



## **Project Management Experience**

### **A N Godetz**

As executive headteacher, I gained experience of managing many complex projects across a number of different disciplines, often with more than two or three running consecutively.

These included:

Remodelling a school premises design;

Bringing three school budgets into one and eliminating an inherited, deficit budget (at the time, one of the largest in the authority);

Demolishing, redesigning and rebuilding two, commercial school kitchens;

Remodelling and designing a variety of toilet suites;

Restructuring senior staff roles to support a federation and later an amalgamation, (50% instant growth in organisation);

Repeatedly implementing national updates on curriculum content, assessment, pupil testing and inspection schedules and expectations; at whole school and local authority level;

Establishing and operating wrap around care services (before and after school childcare);

Establishing and running a Children Centre;

Establishing and running all day, childcare for 2 year olds;

Managing the transition of a community school to become part of a Multi Academy Trust;

Tendering and managing cleaning, catering and premises contracts and a whole range of Service level Agreements;

Managing capability, performance management, discipline, conduct, dispute and allegation processes;

Leading and coordinating public consultations;

Cascading information to large groups of staff, pupils, parents and members of the public;

Supporting local authority implementation of national and local strategies, including Remodelling the Workforce, establishing Children's Centres, strategic ICT planning, developing a coordinated approach to managing children with social, mental and emotional needs, Inclusive practice , Multi-Agency working and strategic financial planning.

Coaching headteachers as Part of the, then, National College for School Leadership's London Challenge;

Implementing new terms and conditions procedures, appraisal and performance management practices and payment by results cycles for a range of different staff groups.

### **Detailed STAR analysis of three projects:**

#### **Example 1**

#### **Implementing the Children Centre Strategy at Local Authority and School Level**

##### **Situation**

The Every Child Matters initiative proposed a switch from Sure Start local programmes to Sure Start Children's Centres, which would be controlled by local authorities, and would be provided not just in the most disadvantaged areas. In the 2004 Comprehensive Spending Review, the then Chancellor Gordon Brown announced that the Government would provide funding for 2,500 Children's Centres by 2008. This target was later increased to 3,500 Children's Centres by 2010.

##### **Task**

Each local authority was to establish a network of Children's Centres. These were to be, where possible, attached to existing providers of universal children's services.

As the largest London borough, Croydon had to establish over 20.

All leaders of children services needed to be trained to understand the aims and vision of the Children Centre Strategy. A strategic planning group needed to be established with representation from all stakeholders. These included Education; the NHS; Private and Voluntary Sectors; Social Services and Local Authority Officers in School Placement and Buildings departments.

Existing settings needed to be identified for Children Centre designation. In education, many headteachers already felt overstretched with the direct focus of teaching and learning, accountability judgements of children's outcomes and the demands of Local Management of Schools. Therefore, there was a significant job to do on changing hearts and minds, as well as Children Centre Strategy training.

## Action

In 2005, a local authority “Children Centre Strategy Group” was established, and due to her commitment to multi-agency working, success as an extended school cluster leader and promotion of Family First Values, Nicole was recruited to be a part of this.

After undertaking National Strategy training, Nicole became part of a small group of senior, local authority staff who delivered the Children Centre training and vision throughout the borough.

In 2007, Nicole successfully bid to have a Children’s Centre at her own school, at which she was head teacher. As well as having no existing space to accommodate a Centre, the existing school premises were not fit for purpose and needed updating. This was the era of “Building Schools for the Future” and “Primary Capital” funding strategies. Nicole ran an architectural competition to gain insight and expert input into a re-design of the school, to make it an inclusive, sustainable and fit for purpose educational establishment.

Nicole was aware of the lack of client engagement in the school rebuilding programme. This was such a prevalent issue that Jack Pringle, the then president of the Royal Institute for British Architects, RIBA, responded positively to the competition launch invite. Over 100 architects attended. A diverse panel of councillors, architects and governors; brought together by Nicole, as well as staff, parents and pupils, unanimously chose the successful design.

The appointed firm’s (Erect Architects) design, proposed a 4-phase plan, which preserved the school’s positive attributes, incorporated all the headteacher’s movement flow and logistical requirements and placed the Children Centre at the forefront of the school.

The local authority agreed this plan to re-design the school, and applauded the attention to all the, then current, indicators of good practice: consultation, inclusion, sustainability and client engagement. Unfortunately, in 2009, there was an increasing demand for school places in the borough, and although supportive of the plan, the local authority had to divert funds to expansion programmes.

The change of administration in central government in 2010, led to a change in policy on school buildings, and monies were not put back into the Primary Capital fund, so the re-modelling project, in its 4 phases, did not happen. However, Nicole re-phased the project, and secured funding for the re-design and expansion of the existing nursery building to incorporate a new Children’s Centre.

Nicole was permitted, at her request, to project manage the Children's Centre building development for the local authority; all the other developments of Centres in Croydon were managed by the Local Authority.

In addition to the premises project, a new staffing structure, different to anything else that had been in place in schools previously, was required, recruitment undertaken and a service plan devised; Nicole led on all of these. She became part of a Local Cluster of Centres and continued strategic input with the Local Authority Children Centre Strategy.

### **Result**

Croydon attained its target and all the required Centres were established.

Construction of the Centre at Nicole's school, revealed complex land geology, resulting in an expensive, reconfiguration of the plan for the foundations. Nicole worked with the architects to make savings on design aspects of the project, secured extra funding and delivered the project successfully.

In 2011, the Children's Centre at Nicole's school was opened. The Centre ran successfully and delivered services that positively affected the lives of local families.

In 2012, alongside the Olympic Stadium, Nicole was shortlisted for client of the year by RIBA.

### **Example 2**

#### **De-designation of Children Centre and the Change of Use to 2-Year-Old Childcare Provision**

##### **Situation**

In 2013, there was a dramatic reduction to funding of the National Sure Start Children's Centres. The local authority had to consider how it could sustain a strategy.

The focus of central government funding turned towards childcare, to encourage parents and carers to return to work.

Croydon had to de-designate Centres and target the reduced funding stream to a greatly diminished number of Centres.

The Centre at Nicole's school was identified as a Centre for closure.

##### **Task**

De-designate the Centre at the school and decide on the use of the premises to avoid threatened, capital claw back

Draw up an option paper for governors to consider with a full, funding briefing.

Manage local community consultation, expectations and wishes.

Decide on the option and then deliver it.

### **Action**

Governors made the decision to change the use of the premises to become a 2 year old, childcare setting. The government was providing 15, free hours of childcare for 2-year-old children of vulnerable families. As a headteacher, Nicole was also aware that there was a market for private childcare in her local community. She undertook market research to confirm this, and presented a business plan for the consideration of the local authority and school governors, for running a mixed provision of private and funded childcare for 2 year olds. She also devised a modification plan, to accommodate the change of use to the buildings.

Nicole routinely consulted with her community, formally and informally. Therefore, she was aware that there was a great deal of disappointment about the local authority's decision to make this one of their proposed closure Centres. She drew up a plan that included continued support for activities, which the community and staff ranked most likely to negatively affect family well-being, due the Centre's closure. This included relocating the Stay and Play sessions, continuing to accommodate Midwifery Clinics and sustaining delivery of the Webster Stratton, parenting courses and baby massage programmes. Accommodating these family support initiatives was pivotal to a successful premises remodelling design.

### **Result**

Approval was gained for the premises remodelling plans.

The building was modified to become a setting to provide childcare for 2 year olds.

The setting is extremely popular and offers a mixed provision of funded and private childcare. Applications for 2017-18 were 98% filled by siblings, evidence that it is a provision for the local, school community.

The community did run a petition to the local authority against the Centre's closure. However, community were appreciative of the facilities still offered by the school.

Internal appointments staffed the setting, although offered nationally. This was a testament to the quality of the performance management and continuing professional development cycle routinely offered by the school to all staff, not just teachers. The staff, who secured the senior positions in the new setting, are still in post and have undertaken further study and gained even higher qualifications.

The settings has been judged effectively by OfSTED and the local authority, and it is now used as an exemplar setting for other school, private and voluntary settings who currently only offer childcare to 3 year olds, and are considering offering 2 year old provision too.

In 2016-17, the headteacher also prepared the plan for the implementation for the government offer, to eligible families, of 30 hours free childcare for 3 year olds. The Academy Trust that the school had chosen to join in 2018, implemented the head teacher's, proposed plan.

### **Example 3**

#### **Teaching Assistant Staffing Restructure**

##### **Situation**

In 2015, the headteacher, Nicole Godetz, presented the case to the school governors for significantly rethinking the use and staffing structure of the school's, teaching assistant workforce.

She presented a proposal paper for restructuring, which included the following evidential points:

- School data demonstrated that the school's provision was not having a favourable impact on the progress of less able and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) pupils.
- A significant emphasis of the school's strategy for targeting the needs of the less able and SEND children, was to increase the number of teaching assistants. A bench marking activity demonstrated that the school spent more money per pupil on teaching assistants than the 10 most local schools. However, the average point score per pupil ranked 7<sup>th</sup>. Therefore, one conclusion that could be drawn, was that the investment in non-teaching staff currently in place, did not present as value for money.
- Teaching staff often cited dissatisfaction with practice of withdrawing children from their classes for support programmes. Whilst the children were out of class, teachers felt that their pupils were more likely to lose track of what was being targeted in class, and that this was negatively affecting the children's progress.
- The school offered a wide range of interventions, the purpose of which was not always clear to all staff, in terms of the content and impact on their pupils' learning.
- In the previous year, there had been a move away from teaching assistants routinely supporting groups of less able children in class and towards them targeting support to children on a 1:1 basis. Where teachers had been confident to plan this work, and teaching assistants competent in delivering planned interventions to meet set, small targets, this approach had demonstrated that it improved outcomes for the targeted children. However, this approach had also shown an increase in teacher workload to enable its effective management. The headteacher stated that it was not appropriate, or effective, to place this time demand

on already time-pressured teachers. Therefore, it was necessary to plan some alternative actions to lessen burdens on teacher time, but still improve outcomes for pupils.

- Daily administrative, support time for teachers, by teaching assistants, had been reduced, as teachers strove to maximise the time their teaching assistants spent with the children. This, again, placed an extra burden on teachers' workload.
- Contemporary research, collated by the Education Endowment Foundation, had shown that teaching assistants were most effective when they were well trained and directed. This was in line with the school's own reviews.

### **Task**

To introduce a schedule of deployment of teaching assistants that ensured that

- All teaching assistants had a clear timetable to follow
- All teaching assistants were trained and capable of delivering effective support
- Supervision was in place to monitor the quality of support offered to children
- Support was targeted to the children who most needed it
- The effectiveness of their support on children's progress, where possible, could be measured
- Teachers were given dedicated administrative support
- Teachers were clear on what the support that was being offered was and what impacts to expect
- The support offered demonstrated value for money

The proposed structure needed to be less costly than the current staffing bill and achieved without any redundancies.

Governors needed to agree the proposal.

A formal consultation period needed to take place with the unions and letter 118 issued.

### **Action**

Before this review, teaching assistants were paid on two different levels for working directly with children under the direct supervision of a teacher, level 1 or 2. The headteacher was very clear on the skills and expectations criteria for each level of pay grade. She had been the single headteacher to work in detail with the local authority and unions to draw up generic job descriptions for the locally agreed and national "Remodelling the Workforce" initiative in 2005. Pre 2015, teaching assistants at the school were either attached to a specific class or they worked as part of a central support team.

The new proposal would result in an overall reduction in teaching assistants, but would set a higher expectation of skills needed to fulfil the teaching assistants' roles.

The proposal stated that all teaching assistants in key stages 1 and 2 would:

- Be paid as level 2
- Have to study to a level 3 NVQ, if they did not already have one. (Free training and study support was offered)
- Specialise in being part of a central inclusion team or support children in maths or English development
- Undergo specific training in interventions and subjects specialisms
- Be supervised by a leading, senior teacher; SEND, Maths or English
- Attend fortnightly supervision meetings
- Be observed each term
- Be able to perform to at least to the level expected of an 11 year old in maths and English skills
- Be assigned to a base class for administrative support, playtime and lunchtime supervision

The proposal recommended a dedicated 30-minute, daily time slot, which was ring-fenced so that teaching assistants could undertake administrative activities to support teachers' workload.

The proposed structure was less costly than the current staffing bill and no redundancies were necessary.

The proposal was presented to governors.

A formal consultation period was undertaken with the unions and letter 118 was issued.

### **Results**

Governors agreed the headteacher's proposal in total.

Unions supported it.

It was more cost effective than the previous model.

Teachers and teaching assistants saw it as an opportunity for teaching assistants to become better qualified, have improved supervision and to be recognised as professionals.

Improved outcomes for pupils were seen in the data, after intervention support by teaching assistants.

The local authority HR officer said it was the best restructure he had seen and used it as a model of good practice.

The use and deployment of teaching assistants remains a topic of debate nationally still.

## **Testimonials for Project Management Experience of A N Godetz**

### **Testimonial 1:**

I was a parent governor, Vice Chair of Governors and Chair of Personnel Committee for a ten-year period when Nicole was headteacher. As a Human Resources Director, I am closely involved in change projects on a day-to-day basis, and I was impressed with Nicole's management of the three projects described. Managing a school is in itself an intense and demanding role, particularly in London where diverse pupil needs, staffing and budget challenges mean that the job is multi-faceted. Three things in particular impressed me about Nicole.

1) Her vision and high ambition for her organisation. Nicole was never content to settle with the status quo, and would push herself and others in pursuit of opportunities that would contribute to a stronger and better future. Sometimes this was hard for others, including staff and parents, to recognise and accept, and so she would need to bring this vision to life, and describe how it would benefit both those in the immediate school environment, and the wider community, with the children always at the heart of any change. This involved resilience and a degree of managed risk that are key requirements for a successful change leader.

2) Her ability to collaborate with others and bring people with her. This included managing her team in a supportive way, empowering her leadership team to take responsibility and make decisions, and helping team members who might find change difficult or confusing. She demonstrated good emotional intelligence and is a natural communicator who interacts easily with those around her. Members of her team feel supported and enjoy being part of her team, working in an environment which is open and good humoured. Where there were difficult messages to convey, or conversations to be had, Nicole would not shy away from these, and would encourage open and honest dialogue. She is also strong at coaching her team, and helped them to adjust and take on new roles and skills. Her approach helped to secure agreement to key decisions and to make change happen in a positive and supportive way.

3) Successful project delivery. Once agreements were reached, Nicole would follow her ideas through to implementation using project management tools and techniques. As a governor I was reassured that implementation plans would be well executed, and that Nicole would bring progress reports, along with key issues or sticking points back to governors for further consideration and agreement. She genuinely valued the support of others, and used the professional support of those who were integral to project delivery, particularly those outside the teaching profession. She maintained a clear focus on

delivering expected outcomes and achieving the best possible value for money. Once changes were implemented, Nicole continued to scan the horizon for future opportunities and external factors, and was ready to grasp and lead further change, as evidenced by the change in purpose of the Children's centre to ensure sustainability.

Taken collectively, these qualities equipped Nicole to lead and manage change strategically, collaboratively and proficiently.

Jackie Hart

**Testimonial 2:**

We are architects and are lucky enough to work with clients who are highly committed to the process of creating public spaces that benefit their communities.

Nicky, in her role as head teacher of Cypress Primary School, stands out, however, for her ability to embrace innovation, offer clear and calm guidance and full-blooded commitment to achieving the best outcome for her school.

We thank Nicky for her enlightened and brave patronage. Our client/ architect relationship was the result of an architecture competition, specifically open to young, start-up architecture practices.

Throughout the project, from her ambitious project brief, regaling the assembled architects with speaking clouds at the briefing day, enabling us to understand the ethos of her school, her guidance was always clear, her embrace of the project firm and her love for design quality passionate.

The Royal Institute of British Architects clearly agreed with our enthusiasm for working with Nicky by nominating her for the RIBA Client of the Year Award.

We wish Nicky the very best in her new endeavours and know that she will dedicate the same amazing set of skills and dedication to all her clients.

Barbara Kaucky & Susanne Tutsch  
Directors  
Erect Architecture

**Testimonial 3:**

I was chair of governors at the Cypress Schools during the premises redesign of the infant school

Nicky was extremely imaginative about the development of the children's centre. She really pushed for a creative approach; she led strongly on developing a vision for the children's centre but enabled staff and parents to get fully engaged. She managed the project from start to finish and was extremely effective in dealing with changing parameters thrown up by the complexity of the site. She is very effective at project delivery.

Nicky is always thinking her way round a problem but takes her staff team with her.

## School merger

Nicky was appointed to head both the infant and junior schools at Cypress and the Children's Centre, bring all of them under a single leadership. At the time, the Junior School had a very large budget deficit, run up by the two previous heads. Nicky re-structured the schools to create efficiencies from the merger and improve effectiveness, eliminating duplication of roles and exercising strict control over expenditure to get rid of the deficit.

Kathy Bee, Ex Chair of Cypress Governing Body

### **Testimonial 4:**

In regards to project example 3, Teaching Assistant Staffing Restructure, this was, at the time, the best and most beneficial restructure I had seen. It continues to espouse the concept of pedagogical benefit when conducting reorganisations as a model of good practice.

Gordon Mackenzie

HR officer