

PARTICIPANT CASE STUDY FROM FACULTY LEADER TO FUTURE LEADER

Perry Beeches - The Academy was a failing school just five years ago. In 2006, only 20% of students achieved 5 A*-C GCSEs including English and maths, and the school was under an Ofsted 'Notice to Improve'. When new Headteacher Liam Nolan arrived in April 2007, he faced significant challenges, but his outstanding leadership rapidly drove the team to a dramatic increase in performance and the school achieved 51% 5 A*-C GCSEs including English and maths in 2008. This made Perry Beeches the most improved school in the UK that year.

For Liam, the challenge now lay in embedding long term, sustainable improvement in a school that is located in a deprived, inner-city Birmingham neighbourhood; approximately 80% of pupils come from the bottom 20% of household incomes, and pupils are well behind national averages for attainment on entry into Year 7. Part of the solution came through Liam's decision in 2010 to nominate Assistant Headteacher Russell Bond as an internal candidate for the Future Leaders programme: an accelerated leadership development programme for challenging schools to train outstanding individuals to become headteachers in around four years.

Russell, who joined the school in 2009, had already shown his potential to make an impact as a leader. As a new Head of Design and Technology he had taken his department from 36% GCSEs A*-C to 100% A*-C GCSEs and was quickly promoted to the school's senior leadership team the following year. Both Russell and Liam felt that the Future Leaders programme would provide the support and intensive training opportunities that they needed to assist the school's succession planning.

After successfully completing the Future Leaders rigorous selection process and joining the 2010 cohort as an internal participant, Russell remained at Perry Beeches charged with the challenging task of making an impact at whole-school level by reducing the school's deficit.



Russell Bond with students from Perry Beeches

In order to help him achieve this, Russell benefitted from the same coaching, training and networking opportunities that Future Leaders provides for every participant.

“When I found out about what Future Leaders had to offer I knew that it would help make me a better leader. The core values Future Leaders embodies really resonated with me and after the summer ‘Foundations’ residential training I knew I wanted to be part of this leadership movement. Future Leaders is child-focussed and I supported the organisation’s values of improving the education and therefore life chances and ambitions of young people in challenging circumstances.” Future Leader Russell Bond



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Russell says, “The support from Leadership Development Advisers (LDAs) and the Future Leaders team is second to none. They have first class mentoring to support, advise, coach and guide you through the transition to senior leadership and ultimately headship.”

A key issue for the school was to reduce their deficit and balance the budget. The school needed to pay back the Local Authority their arrears over a five year period. The challenge for Russell was to do this without affecting outcomes for students.

Russell used a number of strategies to bring the school back into financial health. 35.6% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, but not all parents claim their entitlement. Not only were these pupils missing out on a free lunch, the school could also not claim for their Pupil Premium. Therefore, Russell ran assemblies to raise awareness of this and all parents/carers were sent letters and relevant forms to enable them to directly claim the benefit. As a result, the amount received in Pupil Premium funding increased to £138,890 - one of the largest increases in funding that year. Russell also knew some staff were not aware of the school’s financial situation and funds were being lost through waste. Staff budget holders were given additional training on school finance and attended a workshop on using budgets effectively. The outcome of the training was that budget holders spent less than what they were allocated and created a surplus.

Russell was also keen for students to learn about financial responsibility. He started an ‘in-school bank’ and over 300 students now have accounts and are planning for their future. Furthermore, students have received MoneySense training from NatWest and are currently completing evaluations on the topic.

As a result, the school managed to repay 57.9% of the deficit by the end of Year 1 of the repayment plan. In addition, they have also reduced expenditure in 2011/12 which means by the end of Year 2 of the five year plan they will have paid back the full amount to the Local Authority. Having a tight budget on the school’s resources did not negatively affect students; the 2011 GCSE results were the school’s best ever with 75% achieving 5 A*-C GCSEs including English and maths.

Russell commented, “The deficit reduction has been a great success, the school now has flexibility in future years. The financial position also ensures that the school is able to work on its priorities and have the funding available to make long term decisions.”

Through his involvement with Future Leaders, Russell was also able to bring about significant change in the way the school engages with its local community to raise aspirations. He was the driving force behind a project to recruit graduates from neighbouring universities as one-to-one coaches for pupils, inspired by a similar practice that he and Liam witnessed when they visited Match Charter School in Boston, MA as part of the 2010 Future Leaders US Study Tour. The project began in 2011 and is now in full swing, with five graduates from Birmingham City University tutoring children in Year 10 to help them in early entry for English and maths GCSEs.

“Russell has raised his game since joining Future Leaders and has proved himself to be a very valuable member on our senior leadership team. He leads with a thoughtful, considered confidence and has driven new agendas right across our school. His work on the tutoring project, using graduates to individually coach Year 10 students, has been remarkable. Russell is clearly the epitome of Future Leaders!”
Liam Nolan, Headteacher

Alongside his dedication to improve results and reduce the deficit, Russell felt strongly that younger pupils in the school needed greater access to a broader range of life experiences.

He was able to make a powerful impact through a project that offered Year 9 students to experience an overseas trip to Normandy, France as part of their curriculum. Many of the school’s children had never had the opportunity to undertake a cultural visit on this scale before and Russell felt that the trip would form an important part of the pupils’ learning experience.

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Despite some initial reluctance from a few parents, he successfully engaged with the school community, holding information sessions and inspiring the whole school to get involved with fundraising to ensure that no child would be left behind because of their financial circumstances.

Russell believes his training, along with the support from his LDA and peers within the Future Leaders network really helped to make the trip as successful as possible; Louise Kelman, a fellow Future Leader on the school's senior leadership team accompanied him on the trip. The impact on students was profound – the entire year group of almost two hundred children benefitted from the opportunity to travel abroad and learn about another culture first-hand. The trip will now be embedded as part of the school's ongoing commitment to raising aspirations



Students from Perry Beeches in Normandy, France

Gregg Robbins from Year 9 commented on the visit: “It was a good experience because we got to try new things like frogs’ legs and snails! We had a really fun week with all of our friends away from home. We got to see what France is like and how the French people live.”

Only in his first year of the Future Leaders programme, Russell was able to reduce the school's budget deficit, organise an overseas trip and a tutoring intervention project.

Russell sums up his experience on Future Leaders and his hopes for the future enthusiastically:

“I have learnt much about myself and my core values. I now fully understand that the core business of a school is to improve the life chances of young people. Often at school we can get bogged down with the day-to-day but I have learnt to focus on the end result of student improvement and make sure that we achieve that.”

“At the moment I am concentrating on the students at Perry Beeches and making sure that we improve results for the sixth year running. My plan for the future is to become a headteacher of a failing school in a challenging area and make it outstanding.”