

ASPIRE

TRUST NEWSLETTER FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING



**PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT CENTRE**
Part of True Learning Partnership

A note from our CEO

Professor Geoff Baker



IN THIS ISSUE

As another academic year draws to a close, I want to thank every colleague across True Learning Partnership for all you have done over the past twelve months. It has been an exceptional year. Admissions for September 2026 have increased significantly, and four schools are now at different stages of joining the Trust. This growth reflects the confidence others have in the quality of education and support our colleagues provide every day. Attendance has risen, suspensions have fallen, and our schools continue to improve. These are achievements of which we should all be immensely proud.

What makes me proudest, however, is that this progress has never come at the expense of the wider experiences we provide. Pupils continue to benefit from productions, concerts, sporting events, educational visits and enrichment opportunities that develop the whole child. A highlight for me was joining Lostock Hall's 'Bike Bus'. Cycling through the local estate with staff and students, while neighbours—and even the bin crews—cheered us on, perfectly captured the joy, creativity and sense of community that define our Trust.

This edition of Aspire celebrates the professional learning taking place across the Trust. More colleagues than ever are undertaking apprenticeships, NPQs, postgraduate qualifications and bespoke development programmes because we believe investing in our people is the best investment we can make. Looking ahead, I am excited for our first Trust-wide professional development conference, TLP Connect, in October, with Paul Dix as our keynote speaker, reminding us that lasting school improvement is built on the quality of relationships.

Finally, thank you to everyone who has contributed to this edition of Aspire. It showcases the expertise, creativity and commitment across our Trust and celebrates the people behind our success. I hope you enjoy reading it and, as always, thank you for everything you do to inspire the best in everyone.

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Evidence-Informed... But Context Matters Why Research Should Guide Practice - Not Dictate It

Craig Lomas - Deputy Director of Education



“Research-informed practice” has become one of the most commonly used phrases in education. While using evidence to improve practice is important, there is a growing risk that the term is sometimes used as a shortcut to justify strategies without properly considering context, implementation, or the needs of the community being served.

A strategy being “evidence-informed” does not automatically mean it will work effectively in every school or classroom. This idea is increasingly reflected within implementation science and educational research. The [Education Endowment Foundation \(EEF\) Implementation Guidance Report](#) highlights that successful implementation depends heavily on school context, leadership, readiness, and adaptation rather than simply adopting a strategy itself. Similarly, research by John Hattie and implementation researchers such as Dean Fixsen emphasises that the effectiveness of an approach is shaped by how it is enacted within a specific environment. Increasingly, literature around “knowledge mobilisation” argues that professional judgement, local context, and community understanding are essential components of evidence-informed practice, rather than barriers to it.

Take flipped learning as an example. Research has shown that pre-learning activities and video instruction can improve understanding and increase classroom discussion. However, in some communities, pupils may have limited access to devices, internet connectivity, quiet study spaces, or parental support. Without considering these factors, a well-intentioned strategy could unintentionally widen gaps rather than reduce them.

Rather than asking: “Is this evidence-informed?”

A better question may be: “How does this evidence apply to our context, pupils, and capacity?”

A simple framework for contextualising research might include:

1. Who was this strategy successful for?
2. What conditions were present for success?
3. Do those conditions exist in our setting?
4. What barriers might our pupils face?
5. What adaptations may be needed?
6. How will we know whether it is working here?

Evidence should strengthen professional thinking, not replace it. The most effective schools are often those that combine research, professional expertise, and deep understanding of their community to make thoughtful, informed decisions about practice.

For colleagues interested in exploring these ideas further, the following texts provide accessible and valuable insights into evidence-informed practice, professional learning, and reflective leadership: *Evidence-Informed Teaching* by Alex Quigley, *Powerful Professional Learning* by Helen Timperley, and *The Reflective Practitioner* by Donald Schön. Each offers valuable perspectives on how thoughtful systems, professional judgement, and continuous learning contribute to effective schools and improved outcomes for students.

READING AND RESEARCH LINKS

-  **EEF Guidance Report**
-  **Evidence-Informed Teaching by Alex Quigley**
-  **Powerful Professional Learning by Helen Timperley**
-  **The Reflective Practitioner by Donald Schön**



Laboratory Schools: Learning Together - Collaborative Improvement Through Instructional Rounds

Jake Nichols - Headteacher, Disley Primary School



Hosting colleagues through the Lab Schools Network was, without doubt, a thorough process, but also an incredibly positive and affirming one for our whole school community.

Viewed through the lens of appreciative enquiry, the process created space for professionals from a wide range of settings to come together and focus explicitly on what is working well at Disley Primary School. Rather than seeking to identify deficits, the enquiry centred on recognising strong practice and understanding why it is effective, while still honouring the individuality and context of our school.

One of the most powerful aspects of the process was how external perspectives helped us articulate practice that can often feel intuitive or embedded. Through collaborative discussion and reflection, we were able to identify and agree upon a shared set of theories of action, which are clear, positive statements that describe what successful teaching and learning look like at Disley. These theories now provide a common language and a guiding framework for staff, rooted firmly in our existing strengths and values.

The findings from the instructional rounds and professional dialogue have been genuinely impactful. They have enabled us to sharpen and develop certain areas further, while also helping to shape practical aspects of our work such as lesson visits, professional conversations and the development of a culture charter that we are currently working on. Importantly, this work feels purposeful rather than performative; it is directly informing how we think about consistency, expectations and professional learning across the school.

Perhaps most importantly, the process prompted new thinking while also giving us time and permission to celebrate what we already do well. It allowed staff to see their everyday practice through a different lens, one that recognised quality, care and intentionality. Practice that might otherwise go unnoticed was articulated, validated and shared.

Having a number of professionals in school can, at times, feel overwhelming. However, this experience was quite the opposite. The atmosphere was collegiate, respectful and genuinely supportive. The reassurance that comes from externally-validated strengths, combined with thoughtful challenge, made the process both confidence-building and motivating.

Overall, the Lab Schools work has been a valuable professional learning experience for Disley Primary School. It has helped us to deepen our understanding of our own practice, refine our shared vision of teaching, and further embed a reflective, collaborative culture that ultimately benefits staff and pupils alike.



Behind the Scenes, At the Heart of School Success



Leanne Pace - Business and Community Manager, Glossopdale School

Strong school operations are often invisible, yet they play a vital role in creating an environment where students and staff can thrive. Behind every calm classroom and successful lesson is a framework of systems, planning, and operational decision-making that allows teaching and learning to happen effectively and without disruption.

One area where this impact is particularly visible is community provision. Accessible and consistent opportunities outside the school day, such as clubs and established holiday provision, help children develop familiarity with the school environment before they formally join. This can make a significant difference during transition, as pupils arrive with greater confidence, reduced anxiety, and an existing sense of belonging.

At Glossopdale, our structured primary competition calendar provides valuable opportunities for younger pupils to engage with the school community early. Through sports competitions, dance events, and festivals, students begin building relationships with staff and peers while strengthening connections between the school, feeder primaries, and families.

Operational consistency also has a significant impact on staff wellbeing and effectiveness. At Glossopdale we ensure that reliable systems for site readiness, compliance, communication, event planning, school trips, and administrative processes reduce last-minute pressures and allow both teaching and support staff to focus on their core responsibilities. Effective operational systems not only improve efficiency but also contribute positively to staff wellbeing and retention.

At its core, school operations is about creating stability through proactive planning, strong relationships, problem-solving, and attention to detail. Collaboration across all teams is essential. By anticipating challenges and putting preventative measures in place, operations staff help establish the conditions in which great schools can flourish.

When operations work well, they are rarely noticed directly, but their impact is felt everywhere. They help ensure that students and staff experience a school that feels safe, organised, welcoming, and connected to its wider community.



SPOTLIGHT ON PRACTICE

How I use Copilot AI to create up to date lesson resources that save time and improve learning

Jack Wallace - Trust Improvement for AI in Education



One of the biggest areas where I have used AI is in teaching A Level Spanish. The A Level Spanish course is constantly changing and requires up-to-date, authentic material but unfortunately, the last published textbook is now 10 years old.

Before I started using AI, I would spend hours looking for a good article that I could use, I would adapt it so the language was appropriate, then design exam-based or learning activities to go with the article. I also spent a lot of time writing many translation sentences and grammar exercises as I wanted students to have lots of practice opportunities.

This process was time-consuming and at times challenging.

HOW I USE COPILOT TO SUPPORT RESOURCE CREATION

I now regularly use Copilot to support each stage of the resource creation process. I will use Copilot to adapt an article I have found to make it shorter / easier to understand. I will ask Copilot to write an article about a particular topic – often including the grammar points I want to focus on that lesson. I will ask Copilot to write a range of question types based on the texts. I also use Copilot to generate discussion questions on the topic I am teaching. I have even used it to create a Taboo game based on a prescribed list of vocabulary.





ADAPTING TEXTS I HAVE FOUND

- Simplifying complex articles
- Shortening content whilst maintaining meaning

GENERATING CONTENT

- Creating topic-specific up-to-date articles
- Including targeted grammar structures

DESIGNING ACTIVITIES BASED ON THE ARTICLE

- Comprehension questions
- Exam-style questions
- Extensive translation or grammar questions

DEVELOPING SPEAKING TASKS

- Discussion questions linked to the article
- Vocabulary based games like Taboo

WHAT HAS THIS MEANT FOR MY PRACTICE?

The biggest impact on my practice has been the improved quality of the resources I am using in lessons. The resources are now current and provide much more useful information for the students to prepare them for their exam. I can now also quickly generate targeted practice tasks in areas that I've identified where students need support. It has also given me more time that I have been able to spend on more impactful tasks.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

AI has not replaced my role as a teacher – it has improved it.

By using Copilot I can provide an improved learning experience and focus more on the aspects of teaching that will have a greater impact.

PRACTICAL TIP

If you are new to AI, I would recommend asking yourself this question: "Can Copilot help me create this resource more efficiently without impacting quality?" If the answer is yes, then it's worth trying.

Every Day Matters: What Our Attendance Improvements Tell Us



Debbie McGloin - Director of Education and School Improvement

At True Learning Partnership, attendance is about far more than whether a pupil is in school. It reflects our core belief that every child deserves to feel they belong, to experience success and to have full access to the opportunities education provides.

This sits at the heart of our Trust vision—to inspire the best in everyone—and is brought to life through our daily work in classrooms, corridors and communities.

This year, our collective efforts have led to strong improvements. Attendance across the Trust is above national averages and persistent absence is lower than national figures. This reflects not just effective systems, but a shared commitment to our values in action.

LIVING OUR VALUES THROUGH ATTENDANCE

- High expectations – We are clear that attendance matters. Every pupil, every lesson, every day—because we believe every child can succeed.
- Inclusion and belonging – Strong attendance is rooted in pupils feeling safe, known and valued. Relationships across the Trust are central.
- Collaboration – We work together to share practice, support families and remove barriers to attendance.
- Relentless focus on improvement – Staff act early, using insight and professional judgement to intervene.

WHAT IS MAKING THE DIFFERENCE

- Clarity of expectations – Attendance is the norm. Expectations are clear and consistently reinforced.
- Strong daily routines – Accurate registers, immediate follow-up and robust first-day response ensure no absence goes unnoticed.
- Knowing pupils well – Staff act early, identifying patterns and addressing barriers before absence becomes persistent.
- Focus on vulnerable groups – Targeted support for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND is improving outcomes, though this remains a key priority.
- Collective responsibility – Attendance improvement is strongest where it is owned by everyone.

FROM STRONG SYSTEMS TO PRECISION

Our systems are now more secure and consistent. The next step is greater precision: reducing persistent absence, closing gaps for disadvantaged pupils, improving SEND attendance, and ensuring consistency across schools.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ALL STAFF

- Deliver engaging lessons that pupils want to attend
- Build strong relationships so pupils feel known and supported
- Maintain consistent expectations
- Act early and work collaboratively when concerns arise

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

We should be proud of the progress we have made. By continuing to align our work with our vision and values—high expectations, inclusion, collaboration and improvement—we will ensure every pupil attends regularly and achieves their potential.

Because at True Learning Partnership, every day matters—and every day is an opportunity to inspire the best in everyone.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTRE OFFER 2026 - 2027

SUPPORTING EVERY COLLEAGUE TO LEARN, GROW AND THRIVE.

At True Learning Partnership, we believe that investing in our people is one of the most powerful drivers of school improvement. Our Professional Development Centre (PDC) provides a wide range of high-quality professional learning opportunities designed to support colleagues at every stage of their career. The offer includes Trust-led programmes focused on key priorities such as adaptive teaching, inclusive behaviour, leadership development and AI in education, alongside a range of externally accredited qualifications and leadership pathways.

Colleagues can choose to engage with individual sessions, complete full professional development programmes, or express an interest in external qualifications. Internal sessions are delivered online and recorded to support flexible participation, while external opportunities are available through approved pathways with recognised training providers.

The current Professional Development Offer can be accessed via the link below. During the new academic year, the PDC will transition to a dedicated online platform, providing a single location for colleagues to browse opportunities, register for programmes, access recordings and resources, track professional learning, and explore available qualifications. Further details and access to the new platform will be shared with all colleagues at the start of the new academic year.

In the meantime, the current offer, including programme details, eligibility and registration information, can be accessed using the link below. Internal programmes can be booked through the sign-up process, while external qualifications require a short Expression of Interest and approval from your Headteacher and the Trust.

RECOGNITION AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

As part of the Trust's commitment to valuing professional learning, colleagues can also access the Professional Development Centre Recognition Pathway. This provides opportunities for staff to gain recognition for their engagement with professional development over time, celebrating both participation and sustained commitment to learning. The pathway has been designed to encourage a culture of continuous improvement, professional curiosity and knowledge sharing, recognising the important contribution that ongoing development makes to individual practice, career progression and wider school improvement.

LINK



 LINK



This Newsletter was written, designed and published by the Professional Development Centre, Part of True Learning Partnership.



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