

**SUBMISSION TO SCHOOLS FUNDING FORUM FROM THE KENT ASSOCIATION OF
HEADTEACHERS (KAH)
30th November 2018**

Introduction

This paper invites the Schools Funding Forum to recommend funding to support the continued work of KAH from April 2019.

The paper has been drafted by the KAH Executive Board and is submitted following formal approval and support of Headteachers agreed through the Area Boards.

The paper seeks to:

- i) summarise the revised role of KAH,
- ii) highlight positive impact of KAH in 2017/18,
- iii) analyse the risk to schools presented by a lack of sustained funding, and
- iv) set out the level of funding requested and the purpose to which it would be applied.

1. The role of KAH

The Association reviewed and refined its role and purpose in 2016/17 to reflect the growing maturity of the organisation and the changing landscape in which it operates. Its core purpose is two-fold:

- i) To establish and co-ordinate a school-led, self-improving system capable of driving sustainable school improvement across the county**

KAH does this by facilitating collaboration between schools and by working strategically with the local authority and other key partners to design and manage a coherent local system. In a financially-constrained environment this focus on co-ordination, brokerage and good practice sharing is essential if we are to see the improvements of recent years sustained and further extended.

- ii) To act as a voice for every school in Kent to influence local and national policy and practice**

KAH does this by representing every school, maintained and academy, and creating opportunities to engage, inform and consult with school leaders.

2. Positive Impact of KAH

2.1 Delivering collaborative school improvement

The work of KAH has contributed significantly to the rise in standards across the county. Since its formation in 2014/15 over 450 schools have been directly involved in collaborative improvement projects initiated or funded by KAH. The impact of these initiatives can be seen in improved Ofsted judgements, improved outcomes for pupils and a narrowing of gaps between the outcomes of disadvantaged and other pupils. Initial project funding has in many cases led to the formation of long-term partnerships between schools, enabling them to work together beyond the period of a specific initiative including through establishing formal

federations, co-operative trusts and multi-academy trusts. See Appendix A for examples of impact.

As KAH has matured and as levels of available funding have reduced, the Association's role has transitioned from a focus on awarding grant funding towards working strategically to create the conditions in which schools are able to collaborate to secure improvement through low-cost strategies.

2.2 Brokering and co-ordinating school to school support and best-practice sharing

KAH's central position in identifying improvement need and brokering support at area and county level is now firmly established. In 2017/18 KAH established a new infrastructure for managing the processes of school improvement. The new School Improvement Sub-Groups and a county-level School Effectiveness Strategy Group bring together schools and the local authority to identify need, agree priorities, plan activity, broker support and evaluate impact. These groups are maturing well and providing a central role in co-ordinating and brokering support for schools and fostering the conditions for sustainable school-led improvement.

During 2017/18 KAH initiated the development of a School Effectiveness Partnership Agreement which sets out shared ambitions, values and principles and work is underway to complete a strategy which articulates the ways in which partners, including TEP, work together to meet the improvement needs of schools in an environment with ever-reducing resources.

KAH has a key role to play in facilitating best-practice sharing between Kent schools (and drawing in evidence of good practice from beyond the county). Recent examples include co-ordinating evaluations of DfE-funded school improvement activity so that lessons can be learnt and shared, organising conferences on key issues (such as teacher recruitment, SEND, KS2 mathematics) and coordinating the involvement of Kent schools in national research into effective models of school improvement.

2.3 Creating capacity through system leaders

Schools have benefitted from KAH's focus on developing leaders through its Leadership Strategy (<http://www.kentleaders.org.uk>) which supports the development, retention and well-being of school leaders.

KAH works to encourage Headteachers and other school leaders to take on roles as system leaders, providing quality-assured designation process, training and development to ensure a high-quality pool of effective leaders ready and prepared to support their peers. Recent work includes the production of a System Leader Directory to provide comprehensive information about the skills and expertise of leaders to those seeking to commission their support.

2.4 Securing financial efficiencies

KAH is able to work with schools, local and national government to generate additional income, lobby for increased funding for education and secure viable cost-saving solutions. Investment in sustaining KAH will generate income and secure savings which will more than offset the investment being requested. See Appendix B for examples of recent cost-saving activity.

2.5 Influencing policy and implementation

KAH represents the views of Headteachers at all major children's boards, including through Non-Executive Directors of the Education People and as members of the Stakeholder and Commissioning Board. KAH routinely gathers, collates and shares feedback from Headteachers on key issues affecting schools to inform policy and implementation. Recent examples include feedback on the impact to schools of the new Front Door access service to social and health services, high needs funding block, re-organisation of alternative provision.

KAH has secured positive support and engagement from other key regional bodies, including the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) and the Regional Teaching School Council (TSC), who recognise the core role played by KAH in co-ordinating and brokering school to school support and building capacity for school-led improvement. For example, RSC officers now attend KAH Area Board meetings to share intelligence regarding academy improvement and to access capacity for improvement from other Kent schools. The TSC have recently agreed to route proposals for new models of school to school support through KAH in recognition of the maturity of local systems.

3 Risk of lack of sustainability

As demonstrated above, KAH both delivers support to schools and also provides a crucial role in helping the local school-led system to self-organise. With school budgets under pressure, the support provided by KAH and the access to expertise, networking and advice that it facilitates is vital to many schools. Small schools and others in vulnerable positions are at particular risk of isolation. KAH, acting as a representative body for all Kent schools, provides a coherent body through which schools and KCC can engage. Without this capacity, we risk incoherence resulting in isolated schools and a fragmented system that is unable to make best use of limited resources through joint planning and commissioning¹.

4 Level and purpose of funding

In the past, KAH has received generous funding from the Forum which has been used to support collaborative improvement work and which has contributed significantly to the rise in standards across the county. KAH fully recognises the imperative to reduce the funding provided and has developed new ways of working which are not dependent on similar levels of funding for impact.

Following the Forum's previous decision to cease KAH funding from 2016/17, a level of funding has been provided by KCC to ensure that KAH can continue to play its part in the activities outlined above. For the 2018/19 financial year this funding amounts to £210,000.

This funding is used to:

- Fund collaborative school improvement activity aligned to area and county-wide priorities

¹ The central importance of area-based strategic partnerships which bring schools and the local authority together to shape a coherent local education system is highlighted in Local Government Association research¹ undertaken in 2017 (Enabling School Improvement, LGA, 2018) and previous DfE research in 2014 (The Evolving Education System in England: A Temperature Check, DfE, 2014)

- Provide executive support capacity to the Chairs of KAH to develop the maturity of the association and its partnerships with KCC, TEP and others
- Contribute to the time given by KAH Chairs

Whilst the funding provided by KCC over the last 2 years has been essential to the work of KAH, one of the key strengths of KAH is its independence from the local authority, essential when brokering support or reflecting the views of headteachers. In order to preserve its credibility, the association needs to be predominantly funded by schools.

Consideration has been given to a subscription model but to do so would remove the essential fact that KAH is the only organisation which represents every school in the county and therefore significantly reduce its impact.

Schools already commit a significant amount of in-kind match funding to the management of KAH (all members of KAH Boards give their time without charge) and commit substantial amounts of time to supporting other schools without charge.

KAH is seeking a sum of £280,000 from the Schools Funding Forum to continue its work into 2019/20 and meet its medium-term objectives on behalf of all schools in Kent.

5 Conclusion

It is believed that schools receive a significant benefit from Kent Association of Heads, not only in terms of its support for school effectiveness, but also in financial terms. The brokerage of support enables schools to access support without spending large sums, its involvement in regional bids makes access to additional funding more likely, its pressure on central government over national funding for schools keeps educational spending on the agenda and the induction and development of leaders provides stability, thereby reducing the need for schools to invest money in the recruitment of senior leaders. Without its involvement, many aspects of school improvement will once again be at the mercy of the marketplace at a time when available funding is severely restricted. The allocation of funding requested, therefore, is believed to make sound financial as well as educational sense and the Forum is respectfully asked to give approval to this request.

Appendix A: Examples of Co-ordinating School Improvement

- The Hythe Hub – 6 primaries and 1 secondary school working together since 2015 to improve and sustain outcomes. The Hub schools have focused on shared language and systems for assessment leading to significant increases in the percentage of pupils achieving or exceeding expected progress
- The Deal Learning Alliance – 11 primary schools working together to improve Ofsted outcomes and raise standards of progress and attainment, particularly for disadvantaged pupils in schools with high rates of FSM eligibility.
- The Coastal Alliance – 14 primaries and 1 secondary school who have achieved significant improvements in Ofsted outcomes and in pupil attainment in KS1 and KS2
- The formation of an International Baccalaureate (IB) partnership.
- The Sevenoaks Primary School Partnership focused on pupil mental health and well-being, leading to the introduction of Nurture Groups, mindfulness programmes, the creation of a tool to review independent learning skills and meta-cognition and more recently work to address staff well-being.

Appendix B: Examples of Securing Financial Efficiencies

- Securing and coordinating the involvement of 72 schools (169 Headteachers and senior leaders) in a national research project subsidised by the Education Endowment Foundation to evaluate the impact of peer review on KS2 outcomes. Kent has the largest number of schools involved in this national trial.
- Supported schools to submit successful bids for external funding (e.g Strategic School Improvement Fund) and serving to evaluate the impact of strategic school to school support work and disseminate best practice widely
- A new online resource to support Headteachers in addressing the key challenge of teacher recruitment and retention by sharing best-practice and sign-posting leaders to relevant research, resources and advice will result in efficiencies by reducing vacancies and costs of recruitment
- Through its partnership with Leadership Learning South East (www.llse.org.uk) KAH has enabled schools in the priority areas of Thanet, Ashford, Gravesham to access fully-funded, nationally accredited leadership development programmes, resulting in skilled and motivated leaders.

As the representative body for every school in Kent, KAH has recently lobbied national government to raise the profile of the challenges faced by schools through, for example, participation in the WorthLess campaign (over 100 Kent Headteachers attended the recent campaign march and key KAH leaders were interviewed on local and national radio and television) and presenting analysis and feedback to national government on the impact on schools of funding the recent teachers' pay award.

KAH provides a valuable mechanism through which Headteachers and the local authority can work together to analyse key challenges and co-construct effective, cost-saving solutions in priority areas such as High Needs Funding, Children in Care arrangements and the organisation of Pupil Referral Units.