

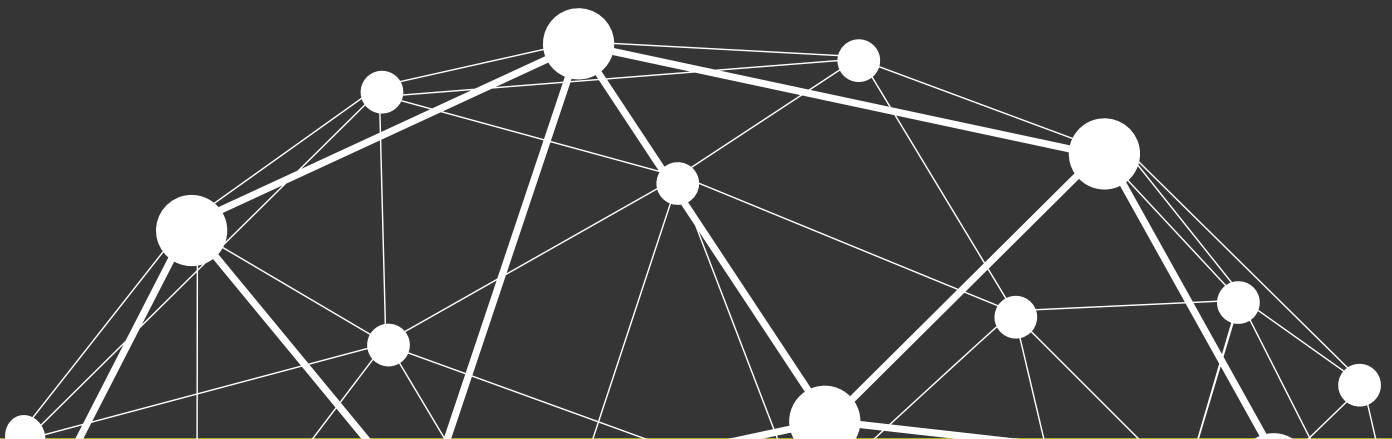


 **inspiring|leaders**

**Leaders Learning
Exchange**

2024/25

**Shared Challenges, Shared Solutions:
Collaborating for School Improvement**





Introduction & Rationale

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have observed a significant decrease in collaborative efforts among school leaders, particularly in peer support partnerships. Prior to the pandemic, Teaching School Alliances (TSAs) across England were actively engaged in developing support programmes to facilitate mutual improvement and evaluation activities among schools. However, with the introduction of Teaching School Hubs (TSH) in 2021 and the subsequent dissolution of approximately 630 alliances nationwide, these collaborative activities have markedly diminished, leading to a more insular approach within schools.

Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) have established internal systems and structures to foster peer support and challenge within their school improvement planning. However, these opportunities are often exclusively available to schools within the MAT, excluding potential external partner schools. This inward focus within MATs, while beneficial for establishing consistent systems and approaches, poses a risk to innovation. The potential for MATs to become inward-facing may limit the learning and growth that can be achieved through horizontal collaboration with other schools and trusts.

In light of this, **our new project aims to create opportunities for school leaders to form meaningful partnerships with schools outside of their own MAT, focusing on common challenges.** We plan to establish **working triads** among schools and provide a **structured programme for school visits throughout the upcoming academic year.** This will enable schools to learn from each other's cultures and approaches, fostering innovative solutions to their shared challenges.

Rationale for the project

This programme has been developed in response to the requests of CEOs within the Inspiring Leaders MAT Partnership who share a commitment to working in close partnership within the region to continuously improve practice in their schools. Our CEOs **recognise the value that working with peers can bring individual leaders and their settings** and recognise the importance of continuing to look beyond their immediate partnerships of schools to find solutions to common challenges.

Partner MAT CEOs have challenged us to create a structured programme to enable this inter-school sharing and we look forward to working with colleagues who join the programme.



About Inspiring Leaders

Our origin

Improving the lives of students beyond our own schools was a shared vision for the founders of Inspiring Leaders. As pioneers of the Self-improving School-Led system, our founder Trustees faced new challenges and opportunities as cohort one Teaching Schools and early Academy Trusts. They found strength and support in each other, forming a network founded on trust and collaboration across the region. Together, our founders applied to become a license holder for NPQs and a SCITT, offering high-quality training and development for leaders and teachers in the system. This commitment to partnership has made a positive impact on thousands of students and educators, both locally and globally, and continues to learn and grow as a partnership.

Our vision for the Education System

'Helping MATs become strong and sustainable'

We know that the MAT sector is competitive but Inspiring Leaders believe that MAT Leaders have a moral duty to collaborate with their regional peers for the benefit of the whole education community, as the school-led self-improving system matures. As civic leaders, they should take initiative and join effective regional peer networks which share a commitment to improving school practice and advancing student achievement in their region. ***We are committed to creating a more integrated community of MATs by transforming culture to become more collaborative and strategically aligned.***

Our vision

At Inspiring Leaders our vision is for every child to be taught by a well-trained teacher who works within a strong, sustainable, and ambitious academy trust.

Our Mission

Our mission is to become the partnership of choice for aspirant teachers and MAT Leaders in the region. Providing teachers and leaders with a high-quality, collaborative, professional development offer.

Our Values

- Integrity
- Bravery
- Credibility
- Synergy
- Excellence

Our promise to our partners



We are passionate about helping teachers and leaders reach their full potential, raising standards in education. Through innovative collaboration, supportive networks and continual professional development, Inspiring Leaders helps partners to achieve their strategic goals and create strong, sustainable trusts.

We are committed to creating a more integrated community of MATs by changing the culture to become more collaborative and strategically aligned.



Leaders Learning Exchange

A collaborative learning and improvement programme for the Inspiring Leaders Network.



The exchange aims to provide structured opportunity for school leaders to form meaningful partnerships with schools outside of their own MAT, with a focus on addressing common challenges and learning from other school cultures and approaches.

HOW WILL IT WORK?

Schools will work in triads throughout an academic year to undertake / host professional and reciprocal visits to:

- Identify and implement effective practice.
- Identify and make improvements in development areas.
- Provide external insight into the school operations.

Leading to tangible improvements in development areas and leadership practice.



WHAT IT IS

*Peer support
Professional and reciprocal
Learning conversations*



WHAT IT ISN'T

*Formal peer review process
Scoring/judgement based*

TIME COMMITMENT

*3 days per school
plus visit preparation*

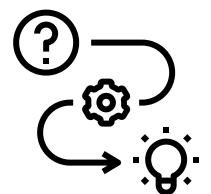
PROGRAMME LAUNCH

*All schools attend to agree ways of
working and trial programme tools &
resources for leaders.*

WHO WILL IT BE OF VALUE TO?

The Exchange is designed for Headteachers from schools that are part of the Inspiring Leaders MAT Partnership. Participating schools will need to have:

- Capacity to undertake and host visits.
- Practice and learning to share with peers.
- Genuine interest in fostering relationships with schools beyond their own MAT, preferably from different regions.



It is unlikely that participating schools will be in the immediate Ofsted window – although this is at the discretion of school leaders

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PPROGRAMME STRUCTURE & CALENDAR

TERM 1			TERM 2		TERM 3	
Launch Event ½ day	Visit One ½ day	Online Check-in 90 min	Visit Two ½ day	Online Check-in 90 mi	Visit Three ½ day	Celebration Event ½ day
23/9/24 1:00pm-4:00pm	Locally arranged	10/12/24 1:30-3:00pm	Locally arranged	10/3/25 1:30-3:00pm	Locally arranged	23/6/25 9:00am-1:00pm

PROCESS

Each MAT puts forward up to three schools annually to participate in this project.

Schools complete an application providing details of the areas for development that they would like to explore with colleagues.

Schools are placed in triads based on the similar areas of development.

A launch event sets out ways of working and provides tools to support learning.

Schools undertake / host a series of half day visits are scheduled with check in points in-between

All schools attend the end of project sharing event to report on progress/learning and school level developments

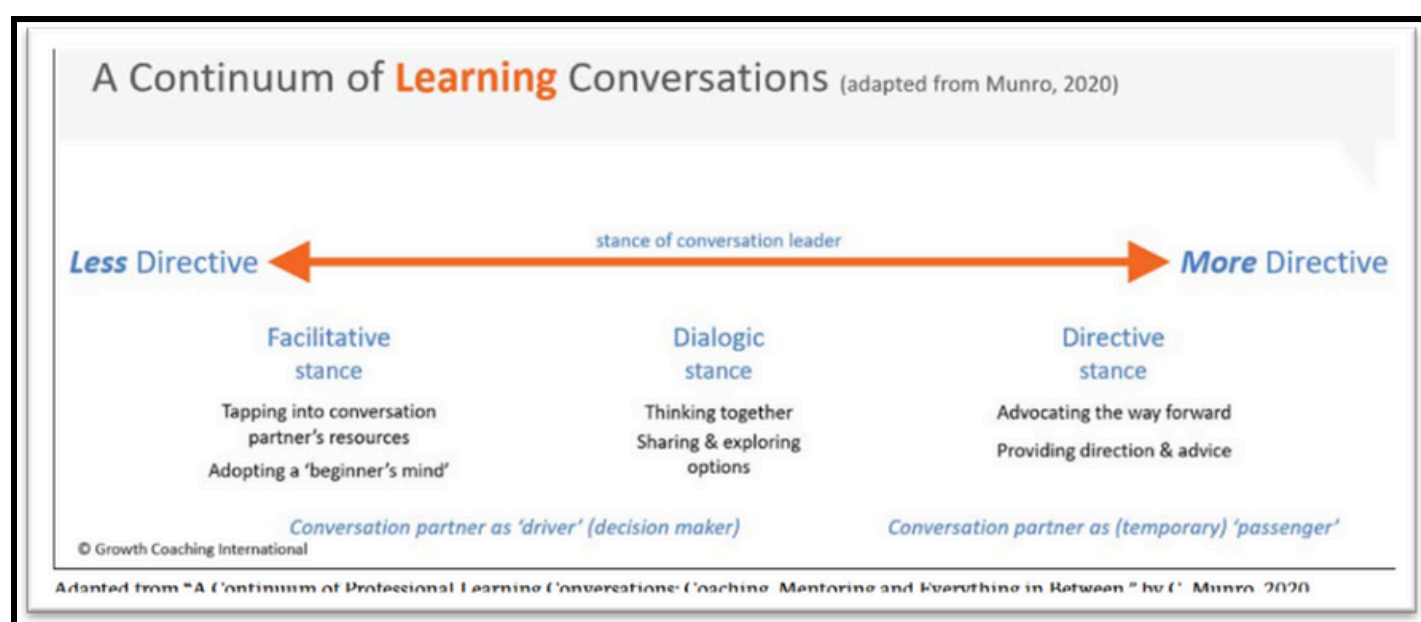
Conversations, Learning and Leading

Creating meaningful, focused partnerships.

School visits will be underpinned by coaching conversations informed by the work of Jim Knight.

'Every interaction between a leader and other members of a school community presents an opportunity to enhance learning, growth, and progress. More broadly, it is becoming clear that the skill of facilitating positive conversations is an important professional practice for all educators, leaders, and other staff in schools.'

In his book *Better Conversations*, Jim Knight (2016) describes this as being about ... how we can get better at the kind of conversations that help us be better people and communicators. That kind of improvement is especially important in educational organisations since communication is at the heart of everything educators do.



Programme Facilitators



James Brown Managing Director, Inspiring Leaders

James brings 17 years of experience in the education sector, primarily working within schools. His career began by supporting a small family of schools in Nottingham City Centre, where he focused on addressing educational disparities and fostering higher aspirations among pupils. Since then, James has taken on various roles, including leading a national teaching school alliance and serving as a regional Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) deputy CEO. Currently, he holds the position of Managing Director at Inspiring Leaders. James is deeply committed to empowering teachers and educational leaders. He believes in maximizing the impact of professional development through collaborative efforts. His dedication to lifelong learning led him to earn a Masters in Education in 2019, and he is currently enrolled in an Executive MBA program.



Sarah Heesom, Teaching School Director, Flying High Partnership

Sarah has worked in education partnership and people development for over 25 years. Her roles have been focused on delivering projects that lead to improvement in the life chances of children, included establishing and leading an inner-city Education Action Zone, a charitable foundation and private sector corporate responsibility projects. She was also an original member of an executive team establishing a MAT and Teaching School Alliance in 2013. Currently Teaching School Director at Flying High, Sarah leads the Futures Team with responsibility for the National teaching programmes, Hubs and projects, Flying High SCITT and Flying High Partnership's staff CPL offer. She has a breadth of experience in creating the conditions for the development and empowerment of the people within schools. Sarah holds a Post Graduate Certificate in Training and Development and NPQH and is currently studying for the NPQEL. She has co-authored a number of research reports including DFE Workload Challenge Report: Collaborative Planning, Transform Leadership Study, and Inspiring Leaders Today: Leadership.

Joining the programme

Applicant schools must complete the application form below, individually. This form asks for important information about the individual leaders and their setting to help us to best shape the project. Please set aside 20 minutes to complete this.

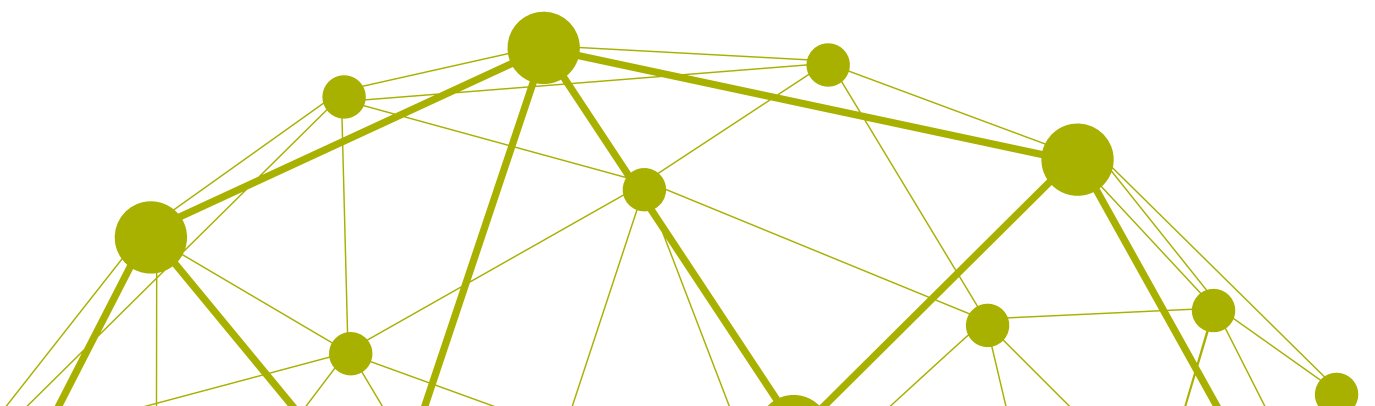
Costs

MATs are welcome to register up to three schools for the programme. The cost attached to this are as follows:

- One school - £450
- Two schools - £675
- Three schools - £800

The invoice for this fee will be sent directly to the MAT for payment.

[Click here to apply](#)





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Contact information

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