

## **Models of leadership**

**Stella Blackmore, NCSL National Succession Consultant for the West Midlands**

Stella Blackmore, National Succession Consultant for the West Midlands, is clear that federations can provide opportunities for aspiring headteachers, as most federations will have a headteacher who has been appointed because they are effective as a headteacher and a team builder.

She says: “What you can learn from these people will be of the most enormous benefit. Heads of federated schools, especially where they are working outside their own school, becoming system leaders and helping communities, have a lot to share.”

There is also a climate of shared endeavour and improvement in a federation. “It brings out the passion in everyone who works there,” Stella said. “And working in a place where you are required to be flexible, adaptable and work with students from two different communities also looks good on your CV.”

**Wendy Jacobs, executive headteacher of Rosendale Primary School and Christ Church Primary, south London**

Rosendale school, a large primary with three-form entry, 700 pupils and 120 staff, was struggling when Wendy was appointed as headteacher. She restructured to create three phases, each led by a deputy, and appointed 15 new teachers.

“We had to build a new team, share good practice and bring in peer mentoring and observations and team teaching,” she said. “It was very much about trying to bring this school up to a good standard. It was also about identifying the strengths in the team, making it a ‘can do’ culture and getting rid of the blame culture.”

Having turned Rosendale around, she took over Christ Church in 2005 when the school was struggling. In the first year, Wendy spent the majority of her time giving opportunities to the deputy and leadership team to step up in her absence.

Wendy convinced Rosendale’s governors to federate with Christ Church by emphasising the benefits to the children of promoting community cohesion between the different school populations, but also the benefits for staff continuous professional development.

The federation now operates as one school with three forms in one and one in the other. Staff plan and train together, children from one school go to the other, and they go on joint trips. Initially, Rosendale helped to train and develop the team at Christ Church but, as the federation matured, staff development has become a two-way thing with staff at each school learning from their colleagues.

### **Co-heads**

**Anita Samani and Tim Jones, co-heads, Byron Court Primary, Wembley**

Tim Jones, working towards a phased retirement, has cut his working week to three days, while Anita, previously a deputy, is acting headteacher for the other two.

The arrangement has given Anita the chance to build on her NPQH training while benefiting from Tim’s wealth of experience. She had not pursued headship before but being a co-head has enabled her to see the job in a different light.

“I completed NPQH in 2006,” she said. “Working closely with Tim, I knew what the job entailed but was unsure whether I wanted to take on all of the responsibility. The idea seemed a win-win situation: he would be holding my hand while I did it, but I could actually get a feel of the job and whether I want to go down that path.”

**They shared the responsibilities: Anita, who has more recent classroom experience, leads on teaching and learning, while Tim handles budget and buildings issues. Staff appointments are handled together.**

**Crucial to the arrangement is a joint view of how the school needs to progress and mutual trust. “The vision and values are very important: you must share them and want the same type of school,” said Tim.**

**Some leadership responsibilities are also delegated. “Co-headship has made us look very carefully at our own roles,” said Anita. “We’d got into the habit of doing certain things in a certain way and we realised that some things don’t have to be done by one of us.” It has created, for example, an opening for a deputy who works with Anita when Tim is not in school on Thursdays and Fridays.**

**Sarah and Pat Fielding, co-heads, Haydn Primary School, Nottingham**  
**Sarah Fielding has been co-head with her husband, Pat, at Haydn Primary School in Nottingham since 2007. The two worked together previously in Leicester and, prior to that, were co-deputies.**

**They have organised their work in various different ways, but currently work alternate weeks – Wednesday to Wednesday – which helps both reduce the sense of being away from school for too long, and ensure that both of them are involved in all regular school activities, such as staff meetings.**

**Practicalities aside, Sarah stresses that the key to making it work is “a very clear idea of where it is we want to get to, a shared vision of where we want to be. This underpins all decisions made as a job-share pair. Pat and I will approach things in entirely different ways but colleagues understand that shared aims underpin our work.”**

**The benefits for the individuals and the school are numerous, Sarah added.**

**“Headship is a wonderful but challenging job. For me, having shared responsibility and accountability reduces the sense of isolation that you can feel as a head. I’ve had someone to talk things through when we’ve had challenging situations to deal with.**

**“You can also develop different responses to the same issue. We don’t agree all of the time so we have to work decisions through, debating the best ways forward. We believe this has made our decisions more robust than otherwise would have been the case. We also have the benefit of constant professional development through working closely alongside someone else. You can observe their way of doing something and reflect upon your own.”**

**Working part-time as a headteacher has also enabled Sarah and Patrick to take on other roles, such as school improvement partner, work with the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, and work on several projects with NCSL. These roles inevitably feed back into their work as headteachers. The opportunity, as a co-head, to carry on teaching for part of the week may be an added attraction for some contemplating headship but unsure about abandoning the classroom, she said.**