

CELEBRATING 5 YEARS OF THE School of PiXL Leadership

When I completed what was then the PiXL Outstanding Headteacher Programme, I was a Vice Principal unsure about my next steps and probably not confident that I could ever be a Head and juggle the demands of a young family. I think it would be fair to say that my attendance on this programme, and exposure to some wonderfully inspirational leaders, changed all of that.

I am now in my second Headship and know that this programme gave me not only confidence, skills and knowledge but, even more importantly, an amazing network to draw upon: throughout the pandemic I have called upon the support of people who not only presented on this programme, but those who were my peers.

The experience was the best in my professional career and one I would happily repeat even now. I learnt so much from amazing leaders across the sector. I owe much to this programme, the people on it and to PiXL.

Will Teece

Headteacher, *Brookvale Groby Learning Campus*



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My journey with PiXL began 5 years ago in 2016, when I became the Deputy Headteacher responsible for Curriculum and Standards. My knowledge of the curriculum was very strong, having been the English Subject Leader across the school. I was able to implement the Power of Reading to support each year group's Learning Journey, but more importantly, to improve the culture of Reading across the school.

However, I absolutely feared the assessment side, especially after the horrendous SATs year of the 'Dodo paper'. Whilst our results for individual subjects were at or above national levels, the Combined RWM measure was low and I felt hugely responsible. I remember so vividly attending my first PiXL conference and walking away thinking this is what assessment should be about: like safeguarding, assessment is everyone's business – to diagnose the gaps, implement therapies, test to see whether subject knowledge is secure and review the practice. I wanted to change the mindset of my staff from thinking that assessment was a bolt-on to actually being an integral part of our curriculum programme.

PiXL allowed me to do this, as well as create a vision and culture around assessment that is now embedded!

My leadership of curriculum and assessment was further enhanced through the regular dialogue with our PiXL associate, who helped me to become more forensic about the use of pupil data and improve my own data wisdom. Attending conferences enabled me to network with other colleagues and share good practice, but also to listen and hear ideas from other educational leaders. I always came away from these inspired, from a quote, book or keynote speaker.

I believe the team at PiXL help develop and grow future leaders. Thanks to PiXL, I have been afforded many opportunities in which to do this. In 2018, I wrote an article in the PiXL Headlines Magazine about our school's PiXL journey. I presented one of the breakouts at the June 2018 PiXL Conference and allowed myself to be interviewed live on stage by Christina Moody on the role of the RSL.

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The highlight of my PiXL journey thus far would be being part of the first cohort of delegates on the Exceptional Senior Leadership Programme, where I was able to exercise my leadership muscles and be taken out of my comfort zone as a leader. The experience elevated my confidence and helped me to become a more courageous and dynamic leader, particularly in making those big decisions that impact pupils' outcomes.

During the first lockdown last year, I felt honoured to have presented at the PiXL Middle Leadership Conference and was able to share my knowledge more widely with other schools. In reflection, my growth as leader has provided scope to develop others: I lead high-quality CPD across the school, facilitate the new ECF programme and have recently been promoted to Associate Headteacher. When I look back on what I have achieved, PiXL has helped me on my journey!

Vanessa Atkinson-Aransiola,
Associate Headteacher (Curriculum & Assessment),
St Teresa's Catholic Primary School



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Leadership development can easily play second fiddle to the pragmatics of operational duties in school and the School of PiXL Leadership provides the space, leadership scholarship and provocations to enable me to consider the impact of my own leadership, while perhaps most satisfyingly engaging in the leadership development of others.

The Exceptional Senior Leaders course is a good example of how the School of PiXL Leadership goes beyond the transactional nature of other leadership courses; the opportunity to network and build sustainable professional collaborations has been an ongoing source of my own leadership development and school improvement. In bringing together leadership influencers from a diverse representation of disciplines, PiXL gives a unique and, at times, unexpected insight into the nature of leadership and its capacity to establish positive and authentic cultures.

Alison Foster

Deputy Headteacher, *Vyners School*

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The School of PiXL Leadership helped me on my journey. In 2016 I was a Deputy Headteacher at a school in Hertfordshire, and knew the time was coming to start applying for Headships, but as someone who historically found interviews difficult, I didn't feel ready. I was given the opportunity to join the PiXL Outstanding Headteachers of the Future course and I am certain that without it, I would not have been appointed to my current post.

The course included two fantastic two-day residentials and a further day in London, where we heard from inspirational speakers sharing their experiences of the challenges they had faced and how they overcame them. Back in 2016-17 the speakers included Geoff Barton, Matthew Syed, Andy Buck, Steve Chalke, Estelle Morris, and of course many of our inspiring PiXL colleagues. We also had training on public speaking and a valuable mock interview with two experienced Headteachers. I had James Heale as my coach; we had 1-1 sessions on each of the five days, as well as visits to each other's schools during the year.

As part of the course, I developed my understanding of leadership strategies:

- how to inspire colleagues
- how to manage difficult situations
- how to have challenging conversations
- how to manage the brand of the school
- how to lead change
- and the importance of culture

I had completed other leadership training previously, but nothing compared to the quality of this programme. The process gave me the knowledge I needed, the confidence to prepare well, and the ability to deliver in an interview, as well as the support network to help me with the challenges I faced when I secured my first headship towards the end of 2017.

Matt Stevens

Principal, Saracens High School



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The School of PiXL Leadership helped me on my journey. It has been transformational for me as a leader. I have grown personally and professionally through the various opportunities afforded to me through this programme. I absolutely loved hearing and learning from a range of inspirational speakers who talked about leadership in their respective fields. I was captivated as they talked about the highs and lows of leadership and I was motivated by their success stories, their advice and their drive to be the best leaders they could be which, in turn, challenged and inspired me.

I was very fortunate through this programme to have a coach/mentor provided by PiXL. This allowed me to learn from a more experienced leader than me. I found the sessions really useful as I was able to discuss openly where I wanted to improve as a leader. My coach/mentor was brilliant. I was able to take those conversations and subsequently adapt my own leadership.

I loved the networking side of this course. I got to spend meaningful time with nearly 40 Headteachers. It was fantastic to network with others, to learn about them, to learn about different school contexts, to talk about what we have in common as school leaders and to see

different leadership styles in action. I also had the chance to visit schools which I just loved. It was a privilege to visit successful schools. I gleaned so many ideas from these visits and again have made positive changes in my own school as a result of these visits.

My experience of the SoPL is one I will never forget. I am so glad that I took deliberate time to focus on developing myself as a leader. Every moment was well spent and the investment has been truly worth it. I am a better leader which, in turn, means that I am able to serve my school community more effectively – all thanks to PiXL. My leadership journey continues and I look forward to embracing more SoPL opportunities!

Jenny Lendrum
Headteacher, *Antrim Grammar School*



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I thoroughly enjoyed being a participant of the Exceptional Headteachers programme. The title alone incited ambition and a challenge to become exactly that.

When I began the programme, I had just been appointed to my first Headship. Little did I know that I would become a 'pandemic' headteacher only a term and a month in. I am confident that mixing with the other excellent leaders I met on this programme contributed to giving me the confidence and the resolve to lead my school successfully through this unprecedented time and become one of the many 'exceptional' headteachers.

The combination of external speakers, networking and sharing was brilliant. After the first two days, I was thirsting for more and looked forward to each follow-up session. Not only did I gain a fantastic coach who I maintain contact with, but I was inspired to coach others and share practice with some brilliant heads. I expanded my network and have seen myself flourish and grow as a headteacher and inspire my first book. Who knew it would give me so much more than just notes on paper! I would highly recommend this to all early headteachers. Well done PiXL.

Miriam Manderson,
Headteacher, *Rooks Heath School*

