



What can S7 do for you?

Pursuing excellence through collaboration

www.s7colleges.com

S7 NEWSLETTER ISSUE 9

AUTUMN TERM 2016

- Do you have any news or a forthcoming event which would be of interest to S7 colleagues? Contact Sharon Kemp at s7enquiries@gmail.com and we will add it to the next newsletter and the S7 website.

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A Note from the Chair



...And then there were 10

Agatha Christie's macabre tale of 'Ten Little Soldiers' aside, '...and then there were 10' is an appropriate description for the S7 Sixth Form Colleges this autumn as we welcome Varndean College to the group. If you didn't read it at the time, look up Bill Watkin's article in *TES Further* (*TES Further* 30/09/16: <https://www.tes.com/news/tes-magazine/tes-magazine/sixth-form-colleges-are-still-a-big-tight-knit-family>) in which he writes about SFCs being '*a family working more closely together than ever, embracing change as an opportunity.*'

Bill's article emphasises the strengths of SFCs, many of which have been established in their communities for over 40 years, for quality of experience and value for money. The ABR process has shone a spotlight on our success and, perhaps a surprise for some in the education world but not for SFCs, how collaborative and outward facing they are.

S7 supports over 25 groups of staff from the Principals and Vice Principals to HR Directors and Clerks, who meet regularly to discuss their particular area of work within the local and national landscape. Then there are groups of teachers who get together to share professional practice in their subject areas or specialism, Peer Review and Development work and member colleges taking part in one another's lesson observation schemes and Self-Assessment Review meetings. We're looking forward to the biennial S7 Teaching and Learning Conference this summer held again at Royal Holloway. Over 400 staff from across the colleges will be able to attend a full range of workshops and enjoy a key note address from Natasha Devon.

Undoubtedly a strength of the S7 Consortium is the professional development and training which takes place annually, organised by Anna and delivered mostly but not exclusively, by the Senior Teams in the colleges: Teachers' Toolkit for NQTs, Aspiring Middle Managers, Senior Leadership Programme and everything else for everyone else above, beyond and in-between. There are excellent opportunities across the colleges for professional advancement. Testament to this are the recent appointments of Will Baldwin, previously Assistant Principal at Godalming taking over from Chris Thomson as Principal at BHASVIC, and Emma Young, previously Vice Principal at Esher, taking over from David Adelman as Principal at Godalming.

ABRs have encouraged reflection on future direction for some colleges and academisation, federation or merger may be on the cards but the S7 Consortium of colleges will continue to be proud of our record and the difference we are making to post 16 education in the region.

Thanks to Dan Dean for chairing S7 so admirably over the last two years. Dan will now take over as South East England colleges' representative for the SFCA.

Sally Bromley, Chair of S7 and Principal of Collyer's



... And then there were 10 — Varndean joins the Consortium

Set in a beautiful green campus with views over Brighton and the sea, Varndean College promotes diversity, multiculturalism and acceptance, offering a wide range of courses, achieving excellent results and allowing students to shape their programme of study into a profile that uniquely suits them.



Ofsted inspectors have recently given Varndean College a glowing report, confirming it once again as a good college with many outstanding aspects. Major strengths included:

- ◆ Progress made from starting points by students on A Level courses remains outstanding and that progress on the International Baccalaureate course is also outstanding.
- ◆ Students studying at Level 3 benefit from a broad curriculum choice that allows a good range of combinations of academic and vocational courses, in addition to the highly successful International Baccalaureate programme.
- ◆ Students enjoy being at the college and value highly the inclusive, tranquil atmosphere.
- ◆ Teaching, learning and assessment are of a consistently high standard and students enjoy the vibrant and challenging lessons they attend.

Ian Harrower, Marketing & Communications Manager, Varndean College



Teaching and Learning Conference 2017

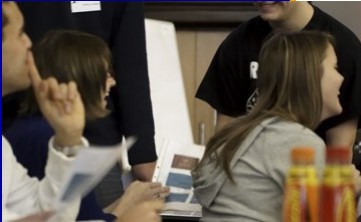
Following on from the success of our last 7 biennial conferences, we will be again organising a Teaching and Learning Conference for 400 teachers from the S7 colleges at Royal Holloway University in Egham on June 7th 2017.

This will include two well respected keynote speakers, subject group meetings and a range of educational workshops that you can sign up for, in the afternoon. Each college will be allocated a number of places in relation to the size of the college and it will then be first come first served until your college's quota of places is used up. Any places left over will be allocated to other colleges with waiting lists. So you need to look at our website at the very beginning of the summer term and sign up really quickly if you would like to come. The evaluations from the day are always excellent and staff are surprised at how much they get out of it.

It is also extremely cost effective as the cost to the college per member of staff ends up at around £35. Where else could you find training at such a reasonable rate!

We look forward to seeing you there.





Student Feedback from the Event:

“I found it reassuring to find out that most people do well at interview and that interviewers don’t ask trick questions”

“The video of the interview was a valuable indication of what to expect. It made the whole process clearer and less daunting.”

“I now have a better sense that I need to read widely, think critically and analytically about my subject, and make sure that I know my application!”

S7-Oxbridge Collaborative Project - October 2016 event

by Dr Jonathan Padley, Churchill College, Cambridge

FOR THE FULL ARTICLE ABOUT THIS EXCITING OPPORTUNITY PLEASE VISIT THE S7 WEBSITE: <http://www.s7colleges.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Article-on-S7-Collaboration-with-Oxbridge-October-2016.pdf>

On Tuesday 4th October, Esher College hosted a National Network for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO) funded event for one hundred upper sixth students from Esher, Godalming, Reigate and Woking Colleges. The event was delivered by Churchill College, Cambridge, and St Hilda’s College, Oxford, and was the third of a new three-event per year programme for the S7 Consortium that has been co-delivered by Churchill and St Hilda’s across 2016.

The students, plus six staff members, attended the event which focused on:

- ◆ fine-tuning applications and preparing for academic interviews, for students applying to Cambridge, Oxford, and like universities;
- ◆ a full discussion of a filmed interview with a Cambridge offer-holder, broken down into sections;
- ◆ a practice interview activity based on a controversial moral position on Brexit which was delivered as a prompt, with follow-up discussion on the merits (or not) of the argument.

Hannah Rolley (Recruitment and Schools Programme Officer - St Hilda’s College, Oxford) said: “[...] Back in the summer we delivered a valuable personal statement workshop at Reigate College and our October session at Esher College invited those students, who were then turning their thoughts to the interview, to come along to find out what they can expect and how they can prepare. [...]. The students were fully engaged and gained vital information and guidance about the interview process from the evening.”

Cambridge, Oxford, and similar universities look for straightforward qualities in their applicants: potential undergraduates who have chosen the right subject, who have strong exam records and demonstrate evidence of significant super-curricular reading and appropriate revision. Croydon, Surrey and Sussex are home to many such students, who will go on to achieve remarkable things, at A-Level and beyond. Jonathan Padley (Widening Participation Officer - Churchill College, Cambridge) added: “[...] This is part of a wider endeavour at Cambridge and Oxford to work with potential Oxbridge (and like university) applicants in a sustained and meaningful way each year, by community. [...].”

The Oxbridge Coordinator at Esher College, Shaista Moghul, thanked Hannah and Jonathan for their time and their support. “[...] “Jonathan and Hannah were able to inform and reassure students about the interview process at each university and the students certainly appreciated this. They learned why the universities chose to interview students, what to expect in an interview format, and how best to prepare for interview. [...] Our students are definitely a lot better informed, and have a stronger sense of what to expect from an academic interview.”

Whilst four of the S7 Colleges attended this event there has also been buy-in and participation from others, such as Coulsdon and Strode’s Colleges, at previous meetings. The programme is available again in 2017 to all high flying academic students of the S7 Consortium, and all S7 Colleges are invited to participate and benefit in 2017. The first session of 2017, for first year S7 students, will be at 16:30 in Godalming College on Wednesday 1st February 2017.



Current S7 meeting groups:

- ◆ Principals
- ◆ Vice Principals
- ◆ Staff Development Managers
- ◆ Student Services Managers
- ◆ Equality and Diversity
- ◆ BTEC Nominees' Group
- ◆ Finance Directors
- ◆ Learning Support Managers
- ◆ Admissions
- ◆ Adult Education
- ◆ Attendance Officers and Bursary Administrators
- ◆ Careers/Student Progression
- ◆ Clerks to Governors
- ◆ Counsellors
- ◆ ESOL Group
- ◆ Exam Officers
- ◆ IT Developers Network
- ◆ IT Managers
- ◆ Learning Facilitators
- ◆ LRC Managers
- ◆ Marketing Group
- ◆ MIS Managers
- ◆ Moodle Group
- ◆ Oxbridge Coordinators
- ◆ Personnel/HR Group
- ◆ Receptionists
- ◆ Science Technicians
- ◆ Student Liaison Officers

Subject meetings can also be arranged on a one-off basis when required.



S7 Support Staff Leadership Programme—a really great day that I would recommend to others!

I recently attended the Support Staff Leadership Programme at Gorse Hill, Woking. The purpose of the course is to develop our knowledge and understanding of managing and working with people. A mix of managers attended the course, from those of us who have been in a role for a number of years, to recently appointed staff. The other delegates were from a broad range of areas and it was good to hear that we all experience issues and stress and can all do with support from time to time.

Anna Loveday, S7 Consortium Director and Karen Lloyd, Director of Learning Resources, Collyers, led an engaging day with a good mix of first-hand experience, discussion, group work and laughter. Discovering if we are Kermit, Paddington, Spongebob, Top Cat, Lisa Simpson or Florence – or a mix - was a particular highlight and brought much amusement!

We came out with a wealth of strategies for dealing with delegation, strong work colleagues, prioritising, time management and qualities of leadership and it was good to have a reminder that we are all doing a good job!

I thoroughly recommend it to others!

Nicky Breslin, Admissions and School Liaison Manager, Strode's College

With the introduction of new specs we have seen an increase in the number of subject groups meeting throughout the year and, realising the benefit of face-to-face meetings, some groups are meeting more than once a year. The S7 team is able to help facilitate any meeting requests so all you have to do is email s7enquiries@gmail.com to get the ball rolling.



S7 continues to support visit requests to peer departments. Any member of staff in any S7 college can request a visit to a similar department in another S7 college.

Simply email s7enquiries@gmail.com with your request and we will help to facilitate arrangements.



Thank you to:

*Dr Jonathan Padley,
Churchill College,
Cambridge;
*Ian Harrower,
Varndean College;
*Nicky Breslin, Strode's
College
for their contributions
to this newsletter.

A message from the S7 Director

It's lucky that the decision was made several years ago not to change the name of the consortium when colleges joined or left as we would have had at least 5 different names by now! S7 used to stand for Surrey 7, which included all the sixth form colleges in Surrey at the time of inception (2002). I was working in a Surrey Sixth Form College then, so I have been involved with S7 in one way or another since the beginning and I was, in fact, a delegate on the first S7 Leadership Programme!

Now S7 is merely a brand, but one that is becoming increasingly well known for its outstanding quality sharing and training courses. We are more and more sought after as an example of how to work effectively together and are being replicated elsewhere in the country.

I love this job because I get to meet and work alongside such lovely and enthusiastic people who really care about the education of their students and want to do their best for them. Each of the S7 colleges is different and individual, but all are working towards a common goal of excellence for our students. Many young people owe a huge amount to the hard work of very inspiring teachers in our colleges and in turn they inspire us with their inquiring minds and fresh outlook on life.

One of the times recently when this was especially brought home to me, was the opportunity to attend the Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award ceremony at St. James' Palace and I have subsequently been working with the co-ordinators of the Duke of Edinburgh scheme in your colleges.

Richard Stilgoe was the celebrity at the ceremony, who got us all singing, and the Earl of Wessex presented the awards. Both of them are very knowledgeable and supportive of the scheme and I have subsequently become very enthusiastic about its possibilities myself. I didn't do the D of E at school and so have learnt a huge amount about it over the last few weeks. It is an excellent scheme for young people, in which they learn much about their own strengths and are able to push themselves to do things they would not normally have the opportunity to do, as well as helping others in their community and further afield. It is a great piece of evidence to have on their CV for University or job applications and is widely respected.

If you think this sounds exciting, but are too old to take part (age limit is 25!) there is also a diamond challenge that is open to all that you can sign up to before the end of the year! Have a look at their website.

Keep up the great work in our colleges everyone and let us know if you would like us to help you in any way. Speak to your Staff Development Manager if you are interested in any of our courses or contact us through the website if you would like to visit another college to discuss a particular issue and we will put you in touch with a relevant department.

Have a happy Christmas and a restful holiday.

Anna Loveday, S7 Consortium Director

