Extending Leading Practice

Participants Handbook 22/23

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Welcome

Welcome to the Challenge Partners Extending Leading Practice programme. Challenge Partners is a national education charity established and led by practitioners. We work with more than 500 schools and over 100 school trusts to facilitate mutual improvement through collaboration, challenge and sharing knowledge about effective practice. Our mission is to reduce educational inequality and improve the life chances of all children, ensuring every school community can benefit from the combined wisdom of the education system.

Building on our experience of facilitating over 2,200 school Quality Assurance Reviews and our successful Growing the Top programme, we are able to extend excellence in a learning community of strong good and leading schools. The purpose of the Extending Leading Practice (ELP) programme is to provide a school improvement programme for strong good and outstanding schools to consistently sustain and extend excellence across the school.

This programme is different from the QAR as there are no judgements and similar to Growing the Top in that visiting leaders explore the strengths and knotty issues of host schools. Unique to this programme is the Impact Project, which provides the opportunity to include and develop middle leaders.

We look forward to working with you to have a positive impact on the good and leading schools in our network and the communities they serve.

Yours sincerely

Dame Sue John
Executive Director
Challenge Partners

What is Extending Leading Practice?

The Extending Leading Practice (ELP) programme seeks to provide opportunities for the strong good and leading schools in the Network of Excellence (NoE) to work together to extend excellent practice across the school.

The Upwards Convergence model (right) proposes that growth for strong good and leading schools comes through effective external learning partnerships, engagement with research, structured innovation, and peer reviews.

The Extending Leading Practice programme provides this growth by bringing together schools in trios to embark on a facilitated school improvement journey through an Impact Project, school visit days and input from researchers and other sectors during virtual masterclasses and whole cohort events.
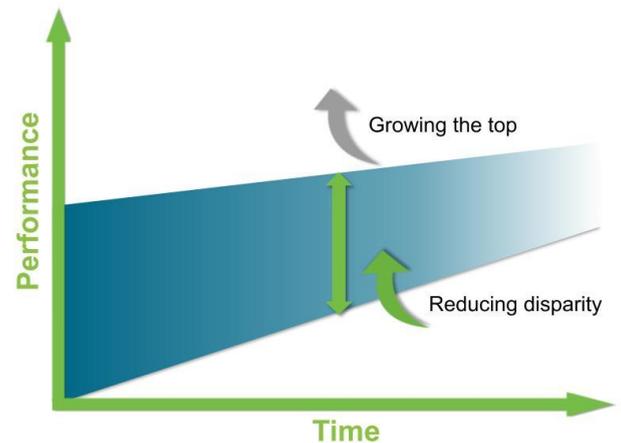
Through this unique combination of organised events, social capital is built and great educational practice and external knowledge is effectively shared.

Extending Leading Practice is designed to realise a set of ambitious objectives for participating schools:
  1. to develop social capital between strong good and leading schools
  2. to share leading practice through structured and facilitated school visits
  3. to support one another in completing an impact project which moves stubbornly good practice towards leading
  4. to develop leadership through observation of other strong good and leading schools

The programme ethos

Extending Leading Practice is about collaboration, partnership and challenge.

Trios are asked to develop collegiate relationships where trust is extended, sharing leading practice is generous, appreciation of what the other schools are achieving is voiced, and support for each other's impact projects is a priority.

Participants are asked to commit the head of school and a senior leader to attend every trio visit day and whole cohort event as opportunities to build these collegiate relationships.

It is also important to respect the confidentiality of information provided at any activity, particularly about individuals and their work; declare all possible conflicts of interest prior to an activity; maintain appropriate professional relationships with colleagues; and ensure personal conduct does not undermine or exploit a fellow participant.

Lastly, a reminder of the Challenge Partners' values which underpin everything we do:
1. **Excellence** We are always looking for ways to improve because we are determined to achieve the best for every child, teacher and leader
2. **Equity** We treat each other fairly, with trust, care and respect. We seek the best for every child, and know that those who have the least need our combined expertise the most
3. **Courageous Leadership** We speak up and take responsibility for all children, making sure that we do not harm others in doing our best for our own schools
4. **Challenge** We expect the best of ourselves and each other, and value challenge which helps us improve
5. **Collaboration** We listen to, share with and learn from each other, developing our practice together so that every child benefits from our combined wisdom and creativity
6. **Innovation** We use and generate research, we innovate with discipline and evaluate intelligently in pursuit of better outcomes for all children, especially the most disadvantaged

The commitment required

In order to reap the benefits of the programme, **it is essential that every school commits to the following:**

1. Embracing and maintaining the programme ethos throughout participation in ELP

2. Participation:
   2.1. The headteacher and one other designated senior leader are to attend all three whole cohort events (including RVSPing to confirm their attendance). If the headteacher or designated senior leader is unable to attend the event, a replacement should be sent.
   2.2. The headteacher and the same designated senior leader are to participate in the three trio school visit days, of which they will host one. If the headteacher or designated senior leader is unable to attend the event, a replacement should be sent.
   2.3. Schools are encouraged to involve middle leaders in the benchmarking, project work and/or trio visits. Middle leaders are also encouraged to join Challenge Partners virtual masterclasses and sharing leading practice events.

3. Preparation:
   1.1. Each school will share their provisional agenda (created with the support of templates and examples below) with the central team and the facilitator for input before finalising. The agenda must be sent to programmes@challengepartners.org at least 2 weeks before the visit day.
   1.1. Each host school will share the agenda and provide information relevant to the Trio visit day to the visitors, facilitator and central team at least 7 days before the visit date. (e.g. parking and travel information, the agenda etc.

4. Undertake a benchmarking exercise at the beginning of the impact project and use the same tool as the end of project evaluation
5. Be prepared to provide a succinct impact project update at every trio visit day
6. Be prepared to be open and honest about their challenges, including sharing supporting data, and ready to support the schools in their trio
7. Expenses: Each school is to cover the expenses incurred in hosting or participating in the programme days

The whole cohort events

Three full day events for all programme participants (or whole cohort) are run over the year, so please add the dates to your calendars as soon as they are received..

These whole cohort events provide the opportunity for participating schools to:
1. Gain external knowledge from other areas of the public sector, corporates and/or the independent schools sector.
2. Share great practice and/ or learnings from trio visit days.
3. Have opportunities for building social capital (i.e. relationships built on professional trust that facilitate knowledge sharing) and expanding their professional network.

The first whole cohort event will include programme induction and trio introductions, and the last whole cohort event will include trio feedback sessions on programme learnings.

The trio visit day

Introduction

Schools are matched into trios according to their geography and diversified by their type and hubs to ensure effective engagement and value for all schools.

Trio schools visit each other for a day, during which the host school shares an area of practice of which they are proud and their learning journey to get there, as well as seeking peer support on their impact project. All trio schools will provide a brief impact project update.

These visits are facilitated by a trained ELP facilitator, who is also an experienced senior leader, to ensure the purpose of the day is achieved.

Over the course of the programme we expect trios and facilitators to build strong social capital and invest time in their relationships with each other. Trios may choose to meet virtually before/between visits to prepare for visits or discuss other issues/reflect on their visit days and follow up on conversations they have started.

Purpose

The purpose of the visit days is to provide the opportunity to
1. increase social capital which is necessary for the effective sharing of knowledge and collaborative learning
2. share existing knowledge of how a strong good or leading school manages its continuous improvement
3. share professional expertise through discussion on the impact project

Preparation

Both hosts and visitors are to prepare for the visit day to ensure it is a valuable experience for all participants.

Host Schools

Hosts prepare an agenda using the guidelines and templates in this handbook. Hosts will share this with the trio facilitator and Challenge Partners central team 2 weeks beforehand to solicit feedback and ensure the purpose of the day is met. At the same time, hosts also communicate the trio visit day start and end times so that visitors can plan their travel. Start times are flexible around your trio's needs, however, typical start times which allow for travel are 9 or 9:30 a.m. with the day often ending around 4 p.m. **All communications should include the central team for programme management purposes** (programmes@challengepartners.org).

Visiting Schools

Visitors may use publicly available information to familiarise themselves with the school being visited prior to arrival, such as:
- What does the school stand for?
- What else is the school presenting to the outside world (e.g. mission statement)?
- What is the context in which the school operates? (i.e. geography, social, demographic and student make up)

In addition, reading the agenda on receipt and noting any questions which may freshly arise is a useful way to prepare. Many visitors find the journey time useful to prepare their minds and demeanour in order to carve out a rich learning space in which they both give and gain.

Participation

The Trio visit day is divided into four parts to facilitate participation, reflection and the achievement of objectives. Content and timing are suggested below, and you can see some exemplar agendas in the final pages of this handbook.

PART 1 - Contracting (or community engagement guidelines) (20-30 mins) Led by the ELP facilitator and includes: ● Welcome ● Collaboration to agree ways of working ● Confirmation of visit objectives ● Confirmation of the day's activities *N.B. This part of the day may take longer in the first visit to establish ways of working together and be shortened in subsequent visits*	PART 2 - Context and your leading practice (2 hrs) Led by the facilitator with input from the host school ● School's context ● Sharing, observation and discussion of your leading practice and how the host school is purposefully improving on its previous best ● Mention the focus of your impact project and why it was chosen ● Time for individual reflection
PART 3 - Impact Project (2.5 hrs) Led by facilitator with input from the host school ● Impact project update from visiting schools (10-15 min each) ● Sharing, observing and discussion of host school's impact project ● Time for individual reflection	PART 4 - Wrap up (1 hr) Led by facilitator ● Visit day feedback

Trio visit day outputs

Participation in the trio visit days produces a number of outputs, including:

1. Trio observations and knowledge share to feed into Impact Projects and take back into school
2. Individual's notes to be used back in school and for compiling the case study
3. Programme feedback to be used by central team for programme evaluation and improvement

The Impact Project

The impact project is unique to the Extending Leading Practice programme. Each school selects a related focus around which they will scope a manageable piece of work called the Impact Project. It is suggested that an existing in-school project, or discreet sub-section of this, be selected.

The impact project is a unique opportunity to appoint **middle leaders** to lead on the development of **evidence based practice**, whilst the head teacher and senior leader on the programme provide executive leadership to ensure the project's progression.

The impact project commences with **a benchmarking exercise**, is **supported by trio schools during visit days and virtual masterclasses**, and is **evidenced by the submission of a case study at the end of the programme** (around two sides on a template which is provided at the end of the handbook).

Once submitted to Challenge Partners, the case studies will be anonymised (unless otherwise agreed with the authors). Challenge Partners will use the case studies as part of the evaluation of the Extending Leading Practice; to inform the development of the programme in future and to share with the wider network.

Whilst suggestions are made as to the approach to the impact project through the Theory of Change session led by Owen Carter of ImpactEd at the launch event and the impact project proposal template, **it is expected that schools will approach the impact project using the established methodologies that they have in school to implement and evaluate new projects.**

Each school is expected to produce a case study of around two pages which **focuses on the Impact Project, its progress to date, barriers encountered and learnings gained** for your Impact Project team. There is a case study template provided as an appendix within this handbook

Timeline
A suggested timeline follows:
1. Select school impact project focus during Autumn 1
2. Schools to plan their impact project and select a benchmarking tool during Autumn 1
3. Commence project - benchmarking during Autumn 1/2
4. Implement project - Spring 1, Spring 2, Summer 1
5. Close out project/mid-project evaluation - evaluation using benchmarking tool Summer1/Summer 2
6. Final case study required end June ahead of the final whole cohort event to be shared in final cohort event

Contact

For all enquiries, please contact our programmes team (programmes@challengepartners.org) and a member of the central team will be able to assist you.

Extending Leading Practice - Trio Visit Day agenda with guidelines

(please note that the visit day may look different as the visit days progress, for example contracting may be 15 mins, and updates on impact projects may lengthen)

Time	Part	Content and Process	Who
20 - 25 mins	**1**	**Contracting** (This session can be shorter for visits 2 and 3, around 10 -15 mins)	Facilitator
45 mins		**Context** This section should provide insight into the school's character and school improvement journey to date as context for its area of strength and impact project. Provide the highlights of your school's leading practice and what you hope to achieve through the impact project.	Host
60 mins	**2**	**Presenting your school's leading practice** Sharing and demonstration of leading practice/strength Activity suggestions include: ● Select the few activities which most demonstrate your school's strength (depth rather than breadth) ● Talking to students/staff in groups ● Presentations from relevant members of staff ● Observation of a relevant activity (not lessons) for example assembly/CPD coaching session etc. Helpful hints: ● Consider splitting visiting team and match with a host senior leader for increased exposure to the system ● Allow about 15 mins for each observation/activity ● Allow 10 mins for professional dialogue afterward for information sharing ● Allow 5 mins for individual consolidation or reflection at the end. Time for individual reflection	Host

60 mins	**3**	**Impact projects - trio updates and peer input** Each **visiting** school provides an update on their impact project through providing the latest draft of their impact project case study and sharing a knotty issue for peer input (20 min per school) Questions which may be helpful: ● How do you identify the impact project objectives? ● What strategic decisions have been made to support the achievement of the project? ● What else have you put in place to ensure the success of the project? ● How does where you are now compare with where you want to get to in this area? ● What have been any successes/difficulties in trying to improve this area previously? ● What knotty issues would you like to discuss with peers?	Trio
30 - 40 minutes	**Lunch**		
2 hrs	**3**	**Impact project - furthering the host's project** Activity suggestions include: ● Further unpack the impact project - alignment check-in: matching objectives to benchmarks to project milestones ● Select the critical path milestones, unpack implementation challenges faced, and brainstorm with peers ● Identification of further resources and support needed, and where the expertise lies ● MLs to present current challenges/ideas and get questions/suggestions from visitors? Conclude with host consolidating ideas and actions to move the project on	Host /Facilitator
45 mins	**4 - Wrap up**	**Consolidation of reflections and agreement of key points** ● Time for individual reflection ● Visit day feedback	Facilitator

Exemplar agenda 1

Extending Leading Practice: *[School name]* visit day

Facilitator: *Name*
Attendees: *Names*
Leading Practice to present : Distributed leadership and 4th way professional learning and coaching in the school
Host School's Impact Project: Exploring the implementation of whole school literacy strategies in subject teaching (specifically History and Maths)

Time	Part	Content and Process	Who
9.00-9.25	**Contracting**	Contracting	Facilitator
9.25-10.10	**Sharing Leading Practice**	Context/Scene setting [Including tour of school ~ 20 minutes]	HT/Deputy
10.10-10.30		**Distributed Leadership and PIP** Our philosophy and approach underpinned by strategic planning and fourth way leadership	Head
10.30-10.50		**4th way Professional Learning and Coaching in the school** Professional pathways, feedback cycle and QA approaches to drive continuous improvement	Leader of Staff CPD
10.50-11.15		**Meeting with Staff (Q and A)** Extended Leaders/TLRS/Teachers	All
11.15-11.30		**Reflective discussion on leading practice and comfort break**	
11.30-12.30	**Impact Project - Visitors**	**Impact Project - Trio updates and peer input** [~20-30 minutes per school- sharing latest draft of case study and discussing knotty issue]	Visitors and facilitator
12.30- 13.15		**Lunch**	
13.15 - 13.45	**Impact Project- Furthering the host's project**	**Middle Leaders to present project development to date [Including concept, benchmarking, next steps etc]** Questions from visitors to challenge thinking and encourage MLs to articulate project	MLs Key SLT and visitors/facilitator
13.45 - 14.15		**Lesson Observations to observe implementation of new strategies**	All
14.15-14.30		**Reflective discussion and Q and A with staff following observations**	All
14.30 - 15.15		**Consolidation** ● Discussion regarding upcoming challenges with project and possible solutions ● Identification of upcoming critical milestones and how to achieve them ● Expectations for progress between now and next meeting	All
15.15-15.30	**Wrap up**	● How does what you have seen today relate to my school/practice? ● What learning can you take away? ● What reflections would you like to share with the host school? ● What insights can you offer to support the host school to improve further?	Facilitator

Exemplar agenda 2

SCHOOL NAME : Challenge Partners – Extending Leading Practice Visit

Leading Practice:
- **Sixth Form** –There is strong pastoral provision as well as very clear leadership opportunities for students. We have a large Sixth-Form with a traditional A Level curriculum. 2018 results put us top in the county for value-added at A-Level
- **Curriculum** – We have a broad traditional curriculum offering 25 different GCSE subjects and about 30 courses in the Sixth-Form, mostly A Levels.

Impact Project:
- **Softer skills and personal development curriculum** – We are currently struggling with consistency in our personal development curriculum and are piloting a new tutor time PSHE delivery model, upskilling all our form tutors to deliver it to a high standard whilst also exploring how tutors can identify specific areas for personal development that are needed across the school.

Time	Visitor 1 School A	Visitor 1 School B	Visitor 2 School A	Visitor 2 School B
8.30	**Arrival** – Food and refreshments available in the boardroom			
9.00-9.20	**Contracting** – led by facilitator			
9.20-10.00	**Introduction to [SCHOOL NAME]** - **Context and scene-setting** HT and AHT			
10.00-10.30	**LEADING PRACTICE: Meeting with Sixth Form Pastoral Staff** AHT		**LEADING PRACTICE: Learning walk (KS3, KS4 and KS5)** HT	
10.30-11.00	**LEADING PRACTICE: Curriculum and Options Meeting with students** (Y9, Y11 and Y13),		**LEADING PRACTICE: Curriculum and Outcomes meeting** (AHT),	
11.00-11.15	**Discussion on leading practice over break – Coffee/tea and pastries**			
11:15-12.15	**VISITORS IMPACT PROJECT DISCUSSION**			
12.15-13.00	**HOST'S IMPACT PROJECT: Overview provided by SLT and MLs** ● Progress to date ● Benchmarking at start of project and now ● Current challenges			
13.00-14.00	**LUNCH**			
14.00-14.30	**HOST'S IMPACT PROJECT:** Meeting with pastoral Middle Leaders Meeting with HoY and HoH, and Form Tutors		**HOST'S IMPACT PROJECT:** Meeting with Y11 and Y13	
14.30-15.15	**HOST'S IMPACT PROJECT:** Reflections and questions/discussions on what presented earlier in the afternoon Challenges/Opportunities/Milestones/next steps			
15.15-15.45	**Consolidation of reflections and agreement of key points** ● Time for individual reflection from visitors ● Time for individual reflections from hosts ● Time to discuss next steps with Impact Project			

Exemplar agenda 3

Time	Part	Content and Process	Who?
9.00-9.30am at the	Welcome	Welcome and introductions	
9.30-10am	Contracting		Facilitator
10-10.40am		Context This section will provide insight into the school's character and school improvement journey to date as context for its areas of strength and impact project.	JPS
Break			

10.50-12.30noon		**Presenting overview of school's leading** practice in
		
		● Core
		● Wider
		● Initiatives
		to demonstrate key entitlements for children at *JPS – By the time children are 11 they will have……*
		Session divided into three parts for visiting team with 30 mins each area (20-25 mins input and 5-10 minutes questions/reflection).
		
		Sharing and demonstration of leading practice/strength
		
		   A. CORE
		Maths (Mastery approach/Power maths/EYFS project) and English (Reading) including tour of school + NACE
		
		   B. Wider Curriculum development
		Incl.observation of music/drama/educational visits
		
		   C. Key initiatives including SEN practice (Flagship status) – Inclusion team/Oracy – DHOS and champions and pilot projects in school development – JB/SF/FM/Y5
		
		to include presentations from relevant members of staff
			JPS

12.30-1.15pm		LUNCH (sandwiches etc) to include trio updates and peer input on IMPACT PROJECTS Each visiting school provides an update on their impact project through providing the latest draft of their impact project case study and sharing a knotty issue for peer input (20 min per school) Questions which may be helpful: ● How do you identify the impact project objectives? ● What strategic decisions have been made to support the achievement of the project? ● What else have you put in place to ensure the success of the project? ● How does where you are now compare with where you want to get to in this area? ● What have been any successes/difficulties in trying to improve this area previously? ● What knotty issues would you like to discuss with peers?	KF
Move to **STREATHAM site**			
1.15-3pm		**Impact project - furthering JPS' project - To what extent does the school environment impact on pupils' sense of belonging within an inclusive school?** ● Further unpack the impact project using each of the 5 strands we are working on - Governance, Leadership and management -School environment -PLD -The curriculum -P/C and the community partnerships ● Brief update on all areas + focus on school environment and proposed developments + Identification of further resources and support needed, and where the expertise lies + SLT to present current challenges/ideas and get questions/suggestions from visitors? ● Conclude with JPS consolidating ideas and actions to move the project on	JPS/KF
3-3.45pm		**Wrap up** Consolidation of reflections and agreement of key points ● Time for individual reflection ● Visit day feedback ● Consolidation of Joint Practice findings	KF

Extending Leading Practice
Impact Project Proposal Template

(This template has been prepared as a suggestion to support the development of your impact project. It is optional and does not need to be submitted to Challenge Partners)

School intro
Please tell us briefly about your school and context

Our school challenges
What were or are some of the challenges facing your school ahead of joining the programme?

Our theme
Please tell us what theme your trio selected and the focus areas for your impact project. Please provide a synopsis of your focus area

Our goals for the impact project
What are your goals for the impact project? What are you hoping to get out of it? Include 'must have' and aspirational objectives. Conclude with a statement of the primary / overarching aim of the project.

Our theory of change
Formulate the problem statement so that it is carefully phrased and represents the primary goal of the total impact project effort (i.e. what are we doing and for what purpose are we doing it). The problem statement should be a full grammatical sentence using as few words as possible. It should clearly state how the project will be focussed / limited, i.e. is the project manageable? Please note that the problem statement must be precisely selected and stated, otherwise you may put time and energy into something that is less than it could be. Some hints:

1. *Ensure that the project implemented fits within the wider school improvement strategy*
2. *View the problem from all sides to get a full understanding of what you are attempting to do. Your trio can support your thinking about this.*
3. *Think through the process (perhaps through using the theory of change grid below) so that you can anticipate bottlenecks and pitfalls and scope the project to be manable given the available resource (time, effort, budget)*
4. *Seek opinions and feedback from experts and others knowledgeable in the field. Make use of your facilitator, trio and other Challenge Partners schools from whom your focus is an Area of Excellence*
5. *Discuss your problem statement with your trio at the first trio visit day, and gain constructive feedback and information which will help you accomplish your task*

List the inputs you have and will source to support the achievement of your project aim. Also list the key activities you will undertake to achieve these aims. Please include a benchmarking exercise at the beginning, interim evaluation (summer 2) and a final evaluation on the date of your choice.

Describe the intermediate outcomes you hope to achieve by summer 2, and the long-term outcomes you have to achieve thereafter in order to achieve the overall aim.

Challenge	Input / Activities	Intermediate outcomes	Long- term outcomes	Overall aim
Assumptions				
Barriers				

Our desired impact

What is the hoped for impact of the project? What other benefits result? What data (benchmarking / evaluation and in addition to the benchmarking / evaluation) might be useful in supporting our understanding of the impact of this project?

What we will lean

What key learning are you hoping to gain from the process of completing this project?

Extending Leading Practice
School Name - Impact Project Case Study
maximum 2 to 3 A4 pages in 11 point font

1. **School introduction**
   Please tell us briefly about your school and context

2. **Our school's knotty issues**
   What were (or are) some of the issues facing your school ahead of joining the programme, specifically those which you hoped discussions with peers throughout the programme and/or Impact Project would help address?

3. **How the Extending Leading Practice programme supported us**
   How has the programme challenged you to improve both as a school leader and as a school? What aspect(s) of the programme did you find most useful?

4. **What we did - the Impact Project**
   What was the intention of your impact project? What were the key elements that supported its success? How were your middle leaders involved? What barriers did you encounter?

5. **The impact**
   What is the impact of the project to date? What value did it add? What changes did you make to your practice? What other changes have you seen as a result?
   Do you have any school data or quotes from leaders/teachers/pupils about the impact which you can share with us?

6. **What we will do going forward**
   What will you continue to do? Date of final evaluation and report? Hoped for final impact?

7. **What we learnt**
   What has been your key learning from the impact project experience and the Extending Leading Practice programme? What will you do differently now?