teenagers, perceive small differences very critically. Unless there is a clear goal (such as an Oxford and Cambridge interview process), they may not engage with partnership opportunities unless they are made to feel as welcome as possible. Schools must go the extra mile to make guests feel welcome. This particularly applies where visitors of the opposite sex come in to a single-sex school.

Guideline #6. Go further by embedding school-to-school relationships in 'broad area partnerships.'

These partnerships are now springing up all over the country, linking state schools in formal structures with local independent schools, often on a model where all contribute an equal sum and steer the partnership collaboratively, often through the employment of a dedicated co-ordinator. This can provide the necessary shared ownership and reciprocity to design partnership activities that really make a difference. Examples are the Thames Valley Learning Partnership, launched in September 2019, the East Kent Schools Together Group or the York ISSP. Useful examples can be found at: schoolstogether.org/formal-partnerships/.

Guideline #7. Seek to work with Oxford and Cambridge as well as other partners as 'outreach hubs'

Once it is accepted that cross-sector partnerships can achieve national goals in this area, it becomes clear that independent schools can be central to the strategies being enumerated by the Office for Students, by Oxford and Cambridge colleges and by Russell Group universities. Independent schools can also be the centre of local 'hubs', which enable economies of scale to be developed in the planning and delivery of activities.

¹ https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/media/global/wwwadminoxacuk/local/sites/aad/documents/Report_of_the_Adex_Working_Group_on_Access_Targets.pdf



Intervention #1

Providing interview support

Probably the most accessible way to collaborate with any school is to offer interview support for students who have been invited to interview by Oxford, Cambridge or for medicine and other sought-after courses. Often, schools with little experience of these universities will approach a local high-performing school to ask for help: rarely is this help unforthcoming. The trick is to turn this well-meaning and valuable support into something which is systemic and proactive.

At a very basic level, schools will arrange for an experienced interviewer to throw some unexpected questions in the right subject area at the candidate, usually in a classroom and sometimes by a non-specialist. This is fine and better than nothing. But what if we were trying to turn this experience into a really powerful one, that might make the difference between success and failure for a student?

The timing of interview support varies in different projects across the country, with some being offered in the summer of Year 12, some in September/October, and some as a final dry-run before interviews in December (or later for medicine). Each can have benefits of different kinds. As this booklet emphasises throughout, however, practice interviews will be most effective when conceived as part of a suite of activities which has been designed and planned collaboratively.

In any case, practice interviews should make reference to the student's personal statement and provide written feedback for the student to reflect on and improve performance. Provision of a feedback loop, which informs interviewers of how the student has got on, can build common room support for partnerships programmes going forward.

Case study #1:

It's not just what happens within the interview, it's also the whole experience. *As an academic, state sixth form, we want as many of our pupils as possible to aspire to, and achieve, Oxford or Cambridge places. Much of our work in this area takes place through our school partnership with Eton College. The best evening is the annual practice interview evening held at Eton, which is designed to familiarise students with the Oxford or Cambridge environment. Eton hosts over **130** students for practice interviews, including all of our Holyport applicants, deliberately scheduling these interviews around the site so students have to find their own way around. As Eton is architecturally like an Oxford or Cambridge college, it is good practice for the real thing. Even better if it's raining or if other unexpected conditions occur: if students turn up to the practice interview bedraggled, having forgotten an umbrella, they won't repeat the mistake in the real thing! Often students report being 'stressed' by the practice interview experience when they're debriefed on their way back to Holyport. We think that this is the way it should be, especially if they leave the event much less anxious than when they arrived. Certainly, the overall 'acceptance rate' for students attending the interview sessions is higher than average at over 44% in 2019. Holyport's first ever successful Oxbridge student made it to Brasenose to read medicine this autumn.*

Frank Hardee, Holyport College

Case study #2:

Build generic confidence skills as well as subject-specific ones.

At the London Academy of Excellence, we made our big stride forward in supporting students into the most competitive universities – moving from two offer-holders to Oxford and Cambridge in 2015 to 37 in 2020 – when we realised how much of the battle faced by our students was about confidence in an unfamiliar environment. One of the key differences between students rich in cultural and social capital, and able students who might be the first in their families to apply for university, can lie in their resilience as the process goes on. Students might not be experienced in having academic conversations with adults they have not met before; they might not be socially confident with someone who seems different to other adults in their lives; or they might feel uncomfortable in some of the archaic surroundings of college. Three years ago, therefore, we devised an ‘interview styled workshop’ in collaboration with Eton. Eton hires an actor who works with small groups of six to eight students, role-playing different interview styles for the students. While the interviewee is out of the room, the other workshop participants will devise a personality for the actor, whether “bored”, “tired”, or “overexuberant”. This enables them to see that a lack of eye contact or a particular mannerism should not be taken personally as the interview goes on. The experience of an interview in the environment of Eton – even the experience of conducting an interview in a sinking sofa – can also be incredibly powerful and prepares our students well for the actual day.

**Anushka Chakravarty,
London Academy of Excellence
(Stratford)**

Case study #3:

Moving from ‘emerging’ to ‘established’. Be smart with the use of technology to overcome distance in forging effective collaborations.

Schools tend to look locally for help – and the fact that most partnerships are developed through relationships makes long-distance links harder to develop. However, it is clear that major pockets of low aspiration apply across the United Kingdom, and especially in those parts of the UK that are hard to reach from the south east where most high-performing schools are based. An initial step might be to crack the technology to be able to offer practice interviews via Skype or other video-conferencing technology, using more ambitious partnership structures which are nationally based rather than regionally based. We might even start to offer online mentoring.

Tom Arbuthnott, Eton College

“The mock interviews at Brighton College were really realistic in terms of questions asked but also in terms of how the days were organised and the structure of the interviews. For many of us applying to Oxford or Cambridge is uncharted territory. The mock interviews at the partner schools provide wonderful preparation for the ‘real thing’. They helped me to feel more comfortable and express myself better on the day of the real interview.”

**Jedidiah, former student, London
Academy of Excellence (Stratford)**



Intervention #2

Support with admissions tests

While universities protest that test support does not count for much, educationalists know that a little help can go a very long way, not least in ensuring that students know what they will face in the exam.

Independent schools tend to have more experience in preparing students for these tests, with 59% of independent school students reporting that they have had support in their preparation, compared to 30% in state schools¹. This applies particularly to more specialist admissions tests, such as the LNAT (preparation for law degrees) where few state schools have the expertise or the staff to be able to help.

It can be difficult to involve students from other schools ad hoc in regular weekly or other timetabled classes, especially given the challenges of transport and timetable alignment. It is much better to plan a suite of support activities collaboratively, as Immanuel College has done. Where activities are based around written modules, as at Magdalen College School, Oxford, that can also be an excellent way of sharing expertise. Perhaps, in time, we could put some of these modules online?

Case study #1:

How to prepare students for medical applications: analyse the test and deliver carefully tailored preparation. *The University Clinical Aptitude Test (UCAT) and the BioMedical Aptitude Test (BMAT) rely on a model of testing which is completely alien to most students. Lacking 'content', students' usual models of preparation fall short. They tend to assume that scores cannot be improved aside from blind self-testing – an unstrategic approach which might lead to improvement only via osmosis. At Immanuel, we work with partner schools to ensure that UCAT/ BMAT study is:*

- *strategy-led*
- *indexed to section and question*
- *time-orientated*
- *consciously focused on how best to inculcate processes as opposed to content.*

We start with two whole-day conferences to build students' understanding of the 'rules of the game' and to start building their metacognition (their understanding of the 'question underlying the question'). From this foundation, eight after-school workshops, one for each section, establish the strategies and processes required to answer specific question types and models. This is reinforced through 14 mocks run by Immanuel College and supported by teachers trained and resourced by the partnership. Most students choose to do six to eight of these mocks. Finally, our students are guided to their optimum strategic choices based on their UCAT/BMAT and broader profile. Shifting norms is difficult, but with an intensive and thoughtful programme any student can be best prepared for these vital tests. We have even put in freedom of information requests to ensure that our preparation carefully follows the actual questions being asked within medical school preparation.

Liam Suter, Immanuel College

¹ https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/media/global/wwwadminoxacuk/localsites/aad/documents/Report_of_the_Adex_Working_Group_on_Access_Targets.pdf



Case study #2:

Share resources to make subject-specific interviews more effective in maths. *The maths worksheets developed by Magdalen College School can provide students who may be the only applicant for maths in their school with a significant head-start in terms of interview preparation over the summer holidays. They can be shared by any cross-sector partnership. At MCS, the maths partnership co-ordinator runs weekly classes for students preparing for the Mathematics Admission Test (MAT), required by a number of courses at the University of Oxford and Imperial College London. These sessions run alongside another class aimed at those taking their sixth term examination paper (STEP) examinations. We encourage cross-sector participation in these preparation sessions from schools across Oxford, but we have worked particularly closely with our secondary school neighbour, Cheney School. A key ingredient in the success of our mathematics partnership work is the preparation and sharing of highly effective, and targeted, problem sheets which we issue to all those taking part. We recently granted one of our maths teachers a period of study leave to prepare these sheets, even taking the time to go further and develop freely available 'sideways extension' materials for Year 7 and Year 8 pupils.*

Scott Crawford, Magdalen College School

Case study #3:

For the English Literature Admissions Test (ELAT), a day of targeted teaching is helpful – but offering marked mock exams would be even better. *The Welsh Government's Seren Network provides access advice and university application support to Wales' Oxford or Cambridge applicants. The day-long workshops organised by Seren are crucial in providing sixth form students with tailored guidance about entrance examinations. Eton College allocated me the time to spend two days at locations in North and South Wales running in-depth classroom-based sessions on the ELAT. Guiding students through the test paper by showing model answers, planning answers, modelling essay structures and giving tips about timing and technique proved helpful to them. For the most part, students had not received specialist guidance from their schools regarding the details of the test; this was their first in-depth encounter with the paper and its mark scheme. Although Seren does not yet offer supervised mocks, applicants were encouraged to complete past papers using the resources on the admissions testing website. The notion that the tests cannot be prepared for was dispelled. Applicants were motivated to practise thoroughly. However, targeted feedback on mocks is something that would benefit them. This is an area where experienced teachers might help by offering to mark scripts. It was impressive to see the talent and independent drive of the students and it was possible to build confidence, offer praise and encouragement, and marshal them towards a better ELAT performance, even with only a day of focused teaching.*

**Sarah-Jane Bentley, Eton College
and Seren Network**



Case study #4:

It's not all about the Physics Aptitude Test (PAT) paper: build preparation carefully over time, and keep it enjoyable. *The most valuable lesson we have learnt in our years delivering PAT preparation classes for our partner state schools is that the way we refer to the provision is extremely important. We start our classes early in the sixth form calendar. Pupils start their sessions in the first week back after the first half term of the year, meaning they have a full calendar year to grasp the material. By focusing on the pleasure of tackling challenging, enriching material, we are able to maintain engagement. As pupils progress through Year 12, the focus begins to shift more towards the paper itself. The focus on enrichment first and exam preparation later provides further benefit to the pupils, as it lends itself to genuine enthusiasm and curiosity – both of which can do the pupils no harm at interview. Impact assessment is a key consideration with this provision. It is important to create the feedback loop which allows pupils to inform you how they have done on the paper.*

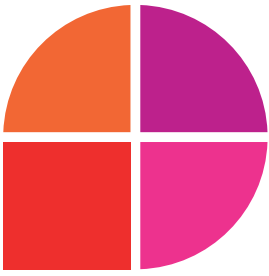
**Joe Connor,
Highgate School**



Case study #5:

Run critical thinking workshops to help prepare students for the Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA). *Forest School runs critical thinking skills sessions for our Forest sixth form students as well as students from our state school partner, the London Academy of Excellence (Stratford). These hourly sessions are run weekly during the autumn term of Year 13 and are particularly useful in preparing for thinking skills assessments such as the TSA. Although critical thinking is a lifelong educational enterprise, these skills are aimed at refining the students' existing capacity to think flexibly in the face of unfamiliar stimuli. Students learn to tackle Fermi problems, interpret data sets and construct logical arguments. As well as this, students undertake focused exam practice in preparation for university tests. Students from both schools benefit enormously from the energetic intellectual curiosity which exists in these sessions. Forest has designed a course which meets the needs of students with varied academic specialisms, so there are often opportunities for cross-curricular conversations as students learn to cross-pollinate knowledge from one domain to another. Working in collaboration with other schools takes students outside of their comfort zone and prepares them for the competitive element of the wider university experience.*

Adela Kay, Forest School



Commentary

A rule of thumb for teachers like us is that student performance in any given test is helped by a moderate amount of teaching. We have all seen students, in the pressure of an exam, make poor decisions that reflect neither their aptitude nor their normal achievement; and it does not take much to realise that teaching from an experienced adult is particularly supportive to good performance. Whatever the benefits of online preparation, nothing beats a teacher with experience who can help you to structure responses and who can mark your work, giving formative feedback. As it becomes more and more difficult to tell the difference between candidates with equally good grades – and as universities are on the lookout for students of limitless potential but limited opportunities – the role of these tests is only going to become more important. If we can find a way of delivering around four hours of outstanding coaching to all students taking these tests then we will level the playing field and give everyone an equal opportunity to show what they can do – and, in turn, universities will make better judgements about the students who will thrive.

Tom Arbuthnott, Eton College

Student voices

"A network like Seren can give you many invaluable opportunities, especially when you don't get to meet many other students applying for the same subject as you. The chance to work with Mrs Bentley, as a really experienced teacher, on the paper was definitely one of these. I learnt so much and had a wonderful time! I know that I would not have understood the complexities of the paper without her help and hope that this will give me a better chance in achieving my dreams. I thank her for all of her time and encouragement."

Niamh, Bangor

"TSA preparation at Forest School has been exceptionally useful as it gave me plenty of insights into the best way of approaching and preparing for admission tests. I had an opportunity to get advice on how to answer all questions in timed conditions as well as on how to structure my essay. Weekly sessions in Forest School not only prepared us for an exam but also allowed me to practise the general skill of critical thinking which will be helpful in the interviews as well."

**Mariia, Year 13
London Academy
of Excellence (Stratford)**





Intervention #3

Reaching students through UCAS and careers days

Application rates highlight the challenge in bringing more disadvantaged students into the orbits of the most competitive universities. Just taking Oxford as an example, 37% of independent school pupils who received grades of A*A*A or better made an application in the years 2012-14. Of state-educated students, only 25% of pupils in this bracket applied to Oxford; and, of those in the 20% most socio-economically disadvantaged postcodes, only 14% applied¹.

This problem can be exacerbated by lack of support or understanding from teachers in certain subjects and in certain schools. Sutton Trust research recently showed that 43% of teachers in state secondary schools would “rarely or never” encourage their brightest students to apply for Oxford or Cambridge.

This one, surely, is a no-brainer. Many schools run UCAS or careers fairs, especially for students in Year 12. Exhibitors, including universities, who come to these events have an interest in displaying their wares to as wide a range of pupils as possible. The greater the pool of potential applicants, the more successful a fair will be at attracting a wide range of contributors. By collaborating with state schools in relation to these events, high-performing schools can help to plug this gap.

Case study #1:

Open up the careers and UCAS provision you are organising to partner schools. *We have run a number of careers events in which Brighton College parents and alumni give talks or get involved in Q&As. To these we always invite the London Academy of Excellence (Stratford) and other pupils, and our speakers are always very keen that this is the case. We have previously run medicine and law evenings separately - we found that local pupils were particularly keen on the medicine evening. For the last two years, we have combined these together in a Professions Conference for Year 12 students, held on a Saturday in the spring term. For events such as these we pay the coach fees of pupils from the LAE, and provide them with lunch. Along a similar vein, we host a Universities Day towards the end of the summer term. As part of this there is a Universities Fair in the Great Hall, which about 35 UK universities attend, including most members of the Russell Group. The LAE and local state schools are always invited to this, giving them the opportunity to talk to representatives of UK universities without incurring the cost of travelling to them.*

**Olivia Upchurch,
Brighton College**

¹ https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/media/global/wwwadminoxacuk/localsites/aad/documents/Report_of_the_Adex_Working_Group_on_Access_Targets.pdf

Commentary

Some schools organise joint trips with local schools to Oxford and Cambridge, and to other universities. Students from both schools have the experience together, sharing ideas and thoughts as the visit progresses. This is a particularly helpful intervention, given a UCAS survey showed open days and visits constitute one of the most used sources in helping applicants make informed choices. Disadvantaged students cited cost (43%) as the main reason for not visiting more than one, while advantaged applicants cited a lack of time. Three quarters of applicants said that a travel voucher to an open day would have encouraged them to apply to higher tariff universities.

Anushka Chakravarty
London Academy of
Excellence (Stratford)

Student voice

"I really enjoyed the Caterham careers networking event as I feel it gave me a good insight into the entrepreneurial world through speaking to different chief executives and successful entrepreneurs. I also learned more about the problems they faced and continue to face in their industries. It has definitely encouraged me to try and go into a similar career in the future, especially as they offered us support in doing so if ever needed."

Ashir, Year 13
London Academy of
Excellence (Stratford)



Case study #2:

Focus on making undiscovered subjects more widely available.

Our 'undiscovered subjects' event is held on a Saturday morning in January and is attended by over **250** Year 11 and sixth form students including pupils from seven or eight state secondary schools. The talks introduce students to courses available in higher education which are not normally included within the school curriculum: such courses are often overlooked by students choosing what to study at degree level because they are not fully aware of what the subject involves. Students are encouraged to consider courses such as art history, biomedical sciences, pharmacy, human sciences, business management and computer science as an alternative to the most popular vocational courses.

Approximately 18 subjects are offered and the sessions are led by professors and lecturers from 15 or so different Russell Group and London universities.

Susan Bartholomew,
Godolphin and Latymer

Case study #3:

Be ambitious by seeking to become a UCAS and careers hub for your local community.

Over **1,000** GCSE and A-level students from across the region enjoy the Bolton School Careers and Higher Education Fair. Over 40 employers and 30+ higher education institutions from Dundee to Falmouth as well as international universities have stands at the popular event. With seminars on improving your employability, applying to dental school, routes to a legal career, student finance, studying abroad, Oxford or Cambridge applications, applying to medical school and apprenticeship opportunities, the evening is a must-attend event for Year 9-13 students and their parents. The event is one of the largest of its kind in the North-West and there are delegates from a wide range of businesses, many offering apprenticeships, representing careers in law, medicine, journalism, the army, accountancy, engineering, construction, architecture, pharmacy, physiotherapy and much more. A wide range of HE providers exhibit, from traditional Russell Group universities to more local institutions. The school invites exhibitors, speakers and local schools – inviting pupils and their parents and teachers. Some schools send large groups.

Sophie Entwistle, Bolton School



Intervention #4

Support with writing personal statements and applications

The process of writing applications for the most coveted universities seems simpler than it is. As any sixth form tutor knows from bitter experience, students often find it difficult to show the best of themselves in a few hundred words of text, producing generic and often poorly constructed efforts, often dependent on some stock examples found on Google. Generally, the more eyes involved in assessing a personal statement, the better – and the more personal statements of similar ilk have been seen by that assessor, the more diagnostic the advice that can be given. In schools with little experience of applying to the most competitive higher education institutions, or where the sixth form pastoral team has less experience in this area, a partnership can really help to provide additional resource.

Supporting minority subjects is important in developing applications. Lots of evidence shows that students from more disadvantaged backgrounds have a tendency to choose 'bottleneck subjects', often vocational, such as medicine, law and economics, where there is a high volume of applicants¹.

Students who are well-informed might then have the confidence to look at land economy, theology, classics or modern languages.

Case study #1:

Provide long-term support with personal statements.

Our partnerships yield enriching academic opportunities that can add to the content of a pupil's personal statement. The most important thing is that we have designed our provision at Key Stage 5 to allow for multiple points of feedback, with the capacity for a pupil to build a relationship with the mentor who is going to guide them. Workshops in Year 12 feed directly into mentoring, feedback and academic enrichment over the summer and in Year 13. The process goes something like this:

- 1. Pupils from our partner schools engage in enriching academic and co-curricular provision throughout Key Stages 4 and 5.*
- 2. Pupils are invited to the Chrysalis Summer Schools, a non-residential summer school over the summer holiday between Years 12 and 13, where they take part in personal statement writing workshops and receive one-to-one advice on an early draft. This is particularly useful for pupils requiring an early submission.*
- 3. Those same pupils return to Highgate early in Year 13 for a mock interview, during which they will also receive feedback on what is likely to be their final draft.*

Joe Connor, Highgate School

¹ https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/media/global/wwwadminoxacuk/localsites/aad/documents/Report_of_the_Adex_Working_Group_on_Access_Targets.pdf



Case study #2:

Support applications in minority subjects such as classics. *Last year, we were approached by a Latin teacher at a nearby Catholic school for help with two pupils who were intending to apply to classics-related courses at Oxford and Cambridge. As she belonged to a department of one and had little experience of Oxford or Cambridge admissions, it was useful for her to have the input of four other classicists with expertise and personal experience of the process. We nurtured their interest by providing opportunities for them to hear lectures from Oxford or Cambridge classicists and helped them every step of the way from writing their personal statements to selecting work to submit. Most usefully, we were able to provide practice interviews in an unfamiliar setting.*

As experienced classicists, we were able to probe into the topics raised in their personal statements and in their submitted essays, which could not be done by non-specialists at their own school. Not everyone can discuss how gender roles are displayed in ancient Greek poetry! One of them was successful and was given a place to study classics and French at Oxford.

Andrew Christie,
Streatham & Clapham High School GDST

Commentary

If what is lacking across many schools is expertise in supporting applications, especially in certain subjects, then one area we should be looking at is in the swathe of colleagues across high-performing schools who retire every year, and who are highly experienced in encouraging and supporting these applications, as well as understanding intuitively how to motivate and encourage teenagers to apply. Often, these retirees are not ready to devote themselves entirely to their pensions or their vegetable patches – they would be happy to help with applications, especially if their time commitment can be recognised financially. To independent schools, the cost would be negligible compared to that of a bursary. In time, and with support, this could be extended into the virtual realm, offering online tutoring and mentoring.

Tom Arbuthnott, Eton College



Intervention #5

Academic enrichment for sixth formers

Lots of schools will organise events and enrichment opportunities for their students. The purpose is clear: a wide range of academic experience will enable students not only to write a more effective personal statement but will also prepare them to excel at interview. These can easily be opened up to students from other schools. Indeed, most schools find that the very act of opening up creates new dialogues and 'collisions', which increase the level of enrichment. In our experience, though, students that don't know each other well do not have as rich conversations as those that have been able to build relationships – repeated enrichment interventions are more effective.

Commonly, these involve lectures, seminars or enrichment / leadership days, often involving external speakers. Some partnerships are really developing these projects and making them coherent, either by using technology to involve more schools and more students, or by bringing different forms of academic enrichment (lectures, seminars and an essay competition) together in one consistent package. This not only makes an iterative and repeated effect on students, but also enables genuine relationships of equals to develop.

Case study #1:

Open up lecture programmes to local schools. *Our weekly Monday lecture series brings our girls together with students from Ark King Solomon Academy to hear dynamic speakers from the world of politics, media, business and sport. Our central location, a few minutes' walk from Baker Street tube, allows us to get important industry figures who are simply taking an hour or two out of their day. Our head of sixth form also exchanges ideas with his counterpart at King Solomon on further speakers they could approach that would be of interest to both sixth forms. Ark King Solomon provides a rigorous and transformational education aimed at preparing their students for success at university and beyond, and their enthusiasm for the guest speakers at our school has proved a motivating force for our own pupils.*

Alex Francisco, Francis Holland School

Case study #2:

Set up a sixth form book club. *The aim of the book club is to foster independent reading and discussion of important literary texts, including novels and short story collections from a range of genres and authors, both historical and more contemporary. This helps students gain confidence in speaking in tutorial-style contexts, in listening to and responding to the ideas of others and in broadening the range of literary texts which students have access to, especially for aspiring English undergraduates. Meetings involve an open discussion of the content, themes and stylistic features of the literary work selected. There is a little teacher input at times, but most of the discussion is generated by students and is often introduced and facilitated by students. The venue rotates between the educational establishments throughout the academic year. Numbers vary from meeting to meeting, but the average number of pupils involved is 20 to 25. For very popular texts, numbers can be as high as 40. The group is open to any sixth form students, irrespective of whether they study an English course in the sixth form. The group is comprised of a mixture of English students and those from other disciplines with an interest in literature.*

Martin Boulton, The Manchester Grammar School



Case study #3:

Combine lectures with seminars and a university-level extended project to develop the whole child. At Magdalen College School, we run our own extended project programme: *Waynflete Studies*. All our lower sixth pupils take part in *Waynflete Studies*, which involves weekly taught and research sessions following an initial lecture series delivered by external experts from the sciences and humanities. Our own pupils are joined each week by sixth formers from our sibling school, MCS Brackley, an academy in Northamptonshire. The MCS Oxford and Brackley students research a wide range of academic questions across 25-30 sessions annually, supported by 25 MCS Oxford teachers who act as research supervisors. As their work progresses, students are paired with an academic from the University of Oxford who provides one or two subject-specific tutorials. We have recently expanded the programme to allow participants to undertake practical science and enterprise projects. This partnership project is one that we are particularly proud of given the year-long nature of the programme and the collaboration that we see between our pupils and those from Brackley.

Scott Crawford, Magdalen College School

Case study #4:

Use online delivery channels to increase the range of academic enrichment. *United Learning's Scholars' Club* is a centrally supported programme delivered to **400** students in 20+ schools that nurtures broad academic interests; develops cultural capital; and promotes higher education options. It is a powerful experience for the students, many of whom are the first generation in their family to go to university. To maximise audience and impact, talks are held in one classroom and live-streamed over Skype to 20 other schools. Students from around the country interact with speakers directly through the chat function. The online lecture series' main aims are to provide students with:

- Academic enrichment: we bring university professors, PhD students and other specialists into the classroom to deliver taster lectures on unfamiliar subjects.
- Role models: experts from different professions give presentations on their career to date. This exposes students to a wide range of careers they may not have previously considered.

Joe Bradley, United Learning

Case study #5:

Think about developing soft skills as well as subject-specific ones. Every student at LAE uses EtonX software as part of their Year 12 Diploma. This presents students with a range of online modules covering topics such as interview skills, entrepreneurship and essay writing. On top of this, Eton and LAE are developing in 2020 the 'Eton/LAE Leadership Institute', which will bring together students from both schools to study and explore texts and stimuli related to leadership development. This built on a very successful pilot project in 2018-19, which was led by the Oxford Character Project. In time, we believe that discourses about leadership provide fertile ground for really powerful cross-student discussions.

Ben Webster, London Academy of Excellence (Stratford)

Student voice

"This year I have really enjoyed learning about character and leadership in our Oxford Character Project sessions in partnership with Eton College. I have been helped to develop my confidence and been challenged to engage in a variety of discussions. It has helped me to hear from individuals who have strengthened their agency when faced with overwhelming structures. I have also learned about the importance of developing a resilient character whether as a student, daughter or friend. OCP sessions have always been insightful and impactful: we have explored leadership through literature and poetry; had philosophical discussions; and we have been taught that wherever we go in life we should aim to be aware of our character and leadership skills."

**Princess, Year 13
London Academy of
Excellence (Stratford)**





Intervention #6

Academic enrichment in Key Stages 3 and 4

A major problem with most interventions designed to support disadvantaged students in entering the top universities is the 'too little, too late' effect. By the time that students reach the sixth form, grades are already lower than they could have been. Interventions need to be longer-term, especially in areas where there are low aspirations and where the norm is that students do not go into university.

University outreach offices tend to be rather poor at working with younger students – not only are they more distant in age from undergraduates, but it also requires the specialist skills of teachers to make a real difference here.

The projects below start working with students in the early years of secondary. Where these interventions become particularly interesting is where they are tightly targeted at particular cohorts, rather than being broadly school-to-school.

Case study #1:

Partner with universities to run challenges to motivate and inspire younger pupils. For two years we have run materials sciences (2018) and earth sciences (2019) challenges for very able Year 9 students (eight teams of six) from local state schools who have an interest in science and technology. Imperial College delivers an inspiring introduction to the academic field with an interactive presentation pitched at the appropriate level, followed by completion of a challenge - designing a strong material (2018) and drilling for oil (2019). Prizes keep minds fully focused on the task.

To encourage collaboration between schools, teams are mixed. This is something we have found to be very successful. Students then participate in a carousel of three 20-minute interactive science talks from Imperial PhD students.

The event is supported by a school governor who works at Imperial; this connectivity allows Imperial to track whether any students apply for related courses whilst showcasing its more niche courses. It is a high energy, dynamic and rewarding day which both challenges and inspires the next generation of scientists.

**Anthony Fitzgerald,
Kingston Grammar School**

Case study #2:

Inspire a love of mathematics through repeated interventions.

Started in 2016, the Oundle, Peterborough and East Northants (OPEN) Learning Partnership hosts three mathematics conferences each year for groups of high-performing pupils from OPEN LP partner schools and others in the locality. Attendance figures are up to **120** pupils and **25** teachers per event and pupils from Years 5-10 are included in separate events. Morning sessions are fun (non-competitive) activities, designed to stretch the most able. Pupils take part in three 50 minute seminars working in groups alongside those from other schools, using the opportunity to rub shoulders with the best from another school to inspire pupils further. The afternoon session is a mathematical treasure hunt with some mathematical prizes on offer. Events are hosted at Oundle School but presenters are drawn from all of our OPEN LP schools, cherry-picking some of the best teachers in the neighbourhood. CPD for teachers takes place at the same time so that teachers also benefit from their day out of school. Again the CPD is presented using local expertise (often from the state sector partners) and therefore all at very low cost. No charge is made to participating schools and most schools become regular visitors.

Mo Ladak,
Thomas Deacon Academy



Case study #3:

Target cohorts of students at particular risk of falling behind, such as looked-after children, or students from disadvantaged areas. *Insecurity, instability and interrupted schooling have such an impact on children in care that they generally have some of the poorest educational outcomes and highest rates of fixed-term exclusion of all cohorts of children. Children Looked After across Harrow are offered two hours of study support and enrichment each week. Quickly expanded to include Harrow Young Carers, and then Ealing CLA, each Thursday evening begins with a study session in which the best sixth form students of Harrow School tutor the CLA and Young Carers in whichever subjects they need support. The most popular are maths and science. They have access to computers and the internet and may bring, for example, exam papers, revision or homework. Three Ealing A-level students have been given one-to-one tuition by Harrow teachers on aspects of the curriculum they were struggling with and each has reported much better and deeper understanding of their topics. The enrichment hour also brings enormous benefits to these young people who have limited opportunities in their lives. The range of activities offered has been fantastic – amongst other things, they have enjoyed yoga and meditation, pottery, judo, music technology (they have a recording of their singing!), rifle shooting, debating and the ancient games of Eton Fives and Racquets. They have examined the surface of the moon from the observatory (and looked inside the Shard!) and have had sessions on careers, debating and a history workshop. Over the months, it has been possible to see many positive changes in the self-confidence and motivation of these young people.*

Attending Harrow School on a weekly basis, witnessing boys studying independently in the library and the seriousness with which the sixth formers and teachers tutor them, has raised their self-esteem and given them a much greater sense of the importance of their learning, witnessed through refreshingly positive discussions about their subjects. For those taking exams, the results were positive too. One young girl, who had not been in school for some years and spoke very little English upon starting, achieved five good GCSEs, among them maths! The programme accommodated around 20 young people in 2018 and is hoping to expand to close to 50 in 2019/20, bringing in students from Brent and Barnet. The aim is not only to focus them on their studies and to raise their self-esteem and confidence, but to offer encouragement and advice for the future. The careers enrichment session was such a success that similar sessions involving university guidance and planning for the future are on the agenda for this year.

Bernadette Alexander, Barnet,
Brent, Ealing and Harrow Virtual Schools



Case study #4:

Encourage older students to mentor younger students. The partnership involves over 25 sixth formers from each of the four schools, Abingdon, John Mason School, Larkmead and Fitzharrys. The students work in small cross school groups of between four to six to plan, resource and deliver a section of the Key Stage 3 English or maths curriculum to groups of 10-15 Year 8 and 9 students across all of the three partner schools. Topics covered included creative writing in English and in maths dividing fractions, quadratic sequences and polygons. The project is to be extended to include science teaching following a similar model involving Abingdon School, Fitzharrys School, Larkmead School and John Mason School.

The aims of the project are to promote leadership, collaboration and teamwork for the sixth formers in each of the schools. It provides opportunities to secure subject knowledge and experience of teaching younger students. It is also designed to support Key Stage 3 students with the fundamentals of the maths and English curriculum.

55 students and staff involved in the project were surveyed. **82%** found it very worthwhile or worthwhile and **80%** would strongly recommend or recommend it to a peer. Of the sixth formers surveyed, **100%** found it very worthwhile or worthwhile and would strongly recommend or recommend it to a peer.

As the head of sixth form at John Mason School puts it, "The challenge of being the 'expert' whilst leading younger students has led to visible and rapid growth of maturity and empathy in the Year 12 students who participated as learning mentors. This maturity was shown not just in thorough and rigorous preparation and planning, but in the reflective yet enthusiastic way they interacted with their pupils."

Rob Southwell-Sander,
Abingdon School

Case study #5:

Kent Academies Network Universities Access Programme (KANUAP).

In 2018/19, Sevenoaks School took over the Kent Academies Network Universities Access Programme (KANUAP), which has been running for five years. This was made possible by the generous support of a number of sponsors and a key donor to Sevenoaks School Foundation, who share our commitment to improve access to university, and social mobility for students from non-selective schools across Kent.

Since its inception in 2013, KANUAP has aimed to encourage highly able students from local non-selective schools to apply to top universities. The programme seeks to develop students' aspirations, confidence, and academic skills, whilst providing the experiences and support required to secure top university places. The selection criteria give preference to students eligible for free school meals, with 'Ever 6' qualifications and/or who are the first generation in their families to progress to university.

The Kent Academy Network (KAN) comprises five academies and their educational sponsors who nominate Year 9 students, with two or three selected for the programme. Students stay on the programme throughout their remaining time at school. Currently there are over 50 participants. Students attend two residential courses and two 'Meet-Up' days annually. These are hosted at Tonbridge School, Sevenoaks School, Fitzwilliam College and Queens' College, Cambridge. Each participant is also assigned an undergraduate mentor who is currently attending a top UK university.

The mentors play a central role in the delivery of the residential programmes, whilst acting as a source of academic support and guidance throughout the year via a secure online learning platform. As well as enjoying the enduring friendships and personal growth fostered by the residential format, students experience a wealth of challenging academic workshops, enriching cultural experiences and fun sporting activities throughout the four-year programme. Led by their mentors and teachers from Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Benenden schools, the academic element of the programme seeks to introduce students to a range of new and thought-provoking topics beyond the national curriculum. At the same time, every residential student visits a new university campus where they receive advice from the admissions team, a tour, and attend subject masterclasses.

Year 11 and 12 students spend their summer staying in a Cambridge University college, enabling them to immerse themselves in all that the world-renowned university has to offer. Alongside the academic provision, inspiring cultural excursions and activities are threaded through each residential timetable; from theatre and museum visits to inspirational evening talks by leaders from a range of professions and backgrounds. As they progress through the programme, each student learns about aspirational university and career options suited to their needs and goals, supplemented with advice on how to prepare for and submit a competitive application.

Henry Langdon, Sevenoaks School

Student voices

"I have loved every minute of the science mentoring and it has made me consider teaching as a possible career path."

**Lower sixth student,
Abingdon School**

"I found the actual teaching and interacting with younger students the most enjoyable thing in the process and I learnt many valuable skills from the process, most notably the partnership scheme has helped me develop clear communication and organisation skills."

**Lower sixth student,
Abingdon School**

"Over the last few years, I have attended many mathematics events led by Oundle School in order to progress and continuously improve my understanding of the subject. These events have included maths conference days, competitive events against other schools and twilight maths sessions. I have learnt new areas of the subject beyond what we would usually be taught in school. We are currently studying the area of group theory with Dr Meisner which is new and very interesting. Thank you for this fantastic opportunity as I intend to continue and do A-level maths in the future."

**Sam,
Year 10,
Prince William School**





Intervention #7

Designed support summer schools

As complexity increases, it becomes clear that there are certain opportunities during the school year that are ripe for designing interventions. One such opportunity comes in the first few weeks of July, where state schools continue to teach at a time when independent school students have broken up for the summer. Many schools take advantage of this window to organise activities. There are also often gaps both in October and at Easter, as well as on Saturdays.

Case study #1:

Lumina: an ‘off the shelf’ summer school that could easily be replicated. Lumina is a free, three-day summer school that Harrow School and Twyford Church of England Academies Trust offer to 200 potential Oxford or Cambridge applicants from the state sector at the end of Year 12. The programme includes talks from Oxford or Cambridge admissions tutors, masterclass tutorials and interview practice.

The aim of the project is to use the expertise of Harrow teachers and the resources at Harrow’s disposal to help make applications to highly selective universities more accessible to state school applicants and to demystify these universities and the application process surrounding them.

The three-day project takes place immediately after the end of Harrow’s summer term. About 20 Harrow teachers, three members of staff from Harrow School Enterprises, 10 external speakers and 15 Oxford or Cambridge students are involved in the course. Many of the school’s buildings and facilities are used, including two boarding houses, and lunch is provided for the participants.

Matt Gompels, Harrow School



Case study #2:

Becoming an ‘outreach hub’ for a county with low aspirations. Historically, Norfolk has a low take up of higher education. Norwich is one of the ‘opportunity areas’ – social mobility cold spots – identified by the Government in 2017. Norwich School wanted to leverage its resources and connections in the most powerful way to help as many pupils as we could from the widest range of local schools. The universities with whom we have good links were willing to get involved as this programme helped them reach a new set of potential students from schools they had not visited before.

Norwich School’s resources – both teachers and facilities – were also used to give the best possible experience for the students. This included small seminar group and lectures as well as offering one-to-one tailored advice and vital interview practice both during the week and into the autumn. Using former summer school attendees as helpers and teaching staff, we were able to provide powerful role models.

In feedback, pupils report feeling better-prepared for the challenges ahead. We stay in touch through Year 13, ask them how things are going and use their testimonials for fund-raising by our development office – which, in turn, helps to support the £12,000 cost of the next summer school. We charge £35 ‘registration fee’ for each student as we have found that this nominal fee increases student commitment. This scheme has now become part of the local calendar and we work closely with Norfolk County Council to promote the summer school, which has become a really important asset for the county. It has helped **1,600** pupils from Norfolk since its inception 18 years ago.

Will Croston, Norwich School



Case study #3:

Enhance subject knowledge in shortage subjects. At Charterhouse, we have supported development of subject knowledge in non-specialist physics and chemistry teachers over the last 15 years. An A-level course in physics has also been developed to help the physics specialist who wants to try new approaches and equipment. The courses are well established and respected and delivered at no cost to attendees. Currently we offer a two week residential in the summer and an extended/enhanced follow up on Saturday mornings in autumn and winter. Through social media, we have developed networks of participants. This allows further distance learning support during term to take place, as well as the loan of equipment. The courses have evolved over the years to blend subject knowledge development with an exploration of pedagogy. Modern physics education research now heavily influences course structure and content. The plan is to develop chemistry further and then to establish a mathematics course. Plans are well underway to replicate this model, so different centres across the UK can offer courses at complementary times of the year.

Steve Hearn,
Charterhouse School

Future case study #4:

The Middle School Summer School at Eton (2021 onwards). Eton College runs one of the biggest financial aid programmes in the country, with over **90** students educated for free. Many of these join in the sixth form, taking advantage of a programme known as the Orwell Award. Lots of 11-16 schools across the country engage with the Orwell Award, encouraging young men of great talent but limited opportunity to apply for Eton. When one of these applicants is successful, it has a powerful ripple effect across the home community: one story is told about school members lining up on the street in Chester to wave off a successful student. Eton is a charity with a national reach. In order to maintain these school partnerships in Stoke and Sunderland, in Hartlepool and in Huddersfield, we aim to develop in 2021 a residential five-day summer school for Year 10 students. We aim to work with 25 schools, each of which will be able to put forward four students. The curriculum will include general academic enrichment as well as sport, drama and music. Impact will be measured depending on how many of these students end up applying successfully for the university they want to go to.

Tom Arbuthnott,
Eton College

Commentary

Key questions for those designing summer schools include:

- How do I target the summer school on genuinely disadvantaged students, rather than on students whose sharp-elbowed parents are keen for their Oxford or Cambridge-aspirant kids to take up places?
- How do I get my teachers, who are tired at the end of the summer term, to stay on for a couple of extra weeks to provide enrichment?
- How do I present my summer course as sufficiently important to the hosting school's charitable purpose to enable it to 'trump' other claims on the buildings, whether commercial or organisational?
- How do I measure impact to demonstrate that my initiative has real importance?
- How do I raise the funds to be able to create a financial model that enables the right children to participate?

Student voice

"I am very excited to tell you that I received an unconditional from the University of Brighton! The university was my top choice and I'm so excited to be starting the course in September. I've had a lot to cope with these past few months and I am so grateful for all your help with the application."

Honor, Attleborough High,
(participant on the Norfolk summer school)



Intervention #8

Academic enrichment at Key Stage 2

The same logic about early intervention applies also in the primary years. Some partner organisations, such as IntoUniversity, begin their interventions in cold spots at the age of seven. There is fertile ground here for independent schools in the primary phase to work in partnership with state peers: it seems that there is a growing appetite among the army of prep school teachers to involve themselves in meaningful partnership work. Equally, there are a number of secondary schools, most notably King Edward's School, Birmingham, which operate 'hub and spoke'* partnerships across a whole metropolitan area to raise aspiration and achievement.

*A 'hub and spoke' partnership is where schools work together in a small group, of generally no more than four or five schools, with one school acting as the lead. The Department for Education has detailed various partnership forms in a 'partnership models guide': www.gov.uk/government/publications/setting-up-school-partnerships/partnership-models-guide

Case study #1:

A 'hub and spoke' network which built, maintained and took advantage of relationships at King Edward's Birmingham. The centrepiece of the network was relationships. We formed these through organising and running teacher training events for local primary schools, specialising in what was then called Level 6 reading, Level 6 writing and Level 6 maths. By 2015-16, we were training almost 600 teachers a year: each one a relationship in formation.

What was extraordinary was the way in which this network was valued by local schools. From a standing start, where we had a relationship with only five to 10 primary schools, we found ourselves at the centre of a network that included 197 different schools, ranging from Sutton Coldfield to Bromsgrove – even as far as Milton Keynes. We offered academic enrichment of various kinds including maths, science, history and a non-residential summer school. We also had the benefit of the extraordinary Jonathan Davies, the only historical re-enactor working professionally in secondary education (to the best of our knowledge), who used to inspire children to love history by giving them swords and cardboard boxes and suggesting that they link the two.

Debbie McMillan,
King Edward's School, Birmingham



Case study #2:

A summer school for primary-aged pupils. Every summer, University College School (UCS) and Highgate School organise and provide facilities for two summer schools for children from selected schools in Camden and Haringey. In the academic school, Year 4 “talented” pupils (as selected by their primary schools) take lessons in subjects such as maths, English, music, design technology, languages and science. In the sport school, Year 5 pupils (again selected by their primary school) get the opportunity to learn new skills and sports using the sports facilities at the two schools. The two schools are run concurrently over two days at the start of July and the feedback from pupils and their primary schools is always universally positive. The schools are staffed by teachers from UCS and Highgate and senior school pupils assist in lessons and at lunchtime.

The events close with a spectacular science lecture which all pupils attend. These events have run since 2009 and during this time UCS and Highgate have taken it in turns to host the summer schools. In July 2019, **195** children attended the summer schools held at UCS.

Edd Roberts, University College School Hampstead

Case study #3:

Primary to prep collaboration in Thomas’s Foundation Pathway. Thomas’s Foundation Pathway is a one-year programme, running from January to December, which is designed to help ambitious, able and disadvantaged children. Pathway draws on relationships forged with local primary schools through Thomas’s Foundation’s community partnerships programmes. Monthly Saturday sessions are offered to primary school pupils in Year 5 as they move into Year 6, each session taught at a Thomas’s prep school by Thomas’s teachers. Pathway provides a multi-disciplinary approach to learning, which incorporates investigative maths and science, literature and elements of art, drama, music, philosophy and sport. Sessions for the pupils are supplemented by information mornings for their parents, with advice on senior school entry at 11+, including bursaries and scholarships where applicable, to a range of schools in both the independent and state sectors. The inaugural programme was launched successfully at Thomas’s Battersea in 2019 and there are now plans to extend the programme to each of the Thomas’s prep schools.

Ben Thomas, Thomas’s





Case study #4:

Build discrete activities into a wider educational partnership to have the greatest impact. *Keen to share their resources with their surrounding community, Lambrook School has been able to host numerous local primary schools as part of its outreach and partnership work. Primarily offering a focus on subjects not necessarily given a large amount of teaching time at Key Stage 2, the programme has included workshops in STEAM, geography, sport, languages, science and maths.*

Ten local primary schools recently attended a 'Geography Day' where visitors joined Lambrook pupils for educational activities including quizzes, games and virtual expeditions (using virtual reality headsets); sparking intrigue and a passion for the subject. An 'Ancient and Modern European Languages Day' gave visiting schools the opportunity to explore Latin, French and Italian alongside Lambrook pupils in three very interactive sessions.

*The programme has built up over the past year as a part of a wider educational partnership provision, with some schools sending pupils to all of the workshops available. Within 12 months, Lambrook has worked with more than **40** state school partners, providing meaningful partnership work for around **200** children.*

Daniel Cox, Lambrook School



Case study #5:

Put students front and centre of a reading mentorship programme. *Improving a student's basic literacy at an early age is the number one most effective way to improve his or her life chances. The research evidence is extremely clear: if you improve a student's literacy, you also improve their ability to get good results at school, get a fulfilling job, have a family life, not go to prison, participate in the democratic process... the list goes on.*

With this in mind, Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School runs a reading mentor scheme with three Borehamwood primary schools with high levels of disadvantage (defined as 40%+ of students in receipt of free school meals). Every year, we train around 20 sixth form students from both the Boys' School and the Girls' School as reading mentors, exploring with them how to stimulate valuable conversations around reading, as well as how to build a rapport and work effectively with young people. Other students are trained specifically in activities to improve students' spelling, designed to complement our partner schools' teaching of national curriculum requirements.

Mentors are then paired with specifically targeted students in the partner school, who they work with for an hour a week for a full term. New partners are then selected by the partner school, and the process begins again. Students from both Habs and the partner schools have been hugely positive in their feedback about the programme, with both the young people and their sixth form mentors feeling they gain a huge amount from the programme. More formal evaluation suggests that the potential benefits for students in the partner schools are huge, with students gaining an average of 1.6 years in their reading ages over the year with their reading mentors.

**Joshua Plotkin,
Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School**



Case study #6:

Sponsor an IntoUniversity centre. At IntoUniversity's Hammersmith Centre, sixth form volunteer 'tutors' (from St Paul's Girls' School, Latymer Upper School and Wimbledon High School for Girls) have supported primary school students at our after-school academic support sessions. Each week the centre sees around **60** primary-age pupils being offered support with their homework along with taught sessions on topics outside the normal school curriculum (such as anthropology, photography and Japanese studies).

These encourage young people to think ahead to potential university subject choices. It is wonderful to see young people from independent schools sharing their subject expertise and exam skills with young people from very different backgrounds. The process is mutual because the independent school tutors also gain as much and have the opportunity to develop valuable skills and experience.

The volunteer tutors help to raise attainment, encourage young people to become active, independent learners and to develop effective study skills. Through the centre, students have access to essential resources that they may not have at home such as books, university prospectuses and computers. There are plans to develop this partnership work in the years ahead, in particular in supporting students with 'career readiness skills', drawing upon the professional experience and contacts of independent school parents.

Hugh Rayment-Pickard, IntoUniversity

"Eton College started sponsoring the IntoUniversity Centre in Clacton-on-Sea in September 2019. We were delighted to visit and experience an extraordinary session where 10-year-olds were being encouraged to research future degree courses in university prospectuses – and were debating furiously the relative merits of microbiology and architecture. We hope that the first year of the Eton/Clacton partnership will see visits from Clacton students to Eton, a joint flash drama production over one weekend, and potentially a week-long volunteering residential where Eton boys will work alongside students from Clacton Coastal and Clacton County. We'd love a Clacton student to apply for (and win!) one of our 16+ Orwell Awards in due course."

Haroon Shirwani, Eton College

"I have loved everything over the last two days. Could we do this again?"

Ife, Year 5, St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School

"The pupils really have had a fantastic time – they've enjoyed all the activities, lessons and the sports. At lunchtime, they have all spoken about how enthusiastic the teachers have been and have loved meeting children from other schools. They are all smiling which means they've clearly had a wonderful time."

Seamus MacGibbon, teacher, Richard Cobden Primary School

"When I first started, I definitely wasn't very good at focusing and I struggled to pay attention. Since then, I've grown as a person. I know I can always come for help personally or academically. I believe that IntoUniversity has helped me shape my future, fully picture my goals and filled me with confidence."

IntoUniversity student



Intervention #9

Helping students to gain offers

Many admissions tutors will tell you that the biggest challenge for students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds lies, not necessarily in achieving the offer, but in going on to get the grades needed.

Every year a proportion of candidates holding offers do not achieve the required grades. In 2016 this amounted to nearly 9% of all offer-holders. This is an issue for offer-holders from all backgrounds, but more common amongst the most disadvantaged candidates from Acorn category 4 and 5 areas, and those from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2.

This is an area that has been given little thought by schools, but one where, arguably, targeted support could be of great use.

Case study #1:

Provide support to students in achieving Oxford or Cambridge grades.

When a local academy received Oxford or Cambridge offers for two students that we had been working with there was much jubilation, but the school was quick to tell us that one of them may not make their offer without intervention. This was a new departure for us but, as the lines of communication, and trust, had already been established between our staff and the students, it was easy to arrange. The arrangements were informal, with the students encouraged to get in touch with a member of staff with whom they had already worked. The student in most need received about four hours of support (the pre-offer help amounted to about five hours) and they achieved their offer. The principle is to ensure that the offer is seen as the beginning of a new phase, where more academic and exam-focused support could be offered, rather than an end point. To do this contact with students post-offer needs to be quick and clear to motivate and focus on the next challenge. The outcomes are clear to measure here, and we are looking to formalise and develop this as part of a more cohesive programme.

Leigh O'Hara, St Paul's Girls' School

Our relationship with St Paul's Girls' School (SPGS) has moved from strength to strength in the last two years and we get a real sense that the teachers who help our higher achieving students are really engaged in facilitating their success. We had a particular issue last year with geography as our department was severely depleted. This meant that students were less able to get the support they needed in order to keep pushing for those top grades. SPGS took it all in their stride and offered occasional tailored support to our Oxford applicant, very much on a 'you ask, we respond' basis. This level of personalisation was absolutely what she required; she reported, "after getting an Oxford offer, the SPGS post-offer support was helpful in terms of how to approach my exams. I received help on how to structure my arguments in my essays and how to tackle the third synoptic paper which was extremely helpful as it was a topic I hadn't covered in class." She got support with both email and face to face meetings and went on to achieve her A.*

Sophie Harrowes, Hammersmith Academy

Case study #2:

Focus on the A/A* borderline. *As a school in the greenbelt, with partner schools sparsely located, preparing A/A* borderline students proves tricky. Students reaching for those top grades often require skills and knowledge which necessitates a sustained and bespoke pedagogy. Yet the frictions created by the distances between schools, exacerbated by the paucity of transport links, make it difficult to provide the essential teacher-led, subject-informed teaching with the required intensity.*

At Immanuel College we have turned to existing, readily available, easy to use technology to negate these frictions, launching a pilot project for A-level history. Using YouTube we have coordinated with local schools to provide easily accessible tailored resources to consolidate 'A' grade understanding and push the analytical reasoning required for A in the subject. This is unavailable in most textbooks and easily missed or forgotten in lessons. Designed to complement lessons in our respective schools, these 'video lessons' comprise of slides narrated by historians at Immanuel. The aim is to promote analysis skills, which are core to success in the subject.*

The intention is to provide students who miss lessons, are writing essays or revising with the type of information unavailable elsewhere required for the A/A, clearly explained by a teacher tailored to an A-level context. Despite being a humble operation formed from the software 'Snagit', a microphone from Amazon, and PowerPoint, these videos have amassed over **98,000** views, with the channel having **1,100** subscribers. Transcending the partnership schools these resources are now national and international, transforming the menu of resources available to students, all at minimal cost.*

Liam Suter, Immanuel College

Student voice

"As a school we benefit from partner schools financially but, more importantly, socially. It is really nice to be able to have conversations with people who come from different backgrounds compared to us as it brings a new and different angle to

conversations and exposes us to different opinions. As well as that, it really helps in preventing the alienation between us, which happens easily as we both come from vastly different areas and backgrounds."

Archisha, Year 13, London Academy of Excellence (Stratford)



Future case study:

Support with Post Qualification Applications (PQA)?

PQA is, as many commentators have pointed out, an old idea which keeps resurfacing. Since only about 16% of the predictions for school leavers are wholly accurate (i.e. get all the grades 'right') it's often thought PQA would be fairer. But would it? The current system (over?) encourages aspiration, and surely if students applied to university after their U6 summer results, the major beneficiaries would be the well-resourced independent sector (whose teachers are more likely to open up well-manned applications workshops in the summer).

My view is that this could be a golden opportunity for partnership. Schools like mine already help with preparation for higher education: mock interviews, student forums where university representatives can come and present and so forth. Could independent schools provide local hubs where, after A-level results day, advice could be given on applications and even, ideally, some relationships built between students aspiring to the same courses? This could – in the summer vacation – also enable student ambassadors from universities to be on hand with advice on finance and student welfare, and with the ex-pupils now precisely that (ex), there would be an ideal opportunity to diminish any remaining sector barriers.

A note of caution: applications scheduling is one lever the Government (through the Office for Students) could pull to even out access. Introducing student number controls back into higher education would be another. Pulling both (and sharpening competition for places) would make partnerships such as I've described more difficult.

Chris Ramsey, Whitgift School



Intervention #10

Joined up approaches

While this publication has aimed to demonstrate individual projects that partnerships can adopt, there are some partnerships that have chosen to make interventions across all of these areas and age points. These are the sustainable and developed partnerships referred to in the introduction: where interventions are targeted, impactful and coherent. Developing partnerships might choose to use one of these blueprints to allow a model for development.

Case study #1:

United Access. The United Access Programme currently involves 18 students from six United Learning academies. They are carefully selected on the basis that they are showing promising prior attainment up to Year 9 and have some of the statistical characteristics of the missing 2,000: first generation, pupil premium etc.

The partnership is a unique collaboration linking United Learning, a number of independent schools including Caterham School and Woldingham, and universities and

colleges such as Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge in support. The programme is from a template devised and supported by the Accelerate and Access Foundation, whereby the pupils attend a series of week-long residentials at the participating independent schools or Fitzwilliam College twice a year with additional meet up days from the end of Year 9 to Year 13. The residentials aim to promote engagement with learning and broaden horizons alongside practical advice and support on academic progress and

university applications – they serve both an academic and aspirational end. The participating pupils are supported by a team of five undergraduate mentors who are an invaluable resource throughout. The programme is underpinned by attitudinal and statistical evaluation, tracking progress against control groups. The depth of relationships and the progress shown have made the whole experience thoroughly rewarding, with many teachers donating their time to contribute.

Tony Fahey, Caterham School





Case study #2:

The Aspirations Project. *The Aspirations Project complements the education of selected pupils at schools in the Wimbledon Partnership by encouraging them to think positively about themselves and their academic careers and by giving them extra-curricular experiences of lasting value designed to broaden their intellectual horizons. The project has been designed by King's College School with the support of Coombe Boys' and Girls' Schools, Ricards Lodge, Ursuline, Grey Court and Raynes Park High Schools and St Mark's Academy.*

Every year, each school selects a group of about 10 students who they think would benefit, particularly targeting those pupils who would be first-generation university scholars or are in receipt of pupil premium. In Years 9 and 10, students attend sessions which include workshops in science and arts subjects, a debate, a visit to the National Theatre and a performance of a Shakespeare play at the Globe Theatre. In Year 11, pupils visit Royal Holloway, University of London, where they are invited to sign up for the university's Special Access Scheme. In the spring term they attend weekly GCSE revision classes at King's. Although it is



tremendously difficult to know what effect each intervention has on a pupil's final grade, for the pupils and subjects in question one school saw the percentage of 7-9 grades rise from 35% to 59%.

In the sixth form there is the opportunity to gain work experience by acting as student leaders in an arts and sports scheme run on the King's site for primary schools. They are also invited to attend academic society meetings and extension classes at King's. The final session of the project is a Preparing for University Day designed to give them information and help with applying to university.

**Peter Hatch,
King's College School**



Case study #3:

Becoming an outreach hub for an Oxford or Cambridge college.

Colfe's School has been working with St Catherine's College, Oxford to help establish its major outreach initiative, Catalyst, working with seven state schools in Lewisham. This sustained contact partnership provides pupils with tailored support at multiple points in their school career. By working with a network of schools, it allows for more effective use of resources and time: using a 'hub model', where schools take turns to host events, St Catherine's has a greater impact in terms of the total number of participants, and the strain of organising events is shared between all partner schools.

In addition to an annual Teachers' Conference at St Catherine's, there are four contact points for each pupil:

- *Year 8 workshop, introducing the University of Oxford and studying at university in general; including a session for parents.*
- *Year 10 trip to Oxford for academic activities.*



Case study #4:

STEM Potential - link to a university providing an academic pathway.

Helping to bridge the divide between secondary and tertiary level study, by engaging pupils with university partners at an early stage, can be an important step in allowing pupils to get a 'feel' for the university environment, to understand what it takes to be part of it and to believe that it is a pathway that is realistic and genuinely open to them. Acting as a hub for Imperial College London, the Oundle, Peterborough and East Northants (OPEN) Learning Partnership connects the university with children in the region through visits from the university's outreach team and through Imperial College's involvement in the annual Science Summer School and ongoing STEM Potential programme.

Created and coordinated by Imperial College London since 2014, STEM Potential aims to support pupils with capability in STEM subjects through to studying science courses at leading universities. The success of the programme in London has led to a new regional centre being developed and hosted by Oundle School as part of the OPEN Learning Partnership since 2018. Pupils join STEM Potential in Year 10 and attend a series of STEM workshops and masterclasses at Oundle School's SciTec, usually on Saturdays, around once per half term. Session content is

grounded in what the pupils will have met in school but aims to stretch and broaden their knowledge. It also reinforces the core elements at GCSE/A-level and is led by teachers from Oundle, other OPEN LP partner schools and Imperial College London. Pupils will continue to attend throughout Years 10-13 and are also offered support with careers advice and UCAS applications.

Candidates attend a one week summer school in Years 10 and 12 which has included sessions on engineering in refugee camps (courtesy of the Norwegian Refugee Council staff), astronomy, computer-aided design, bridge building with the Institute of Civil Engineers, an industrial visit with Northrop Grumman looking at air traffic control systems as well as university experience through a visit to Imperial College, London and the Science Museum. STEM Potential gives preference to applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who do not have a family history of university level study. Whilst there is a considerable level of investment by the host school and Imperial College, it is hoped that the programme can impact a large cohort of young people at similar cost to one bursary place making it a cost-effective model.

- Year 10 workshop, discussing A-level (or equivalent) choices and providing advice on researching universities and courses.
- Year 12 workshop, focusing on university applications, including personal statement writing and interview workshops.

St Catherine's plans to roll out this model to other regions of the UK and create other hubs in addition to Catalyst: Lewisham.

**Claire Lehur,
Colfe's**

**Gordon Montgomery,
Oundle School**

Student voice

"During my time at the Oundle School STEM Potential programme I have gained so much knowledge, not only in science and maths but also in how to communicate and interact with people who I have never met before. It has given me an insight into what science will be like in the future, including A-levels and has encouraged me to consider the sciences as a possible A-level and university choice. It has definitely helped me with my school work and I have found that the topics we cover at Oundle are my stronger topics in my exams at school. Overall my experience at Oundle has improved my school work and the way I tackle my exams and I am very appreciative that I was given the opportunity to be a part of the programme."

Hannah, Year 11, Kettering Buccleuch Academy



Intervention #11

Setting up free schools

The most complex – and most effective – interventions made as partnership activities have been the establishment of state free schools which organise themselves around principles of partnership. Relationships are strong, and activities are designed according to a local need and a theory of change. A strong element of all these partnerships is teacher secondment.

Case study #1:

Harris Westminster. Harris Westminster Sixth Form (HWSF) was created as a partnership between the Harris Federation (a MAT running 48 schools across London) and Westminster School (an independent school whose current incarnation dates to the reign of Elizabeth I). Since 2014, when it was founded, **69** HWSF students have secured Oxford or Cambridge places and almost **500** have gone onto Russell Group universities.

These statistics reveal a partnership that is working well, and the school is very aware of its dual nature, holding Harris and Westminster in partnership and in tension. Parts of the provision are very much from the playbook of a state comprehensive: with classes over 20 there are clear expectations for behaviour on entry to a lesson, for example, and a significant amount of time and energy is invested in developing the ability of students to approach ideas critically rather than with a view to absorption and regurgitation.

This is part of the key process for the school: taking students whose 11-16 education has not been universally excellent and developing the habits of mind and study skills that are taken for granted in Westminster pupils. By the end of 22 months at Harris Westminster, students should be able to hold their own against their peers from any school. The idiom of Harris Westminster is summed up in the phrase “Learning is Amazing”, a truth that many of them want to believe but have never heard expressed before coming to the school.

Lessons emphasise that their subjects are amazing – the phrase “but do we need to know this” is banned; the curriculum embodies the belief that study is amazing – as well as four A-levels, students study cultural perspectives (short courses that unveil some aspect of cultural capital); enrichment and extension opportunities (many of them compulsory) demonstrate that breadth and depth of knowledge are amazing; and the constant



refrain of the library, assemblies, and all teaching staff is that reading is amazing.

To hold to this view amid the storms of Ofsted, league tables, and funding crises is hard – what other state schools do, what they expect of their students, acts as a crosswind, pulling the day-to-day experience away from the vision. In this metaphor, the relationship with Westminster School (expressed in shared lessons, shared resources, shared activities, and the sharing of teaching and learning experience) acts as an anchor, allowing HWSF to sail its narrow path – neither too much of one, nor of the other.

James Handscombe,
Harris Westminster



Case study #2:

London Academy of Excellence (LAE), Stratford. LAE is a 16-19 state sixth form located in Stratford in the London Borough of Newham. It is the product of a unique collaboration between six of the UK's leading independent schools (Brighton College, Caterham, Eton, Forest, Highgate and UCS), with financial support from HSBC.

With the support of the partner schools, we have a robust structure of governance – the headteachers from each partner school sit on the governing body; there is some financial support to sustain our broad educational offer; but most importantly there is access to wide-ranging resources and partnerships, including the sharing of teaching resources, teacher secondment, careers guidance, Oxford and Cambridge preparation support, lectures, residential trips and access to sports facilities.

Through this partnership, we have been able to demonstrate that relative social and economic disadvantage need not provide a barrier to aspiration, achievement and success and we are proud to have achieved some of the best A-level results of any state sixth form or school in the UK.

**Anushka Chakravarty,
London Academy of Excellence
(Stratford)**

Case study #3:

London Academy of Excellence Tottenham. LAE Tottenham is a 16-19 free school which opened in September 2017 in state-of-the-art premises next to White Hart Lane stadium, offering 15 of the most academically rigorous A-level subjects.

The Northumberland Park ward of Tottenham, where the school is situated, is amongst the 2% most deprived wards in the country. Local authority data shows that only 1% of students from the east of Haringey achieve a place at a Russell Group university, compared with 18% in the more affluent west of the borough.

60% of our students come from the lowest two social groups, being described as living in "struggling estates" or "difficult circumstances" using the Acorn tool for socio-economic analysis. 51% have been eligible for free school meals during secondary school, compared with the national average of 28% for all schools and just 4.5% for selective schools.

The principal educational sponsor, Highgate School, provides significant educational support, including seconding the equivalent of 6.4 (FTE) teaching staff, the majority of whom work at LAE Tottenham full time. The business sponsor, Tottenham Hotspur Football Club, provides funding and employment links. LAE Tottenham also benefits from eight other independent school partners – Alleyn's, Chigwell, Haberdashers' Aske's Boys', Harrow,



John Lyon, Mill Hill, North London Collegiate and St Dunstan's – all of whom provide expertise in supporting academically motivated students in sixth form. In addition, Mill Hill and St Dunstan's provide a full-time seconded staff member or financial support in lieu of this.

Students receive a full co-curricular offer, including clubs and societies, sport, community projects and careers. Partner independent schools feed into the UCAS and US universities programmes in several ways, ranging from invitations to attend UCAS and other specialist university fairs, training for staff on reference writing, on-site delivery of admission test preparation support and mock interviews.

The first cohort of students achieved outstanding academic outcomes, their results placing the school in the top 5% of state sixth forms nationally for attainment and progress. **70%** of grades were A*-B and **31%** A*-A. **55%** of students went on to a Russell Group university, compared with just 1% in Tottenham in 2016-17. Destinations included Oxford, Imperial, Warwick, Bristol, UCL, KCL, Nottingham and Manchester and a further 10 students hold offers for Oxford or Cambridge in 2020-21.

**Jan Balon, London Academy
of Excellence (Tottenham)**

Student voice

"In being part of Brighton House, and having our partnership with Brighton College, I have gained an understanding of the level of education and support for universities and careers that private school students are given. This has then given me an awareness of who my competition is for university offers and has motivated me to take full advantage of the education and opportunities given at LAE. I am certain that my peers in other houses have had the same experience with Eton, Caterham, UCS, Forest and Highgate."

Kailan, Year 13, London Academy of Excellence (Stratford)



Policy proposals

Having looked at this range of different approaches to supporting the 'missing 2,000', we conclude with the following thoughts:

- 1. Independent schools have to be part of the solution, not part of the problem.** A disproportionate amount of the expertise in supporting students in accessing the most competitive universities lies within our very best schools and is being freely offered. We must graduate from the simplistic rhetoric of 'state good, independent bad,' and see the educational commonwealth as all the stronger for having different types of school within it. **Indeed, these authors feel strongly that, while university access needs to be more mindful of student type, it needs to be blind to school type.** There are advantaged students in the state sector and increasing numbers of disadvantaged students in the independent sector, so these widely-quoted numbers stand as a proxy of nothing.
- 2. Independent schools need to work more collaboratively and in a more coherent way.** There's a huge contribution that can be made: but only if schools put aside their rivalries and seek to work together. In your average day school, the marginal cost of providing 25% of a teacher's time, as opposed to

providing a full bursary, is similar. However, that teacher time, deployed effectively and in concert with the outreach objectives of our selective universities, can be disproportionately large. But schools must be ambitious and must see effective partnership work as something worth spending money on.

- 3. We must set up structures for scalability and replicability.** This publication shows that the very best projects can be made bigger and/or repeated in different towns, cities and communities across the country. But the structures to do this are currently lacking. We urgently need to find funding to build a 'College of Partnership Professionals in Education', that is cross-sector in origin, which is independent and which is dedicated to taking models of partnership that work – seeding new instances and ideas in different areas. It is crucial that this group is not driven by independent schools but by school leaders in both sectors.

- 4. We must think about how to be systematic in addressing disadvantage.** We should not just think locally, but also nationally – how can our expertise reach into communities across the country? The answer has to be through long-distance mentoring and support for students, especially those students in 'cold spots' or in areas where, historically, very few students have made it into prestigious universities. We need structures to generate content, provide mentoring and academic enrichment for students which are potentially nationwide: then, the 'ask' to individual schools will be achievable and limited (i.e. provide 25% of a physics teacher) rather than extended and unlimited.
- 5. Partnerships which involve universities are particularly strong.** There is an understandable hesitation in some universities to be seen to be devoting scarce outreach resources to schools that are perceived as wealthy in themselves. The best models will see contributions, financial or in kind, coming from both schools and universities to the same end.





Schools Together

Widening access to our greatest universities has become an increasingly important national conversation. It is a goal that Britain's top schools – independent and state – commit to wholeheartedly: indeed it is core to the DNA of these schools to offer life-changing opportunities to boys and girls from all backgrounds. This publication showcases some of the best partnership projects across the UK that are enabling more disadvantaged students in succeeding in their applications to the most selective universities in the country. If these projects can be replicated by other schools and in other contexts, significant progress will have been made in bringing 'the missing 2,000' into Oxford, Cambridge and other Russell Group universities.

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