

## **Biography Sir John Rowling**

John Rowling was a teacher for 40 years, the last 19 as headteacher of Nunthorpe Comprehensive School, Middlesbrough. Nunthorpe became a Beacon School, then a Leading Edge School. Examination performance at GCSE improved year after year reaching 79.2% in 2002, making Nunthorpe the highest achieving state 11-16 school in the North of England. The school is non-selective and has a normal intake based on NFER scores. This achievement was achieved by the dedication of staff and a series of initiatives supporting good teaching, namely dedicated pastoral care and sophisticated personalised monitoring procedures designed to draw out the best of student potential. The Beacon partnership with three schools in socially disadvantaged areas shared principles of excellence together; as a result their GCSE results improved by an average 15.3% in one year.

In January 2002 John wrote *Heading Towards Excellence*, a toolkit for headteachers, based around his experiences in moving towards excellence. The process which was shared by all staff working in the school had a major impact on personal thinking and practice. The book has been an educational best seller.

In January 2004 a follow up book was published. Entitled *Changing Towards Excellence* it highlights the processes for transforming organisations towards excellence. Whether it is a change in culture or change in standards the seven principles outlined in this book reflect theory and practice at Nunthorpe and are applicable in any organisation, educational or otherwise.

These two themes of Personal Excellence and Organisational Excellence form the basis of the Consultancy work that John is presently engaged in. For several years he has been involved in Personal Development Training for headteachers and senior staff in schools and in Key Note speaking to LA Conferences, teams of school leaders or Staff training days. He still spends some time in London linking schools in the Independent sector (Eton, Harrow, City of London School for Girls, Eltham College, and Hampton School) and from the Maintained sector in socially challenging circumstances in the capital. In addition he has been Consultant Adviser in the creation of a City Academy in Birmingham and has worked in 2009 as Chief Education Adviser with Emmanuel Schools Foundation. Presently he is involved in a collaborative called The PiXL Club (Partners in Excellence) intended to raise standards in **150 schools** in and around London and in 20 schools in the North of England, based on principles outlined in his latest book *Climbing Towards Excellence*. Overall improvement in 2009 GCSE performance was twice the national average and with English and Maths exceeded the national figures by 67%. PiXL, Partners in Excellence, was formed in 2008 initially linking 75 schools in London and other parts of England involved in raising standards at GCSE. John is the Director of this organisation which meets centrally in London and extends to Associate work in schools as well as an extension group now working in the North of England.

In June 2003 John was awarded a knighthood for 'Services to education'. He hopes that the focus of these services will transfer from the school he led to encourage and benefit leaders nationwide who have aspirations towards personal and organisational excellence. He is visiting Professor at St Mary's University College, London.

John is married to Sheila, a teacher, has a daughter Rachel, now Assistant Headteacher in Northumberland and a son, Nick, who qualified with a degree in building surveying and is now a Chartered Surveyor working in Newcastle. John can be contacted by e-mail on **therowlings@hotmail.com**.