

## Case study: Northampton Town Area Improvement Partnership



### How it started

A group of Northampton schools and the Local Authority set up the AIP (Area Improvement Partnership) to respond to a number of challenges they jointly faced including the aftermath of a school system re-organisation, changing demographics of the school population, a large number of schools causing concern, and increasing numbers of schools that were judged to be failing by external inspections.

The Northampton Town AIP includes schools, early years settings, and children's services. Schools have pooled resources and commissioned support to secure improvement in vulnerable schools. There is shared accountability for improving quality across the community of schools, and a commitment to the notion of securing a level of entitlement for all children, young people and their families.

Whilst there is a key focus on building capacity for all schools, there is recognition that some schools have a higher level of need than others. Schools in the partnership have therefore pooled financial resources to support

intensive programmes of support to the most vulnerable schools.

### Relationship with AIP and LA

The AIP, with the support of the LA, commissioned EdisonLearning to work as a strategic educational partner. The partnership between the LA and AIP focuses on collectively accelerating the progress of schools towards a key set of outcomes in line with the Local Authority vision for the county, and the local school context.

### How it works

The work with both secondary and primary schools is focused on the specific priority outcomes, which collectively help turn the vision of schools and the partnership into reality. The partnership is able to draw upon outstanding practice both nationally and internationally, not only in terms of system leadership and classroom practice, but also in terms of parental involvement, work with families, communities and involvement of other agencies to ensure a universal entitlement for all children.

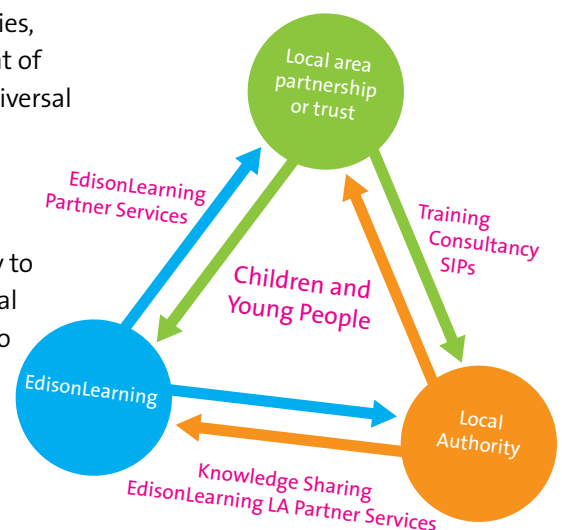
### Commissioning process

The AIP has developed as an effective commissioning body to identify the needs of individual schools and introduce them to appropriate programmes of

effective school support for which they take a shared accountability. Critical to success is the ongoing sharing of knowledge and practice between EdisonLearning, the Local Authority and schools, together with the appropriate provision of development services and activities designed to build capacity at the LA level and create high quality provision for greater numbers of children and young people across Northamptonshire.

### The Good to Great Project – Developing Excellence in Practice

Initiated in July 2009, the goal of the project is to build 'excellence in practice' in the participating schools. The seven primary schools and one secondary school involved were nominated by the LA and underwent a series of exploratory workshops prior to participation. This project is built on 'strength' rather than 'significant



**The coherent and sustained nature of the support EdisonLearning provides is the key to the long-term improvements we are aiming for**

– Paul Burnett, Director of Children's Services, Northamptonshire



improvement need' and an outcome that all parties want to achieve is to share their evidence of further successes with a wider audience. In partnership with the schools involved, EdisonLearning is developing independent, objective measures of 'excellence' that have credibility with all parties and are subject to scrutiny by all stakeholders. Three of the primary schools have received an Ofsted inspection since the starting the project with two achieving 'Good' overall and one 'Outstanding'. The secondary school received a Subject Inspection with a Good judgement.

### The Quality of Teaching Framework and Coaching Project

Commissioned by the Northampton Town AIP, this innovative two-year project draws together a group of primary and secondary teachers across Northampton Town working in collaboration with LA advisers and EdisonLearning Achievement Advisers. The project will develop a detailed rubric for teaching, so that teachers can identify the precise skills and behaviours needed to create successful learning across phases, and builds on the 2009 Ofsted descriptors. In addition to the publication of the Framework to every teacher in Northampton, the resource will be available for the Virtual Learning Community. A detailed coaching programme has been developed to support the use and impact of the Framework for Quality Teaching and Learning.

### Accountability and Reporting to the AIP

The AIP has developed a reporting and accountability programme for all strategic partnership projects that includes the four key aspects of: implementation and impact; improvement in the quality of teaching across schools; collation of student and school outcomes and school feedback on the services provided.

### The impact of our partnership

EdisonLearning was originally commissioned to work with sixteen primary schools and four secondary schools identified by the DCFS and/or the local authority as working in very challenging circumstances. Nine of these schools have had inspections since the inception of the partnership, and all have been judged at least satisfactory. For seven of the schools it is possible to make direct comparisons of Ofsted

*EdisonLearning has given us the confidence to feel our judgements are the right ones. Working in a cluster with other schools is helpful, and it's very reassuring to feel you have 'an expert on tap'*

*– Catherine Keohane, Headteacher, Briar Hill Primary School*

judgements (the other two could not, due to changes in school status and inspection frameworks), and of these, four had improved grades for Overall effectiveness, Achievement and Value for Money.

The network of four secondary schools in Northampton saw very significant progress in their GCSE outcomes over the first year of the partnership (see graph).

GCSE Results for Northampton Secondary Schools Partnered with EdisonLearning since May 2008 (One in January 2009)

