

A PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIP

Stuart Gillespie takes a look at how the Oxford Education Deanery is working with local teachers

DR KATHARINE BURN (BELOW), DIRECTOR OF THE DEANERY, WORKS WITH TEACHERS AT LOCAL SCHOOLS SUCH AS MATTHEW ARNOLD (PICTURED RIGHT)

For Eluned Harries, assistant headteacher at Matthew Arnold School in Botley, west Oxford, it's about developing next practice as well as best practice. Ms Harries is her school's Research Champion – a role designed to foster close collaboration between local schools and the Oxford Education Deanery, part of Oxford University.

Formally established in 2013 the Deanery grew out of the existing teacher education partnership between the University's Department of Education and secondary schools in Oxfordshire. Since the formation of the Deanery, that partnership has grown to encompass research and professional development, in addition to the longstanding teacher training programme.

'Back in the 1980s the local authority made a huge commitment to working with Oxford University through the pioneering teacher education programme,' says Dr Katharine Burn, the Deanery's Director. 'What we have now is a fully realised and integrated version of that initial partnership, in which we can share our world-class research with the community, as well as harnessing the knowledge and experience of practitioners from across the county.'



The Deanery works with a pool of 30 local schools on three strands of activity: initial teacher education, continuing professional development, and research. Initial training is provided through the Postgraduate Certificate in Education, while continuing development takes the form of – among other initiatives – an induction programme for newly qualified teachers, subject teacher networks, and an Enhanced Master's in Learning and Teaching.

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Ms Harries has a hand in all three Deanery strands, supervising a group of seven Oxford University-based interns and coordinating the city of Oxford teachers enrolled in the enhanced master's programme. She says of her role as Research Champion: 'At Matthew Arnold we believe it's essential for our teachers to be research-engaged because it helps develop a culture of professional learning and allows teachers to heighten their professional capacities. We want them to become reflective practitioners and, in this respect, the process of carrying out the research is often as important as the outcomes.'

She adds: 'In my role as Research Champion I aim to act as a bridge between research and practice, helping teachers interrogate their own work and evaluate external research. We're professionals, so we sift and sort, establishing what makes the most difference to us in our classrooms and in the wider school contexts. We want our teachers to be at the cutting-

edge of their profession, helping develop next practice as well as best practice.'

Matthew Arnold School recently took part in a research project led by Professor Harry Daniels, exploring the ways in which local schools collaborate with each other to develop their methods in support of vulnerable students. One of Matthew Arnold's teachers, meanwhile, is currently researching how best to use peer observation in schools as part of the enhanced master's course.

Other recent and ongoing pieces of research involving Deanery collaboration with local schools include one project which examined how young people in schools across the city anticipate and plan their futures – including thoughts of going to university – and another looking at how to assess English fluency in non-native speakers in ways that will ease their transition from primary to secondary school.

Dr Burn, a Fellow of St Cross College who taught history in Oxford schools for ten years, adds: 'Our vision is clear: we want to help improve educational outcomes in the county by encouraging and facilitating local teachers – at all stages of their careers – to develop as professionals. Teacher retention is an issue in the education system, and we hope the excitement of being involved with the University, of being involved with cutting-edge research, will go some way to addressing this locally.'

'As for the future, we have plans to expand the Research Champion programme, and we are also increasingly thinking about primary schools. Much of the research carried out in Oxford's Department of Education is focused on the early years, and we have just submitted a funding application with a view to developing a partnership model with local primary schools.'

► More about the Deanery and its activities at www.educationdeanery.ox.ac.uk

