**Supporting a newly appointed Head of EAL in a Secondary School**

As a newly appointed Head of EAL, I came to the post with no expertise.

The training I completed with ISSK enabled me to fulfil my post with confidence and to make the changes necessary in the Academy. As I developed my understanding, this was immediately implemented with the support of my line manager. I continue to learn from my discussions with ISSK.

On your advice, I restructured the role of the Language unit and moved students in to mainstream lessons so that they built relationships with other students and staff and accessed a normal curriculum. The unit became a place for Language support in fixed lessons and only new arrivals and those in need of significant support spent longer there. Teaching assistants also went in to mainstream lessons to support teaching and learning.

The next step was to support teachers. ISSK provided initial training on cultural awareness. The training then had two focuses meeting the needs of the students and empowering staff to meet the needs of the students. Training since then has focused on up skilling teachers across the Academy in differentiation and meeting the needs of both new arrivals and more advanced learners. This has been achieved through whole school sessions as well as subject specific small group sessions. The Advisory Teacher also worked with our Academy Support Assistants to develop their understanding of their role. Most recently we completed a learning walk, popping in to classes and talking to students and staff about the differentiation evident and the learning going on in class, The Advisory Teacher then created a report and gave further recommendations.

Two years ago ISSK trained a cohort of Young Interpreters whose role in the Academy is developing. At their suggestion, we also introduced the ‘Language of the Month’ initiative with displays and resources made available for all staff and students. We have also run a "My Country" competition to give students a chance to tell others about their homeland. Our Roma dancers perform in the Academy and in the community. Our parents are regularly invited in to the Academy with adult interpreters on hand to support at parents' evenings and meetings.

The advice and training has on every occasion been entirely appropriate, well planned for the required audience and well delivered. Feedback from training sessions has been positive on every occasion and staff have left with lots of new ideas to try. Issues raised in QA sessions have been addressed confidently. The success of these sessions can also be attributed to the Advisory Teachers approachable manner and positive, encouraging style of delivery.

From a position where there was some anxiety among staff and students, we have now reached a plateau where staff are confident of what needs to be done to support students and we are aware of excellent practice in the Academy. Students are prospering as their teaching and learning develops.

Whilst there is still work to be done, I have no doubt that the input from ISSK has been crucial to the progress we have made so far.