

Is your school working in partnerships with other schools?

How effective are these partnerships, and how do you know?

Across the UK, collaboration between schools is increasingly seen as the key driver to improve outcomes for pupils. Responsibility for school improvement lies overwhelmingly within schools themselves and/or groups of schools working in a range of partnerships, including Academy Trusts, federations and teaching school alliances. How can teachers and school leaders make the most of these collaborative opportunities? How can resources be used most efficiently and how can collaboration take place with purpose and rigour? Education Development Trust has developed the Partnerships Evaluation Tool to support partnerships of schools.

Why focus on improving collaboration?

Collaboration between schools is increasingly seen as a means of improving outcomes. From our work with school systems in the UK and internationally we have found that certain conditions are required for collaboration to result in sustained improvement.

The relationships between groups of schools that achieve sustained improvements is characterised by high levels of professional trust ('Partnership') and high levels of support and challenge (Fig. 1).

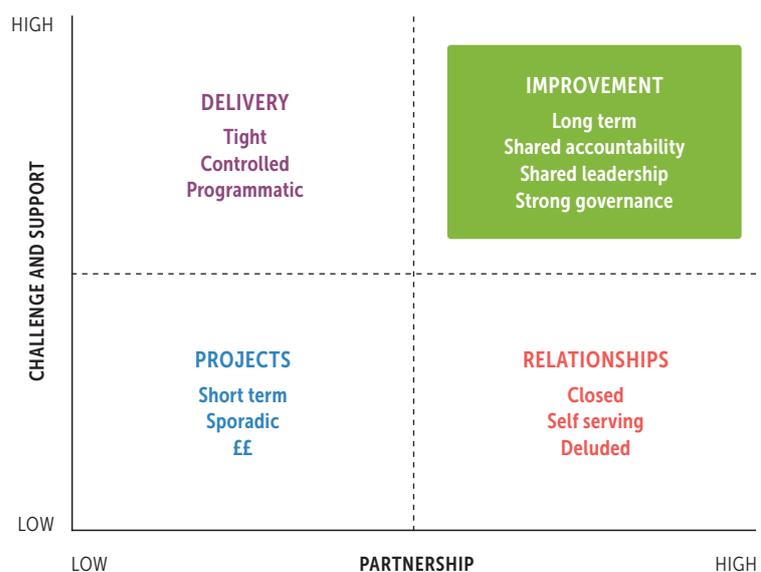


Fig.1 – Forms of collaboration

Reaching the 'Improvement' box is not easy, many schools partnerships fall short and therefore the way that schools collaborate should be approached explicitly. Through our peer review programme, SPP, and this tool we aim to help partnerships of schools to sustainably improve.

What is the Partnership Evaluation Tool?

This tool is a web-based application that enables school leaders to collaborate with greater ease and rigour. This tool:

1. enables any partnership to easily evaluate the quality of their collaboration
2. helps prioritise improvement objectives across partnerships so that resources are targeted as efficiently as possible
3. ensures that talent and effective practice is shared within and across partnerships allowing all schools to benefit;
4. helps to establish a dialogue and way of working that builds challenge, support and trust

This tool uses an enquiry-based approach based on a set of themes and questions to assess the quality of collaboration. These themes build on promising practice about the vital factors for/indicators of effective collaborative working. They have been created with schools and the tool is designed to flex to the ambitions and needs of any partnership, regardless of size, location or focus.

Education Development Trust's Partnership Evaluation Tool ensures that school to school collaboration is outcomes focused and efficient.

How does this tool work?

The process of using the tool will vary by partnership as it should support your existing rhythms and routines. We have found that the tool is most effective when used as follows:

1. Leaders from each school will score their school and the partnership against criteria across three 'Areas of Enquiry' and their sub-themes and record their areas of strength and areas for development
2. The tool will analyse scores from across the partnership and provide a visualization of partnership and school scores for each Area of Enquiry and sub-theme (Fig 2)
3. School leaders will use this information at their partnership meetings as a basis for support, challenge and to better plan improvement activities
4. This cycle of activity usually takes place on a termly basis

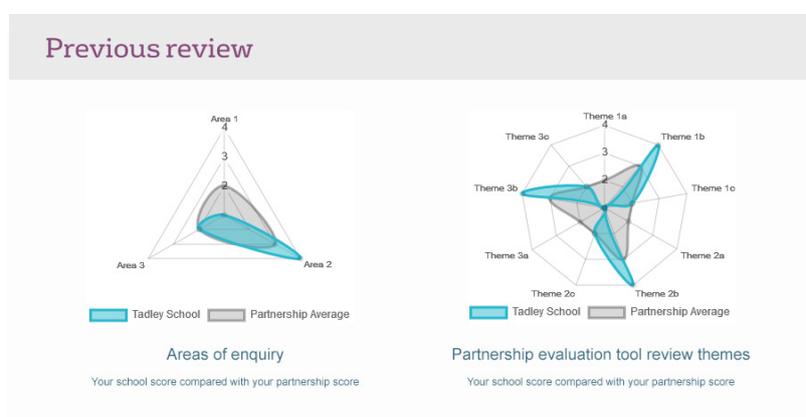


Fig.2 – Partnership Analysis

THE THREE AREAS OF ENQUIRY USED IN THIS TOOL ARE:

- 1 Understanding and committing to our shared ambition
- 2 Knowing our reality and impact
- 3 Creating a learning partnership where everyone belongs and everyone thrives

'The partnership has matured greatly since we started using it [the tool] and we are now much more open and honest about the situation in our schools, we share outcomes and issues and concerns. The process has been the catalyst to bring the partnership closer together and to being much more effective.'

Headteacher and Partnership Lead, Cumbria