

Braided careers in teaching

Preface

England needs more teachers, particularly for science, mathematics and computing. This need has become more acute in light of missed teacher training recruitment targets, low levels of retention and a burgeoning student population.

The case studies presented here shed light on ‘braided careers’, reciprocal arrangements that enable an individual to pursue dual (or even multiple) employment opportunities, including a part-time role in teaching. Braided careers in teaching are rare today, yet they offer a fresh approach to boosting teacher supply that merits deeper consideration.

Shortages of teachers, particularly in economically important subjects such as science, mathematics and computing, have proved persistent in England. Data show that recruitment targets to teacher training courses in these subjects have been missed in each of the past 5 years¹, and these shortfalls have been compounded by poor rates of teacher retention², with significant attrition occurring within the first 5 years following successful completion of teacher training.

Although various initiatives are currently addressing teacher supply, history suggests that these are unlikely to be sufficient to eliminate the deficit of teachers, particularly given the projected 15% increase in full-time equivalent secondary school pupils between now and 2026³. Innovative strategies are needed in addition to existing approaches to increase teaching capacity in schools. As an employment sector, teaching has been slow to embrace part-time and flexible working practices, however these approaches may enable more people to teach and more schools to employ the teaching expertise they need⁴.

The Royal Society has been exploring braided careers in teaching, whereby individuals divide their time between working in a school and for another employer (which could be another learning institution). This publication includes case studies of four individuals, each of whom has successfully carved out a braided career with part time roles teaching and working elsewhere. In particular, they show:

- there is a cohort of people who want to teach part time;
- teachers are successfully creating and maintaining flexible and part-time roles in schools;
- there are employers who are willing to enter into arrangements that enable people to teach part-time;
- employers can gain from the specialist knowledge and skills the teachers bring; and
- employers can support a valuable part-time role that they might not be able to finance full-time.

Flexible working is an important forward step for the teaching profession and these case studies offer a small glimpse of the potential benefits of braided careers. As more employers introduce part time roles, and more teachers seek braided careers, the teaching profession has the potential to undergo a transformation that increases teacher supply and brands braided careers as a standard professional track.

1 See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/initial-teacher-training-trainee-number-census-2017-to-2018>, accessed 7 August 2018.

2 See <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/news-events/nfer-blogs/latest-teacher-retention-statistics-paint-a-bleak-picture-for-teacher-supply-in-england/>, accessed 7 August 2018.

3 See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-pupil-projections-july-2018>, accessed 17 August 2018.

4 See <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/news-events/nfer-blogs/part-time-teaching-what-can-secondary-schools-learn-from-the-most-flexible-schools/> accessed 31 August 2018.



BRAIDED CAREER CASE STUDY

Dr Kristy Turner

Chemistry teacher and lecturer at Bolton School for Boys and the University of Manchester

SUMMARY

- Kristy saw an opportunity to create a mutually beneficial braided career and proactively asked for a role at the university, outlining the skills and strengths she could bring to them.
- Her two roles work perfectly together: there are clear benefits to both employers. She is brokering the link between school and university in a new way, making connections between the academic and pastoral sides of education in both settings.
- Open-mindedness, flexibility and resilience are key to making this arrangement work.
- Enabling Kristy to work in this way has allowed her school employer to keep her as a valued member of staff: being part-time there has not only boosted her morale, but also her enthusiasm, her engagement in more challenging chemistry and her ability to be a strong role model for her pupils.
- There is the need for someone to broker opportunities like this to enable more people to be able to work across a school and university context.

A: Profile

Dr Kristy Turner is a chemistry teacher and lecturer who, since 2015, has been working part-time two days a week at Bolton School for Boys and three days a week at the University of Manchester.

At school Kristy teaches year 9 and A Level pupils, has a shared sixth form tutor group, and is the school's research and innovation coordinator which sees her helping her colleagues to engage with evidence-based practice. She also offers support to sixth form pupils with their UCAS applications.

The rest of the week is spent at the university, where Kristy runs tutorials for foundation, first and second year chemistry pupils and will be adding a lecture course on science writing to her timetable from September 2018. She advises final year pupils on their chemistry education research projects (and helps them to run them) and is a personal tutor, supporting pupils all the way through their degree. A crucial part of her role however, is an advisory one: working with colleagues who teach the early years of university courses and helping them to get a better understanding of what pupils do in their A Levels and of sixth form teaching. She helps them to think about the concepts that they teach and how they might teach them, so that their courses are a much better fit to their pupils' needs and learning styles.

B: How these arrangements came about

Kristy joined Bolton School – an independent, very socially and culturally mixed grammar school in Greater Manchester – in September 2012, working full-time as a chemistry teacher who also taught some biology lessons, having spent the previous year undertaking a secondment as a School Teacher Fellow with the Royal Society of Chemistry at the University of Manchester. She already had five years of teaching behind her by this point and had also been a Head of Chemistry.

The split role between the school and the university was Kristy's idea: she already had a relationship with Manchester after her secondment and had also completed the last year of her PhD there. She could see the need for a role that made that the crucial connection between sixth form and university but didn't want to leave school teaching full-time. So, she wrote to the Head of School in the university chemistry department, outlining what she could offer them, and asking if they would consider employing her on a part-time basis.

“I loved my full-time job, but equally, I could see the benefits of working in both organisations, and not just for me, but for all parties. I’d also been working as a teacher for long enough before I suggested it, so I had good experience in all areas.”

Dr Kristy Turner

Within less than half an hour of receiving her email, the Head of School replied and offered her the job.

C: The practicalities

Kristy negotiated that Bolton School would second her for three days a week to the University on a long-term basis, and that the University would pay the school the equivalent of her salary for those three days. There is a Memorandum of Understanding in place to formalise this arrangement between the two employers. She continues to be employed by the school so is able to keep her continuous teaching service, and all of her terms and conditions for things like sick leave, maternity leave or pensions have remained the same. This arrangement allows Kristy to feel a lot more secure than having two separate contracts: there is always the safety net of being able to return to school full time if the need ever arises.

During school term-time she works in both institutions, but she also gets the ‘big’ school holidays off from university too, though she does tend to work through her half-term weeks at university. Her time spent at the university is much more flexible: if she doesn’t have to run a tutorial, she is able to work from home. It also allows her to do some additional work from time to time for the Royal Society of Chemistry, which is expected of her as an academic.

Kristy has a strong network of friends and colleagues in both organisations, something which helps her to avoid feeling isolated. She takes part in regular performance reviews, but other pastoral support is delivered more informally. CPD is available in both settings: there are e-learning courses and away-days at university and, having visiting lecturer status offers access to plenty more. At school there is a CPD budget, but she tends to make use of it more to attend (and present at) conferences than to go on courses. She works hard to keep up with both school and university life, making sure that she is aware of the pace of things in both settings, and remaining conscious of the potential impact that each job might have on the other. For instance, she may have to attend a parents evening on a day when she is teaching at the university.

Kristy’s line manager at the University isn’t fazed by the fact that she works part-time: he uses a faculty-wide timetabling system, which means that so long as he is aware of the constraints of his staff, they can avoid problems in planning the timetable. He realised that it made more sense to let Kristy negotiate with her school about the days of the week that they wanted her to teach first, as it is harder to modify the school timetable once it has been produced and there is less face-to-face contact time with pupils at university. Similarly, a number of staff at Bolton School are also employed on a part-time basis, so they are used to encountering the usual issues, such as Kristy not being able to teach GCSE (which is taught on three different days a week, while Kristy is in school for just two).

Each of the three parties works well together, and they all acknowledge that the others bring open-mindedness, resilience and flexibility to the arrangements – something that has been necessary recently, for example, as the days of the week Kristy works in one setting is having to change for the next academic year. Their collective willingness to take risks both brought about these arrangements and have helped her to maintain them. For example, at the start, Kristy’s headteacher needed to take a significant financial risk to appoint someone to backfill her work at school several months before the university had signed the contract to second her, something that may not always be possible for a school to do.

D: The benefits

Kristy’s working arrangements have an important significance for her headteacher:

“Kristy had been a full-time chemistry teacher with us before the opportunity to second her to Manchester emerged. We saw it as an opportunity for us to allow a colleague to progress her career in a different fashion: there are only so many Head of Year or Head of Department jobs, and this provided us with a way of keeping a colleague who was good, active, interested and involved in continuing to teach for us.

As the average lifetime in teaching continues, as it will with pensions and longer lives, it’s really important to find different way for colleagues to remain interested and advance in their careers without being forced into the binary choice of leaving or staying at school. This way, Kristy can have her research interests and reinvigorate them at university, and then bring that expertise back into school.”

Philip Britton, Headteacher Bolton School

Kristy echoes this:

“Working in this way can have a real impact on retention. If you don’t want pastoral or SLT responsibilities, then this model can offer the satisfaction you need. When you really love your subject, it’s not really possible to fulfil your ambitions in it, or to access extra pay or status in a subject-based way. Not everyone wants the same from a teaching career: lots of teachers want to be the best in their subject. I love chemistry and talking, but I lost that through working as a Head of Department. I’ve recalibrated, and I am a chemist again.”

Dr Kristy Turner

Looking more closely at the detail, Bolton School wanted to build a closer connection between sixth form and university life, so having someone working in both places is really useful for them. At school, Kristy offers her pupils support with their UCAS applications, and because she also does UCAS work at university, and she knows so much more about how universities work, she can ensure that the support she gives is even better.

Improving this transition was also a priority for the university:

“We didn’t want to have a disconnect between the chemistry taught in school, and how we teach new incoming students – both from a student or a lecturer’s perspective. This arrangement was the ideal way of finding out what happens on both sides of that university-school transition. Kristy has been brilliant in helping us when we look at changing first year teaching and challenging our expectations and knowledge of the background our students have. She helps us to design and deliver the course, but also it gives her a different perspective to take back to her sixth formers and to shape their expectations of university. One thing that did emerge was that at A Level you rigorously use the IUPAC names for chemicals, while at university you use the more old fashioned, trivial names that have existed historically. We weren’t really conscious of that before we had Kristy on board. But now we use both names.”

Dr Alan Brisdon, Senior Lecturer, University of Manchester

Kristy came into teaching from an academic background and didn’t want to only teach to a certain level in school, so her combined roles enable her to teach her A level pupils beyond their curriculum, stretching them and extending their learning.

Similarly, Kristy acts as a subject resource for her school departmental colleagues, and her involvement in education research has led to her running research groups with her teaching colleagues.

Kristy’s sixth form pupils benefit from seeing someone setting an interesting example about how they approach their work: being a university lecturer as well as their chemistry teacher broadens her credentials with them. Her colleagues also benefit from the exposure they get to finding out what it is like to work for a different type of employer as her headteacher explains:

“Schools can be somewhat insular and introverted in terms of employment, sometimes lacking an awareness of how things are outside. Staffrooms can be very self-referencing in that respect, in terms of what they expect and what they like regarding terms and conditions, for example. It’s useful to have someone from outside who is used to different working practices, as it sometimes jolts us into thinking, “why don’t we do that?”, or provides us with some reality adjustment!”

Philip Britton, Headteacher Bolton School

For Kristy, working for these two employers brings her variety, academic challenge and the opportunity to do so much more than when she was teaching full time.

E: The limitations

Teaching in two different institutions does restrict Kristy’s timetable. The two days in school/ three days in university split was proposed by her headteacher: it would have been even harder for him to recruit a 0.4 teacher to fill the gaps at school. Kristy acknowledges that it is probably the right split but does miss teaching GCSE. Conversely however, as a chemistry teacher as opposed to a science teacher, there are fewer periods required each week, so she is also able to teach chemistry to year 9 pupils around her A level teaching.

At university it takes time to establish credibility as a lecturer, and it is only after three years working there that Kristy has been able to pick up a lecture course. Had she not had previous experience of working there, or her PhD, she feels that it would have taken even longer.

Having two jobs creates more workload than a single full-time one, but the nature and variety of the work means that it does not feel as burdensome as the workload associated with being a full-time teacher. Equally, because of the university semester dates there is some lag time at the ends. Some parts of the year are horrendously busy – September to December with no half term, for example – but in the summer there are no university pupils, so Kristy is able to take part in exam board meetings and get on with her own research and outreach work.

Kristy's university line manager was unable to cite any disadvantages or limitations to this way of working from their perspective, and nor could her headteacher.

F: Lessons learned: making this work for other people

Kristy is passionate about the roles she has created for herself and speaks on a number of platforms to try and encourage others to think about doing the same:

“I want to pioneer this way of working: I want to get more people like me. I would love to lead the way in this kind of role – I can see how important it is.”

Dr Kristy Turner

She advises anyone considering this move to make positive connections with their local university: get involved in the relevant department; sit on committees related to community engagement; do some outreach; or judge chemistry competitions! Additionally, having a PhD brings with it credibility of your expertise in your discipline, without which Kristy may have found this way of working more difficult.

She goes on to suggest that it's important to be able to articulate what it is that you could bring to your potential second employer, so this requires confidence in your own strengths and areas of expertise, and proactivity in looking for the right opportunity.

Employing Kristy part-time, and seconding her to the university has really emphasised to her headteacher the importance of schools looking for new ideas about how to flesh out a much longer teaching career:

“It's a march up a slippery slope to become a Head of Department, and you could stay there for 30 years. Keeping fresh and interested while doing that or finding things to do before you take on those roles is important. Managerial roles aren't for everyone. Some colleagues want to feel advancement in their careers but wish to do so for subject expertise.

Headteachers need to hear that what I've said is true: the benefits and gains are real and useful to the school and its mainstream work. It's important for us to persuade other people that these benefits truly outweigh any administration that comes with employing someone in this way.”

Philip Britton, Headteacher Bolton School

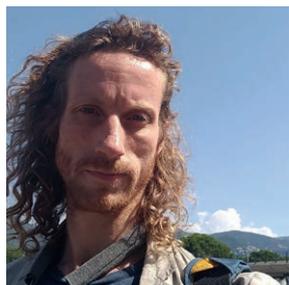
However, he also suggests that there is a need for someone to act in a brokerage role between opportunities like Kristy's and the people looking to take them on. Had Kristy not had the pre-existing relationship with Manchester, their arrangements would have been considerably harder.

Her university line manager echoed this:

“To other employers: I would definitely evangelise for this sort of role. Our arrangements are nothing but beneficial on the part of the students, and our staff. Kristy is a very valuable resource. It would be wonderful if organisations like the Royal Society could do more to facilitate this sort of arrangement.”

Dr Alan Brisdon, Senior Lecturer

BRAIDED CAREER CASE STUDY



James Clark

Further Maths Teacher at Bishop Challoner School and Teaching and Learning Architect at Third Space Learning

SUMMARY

- James brokered this braided arrangement himself: he wanted to remain in the classroom while he also gained experience elsewhere, and negotiated with both of his employers to make this work.
- Having a specialist area of knowledge strengthened his case to secure his part-time working arrangements at school: he brings a skillset and expertise to his teaching team that no other colleague has.
- Remaining in the classroom for part of his week has significant benefits for his non-school employer: they have an ongoing link with a school and with what is going on in the curriculum as well as somewhere to test their products.
- In contrast however, teaching only a day a week has its limitations: the ideal scenario might be a minimum of two days in school to enable more contact time with pupils and less restriction over which elements of the curriculum and year-groups can be taught.
- There are also financial constraints in a school where there may be existing capacity in full-time teachers' timetables that is not being used because specialist part-time teachers are employed instead.

A: Profile

Since 2016, James has been a teacher of Further Maths for one day a week at Bishop Challoner School in Tower Hamlets, East London, and spends the rest of his week working as a Teaching and Learning Architect for Third Space Learning (TSL): a company that provides one-to-one KS2 maths interventions and a toolkit of primary maths resources and CPD.

At school James teaches the mechanics modules of the Further Maths A Level course to pupils in years 12 and 13, provides support to another maths teacher for their year 9 class, and delivers one-on-one support for a year 12 pupil who has been struggling.

At TSL, James spends four days a week designing a primary maths teaching intervention which is delivered online via a personalised tutor located in either India or Sri Lanka. He is responsible for creating the curriculum and the logic that provides the personalised learning journey for young people.

B: How these arrangements came about

James used to be an engineer and went on to train to be a maths teacher on the Teach First programme at Bishop Challoner School in 2012, where he worked full-time. He later wanted to find an opportunity that enabled him to create learning programmes for schools but realised that he didn't want to separate himself completely from teaching, so two years ago, he applied for the job at TSL. He initially began working there for four and a half days a week, spending the other half a day teaching – an arrangement that he brokered himself, due to the good relationship he had with his headteacher (who has now left to teach elsewhere). In his second year of working for both employers, James changed the balance of his time so that he taught for a full day every week, which has allowed him to spend more time in the classroom and create a cleaner break between his two jobs.

With his engineering background, James brings specialist applied maths expertise to his department at school and is the most qualified member of his team to be able to offer the mechanics modules he teaches: it is this specialism that has enabled him to negotiate his part-time working arrangements.

C: The practicalities

James's TSL job is his dominant employment, but he spends every Monday teaching at school, when all of his lessons are timetabled. Working the equivalent of a full-time job across two organisations has the potential to create more workload, but James has not found this to be too much of an issue: as the sole teacher of mechanics modules, his work is fairly discrete and contained. Were the syllabus to change, or should the pupils require more assessment, this could have an impact on his workload, though he does already have to do his marking on non-school days, or at weekends like most full-time teachers.

For TSL, these joint working arrangements have no visible impact on his day-to-day work there as they have been in place since the point at which he joined the company. Had James joined TSL full-time and then reduced his days, his employer may have felt this more but they are used to knowing that on Mondays, James is unavailable, and they plan their work around this accordingly. TSL finds it useful to know that James's availability is always the same each week, and that his teaching day remains consistent. They are also careful to make sure that they have realistic expectations about what he is able to achieve in the four days he works for them.

James is employed under two separate contracts, one for each employer. Each year, James has to re-negotiate this contract with his school, as the agreement is made for one academic year at a time. The increasing pressures on his school's finances mean that a renewal of the agreement is never guaranteed and has to be decided upon within the context that the school finds itself at the time. His relative salary is noticeably different at school and at TSL and, as a part-time teacher, it takes three times longer to earn a pay increase there: increments are earned based on experience.

CPD is delivered to James's maths teaching colleagues on a Tuesday after school, which means that he is never able to attend. However, given his pre-existing relationship with the school, this has not presented itself as an issue: James and his employers enjoy a good professional understanding. Similarly, working in school for just one day a week precludes James from being able to act as a mentor to other colleagues. At TSL, given that James spends the majority of his time there, it is rare for issues to emerge about him not being able to participate in training or meetings – if it is essential for him to be at something, it is simply not scheduled for a Monday.

D: The benefits

For James, remaining in the classroom for part of his week gives him added credibility to do his job at Third Space Learning: he is able to feed his knowledge as an existing practitioner into the teaching and learning system he is designing. His employers at TSL see his two jobs as being a good match. Equally, the fact that his two roles are so very different – the Third Space Learning job is entirely office-based, while the teaching role is different every day – offers him the variety and stimulus he needs.

“It is a privilege to teach, even the very difficult kids: it's really engaging, more intellectually challenging. Teaching is an excellent job to keep you on your toes, and it doesn't let you get used to anything – it's always different.”

James Clark

Teaching for just a day a week means that James is able to bring unlimited energy to his lessons – something that he feels he wasn't able to do so well when he was teaching full time. It sets him at an advantage with the pupils: he is never exhausted or “firefighting”: they can see that he wants to be there, regardless of what happens in a lesson! Further, were James to ever want to go back to teaching full-time, he would have current classroom-based experience and could maintain his continuous service as a teacher.

James is respected as an excellent expert teacher in his school: he has five years of A level experience and is able to anticipate the areas of the curriculum that the pupils may struggle with. There is a fairly high turnover rate among his teaching colleagues, so he is conscious that his continued contribution to the department is important. His departmental lead teacher acknowledges that James brings specialist skills that the rest of the team do not have and can see the value of having him there. James also makes himself available to his pupils at the end of the school day, and always responds to their questions by email at other times of the week. He also provides support to other teachers during the periods he is not delivering A Level modules.

However, the school doesn't believe that they benefit from James's other employment: there is little opportunity for dialogue about his other work, given that he only spends a day a week in school. James does feel that his pupils benefit though, as they are exposed to the idea of flexible and part-time working and to the skills required to do other jobs outside of the school environment.

Conversely, TSL can see the benefits of James continuing to be a practising teacher. He continues to have an insight into what is happening in schools and is familiar with the language of the classroom and the current focus in the curriculum which can be beneficial for TSL's development work. Sometimes, TSL is able to use his school for testing purposes: they roll out something that they have developed to get first-hand feedback on what works and what it's like for users (though the school wasn't able to articulate the impact of this on them). Other TSL colleagues may have previously had teaching careers but feel that since leaving those posts, they have lost touch with what happens in the classroom:

“Perhaps James has more of a realistic view of education [than his colleagues] – when you are developing educational products, there is a propensity to not feel like you're as in touch with reality if you're doing your design work away from the classroom. So, I think he can be a bit more practical and realistic about the expectations we can have of a product we make.”

**Candida Crawford, Teaching & Learning Team,
Third Space Learning**

E: The limitations

James's work at Third Space Learning is barely impacted by the fact that he spends a day a week teaching elsewhere. On the rare occasion that a meeting needs to happen in his absence, decisions may be taken without him. For him, however, he is conscious of the fact that he isn't in the office five days a week, and perhaps feels slightly less integrated in the organisation as a result. He also describes a worry that there could be a subconscious bias towards those who do work five days a week, were there to be a promotion opportunity, purely because they are more present in the office.

For his school, being there for just one day a week does present some challenges. Timetabling is complicated by these arrangements: he is unable to teach GCSE classes as there is too much contact time required, all of which cannot be scheduled for a single day. Instead, all of his A level classes need to be set on the same day so that James can teach them in sequence. When he sets work for his pupils, James can only collect it in again a week later before taking it away to mark, which means that there could be a fortnight delay between setting the work and the pupils receiving feedback – which is not the pace that is often required in schools. If pupils have issues relating to the work that he sets, they have to email him to ask for help, which is not as efficient as being able to ask for help face-to-face. Equally, it takes longer to provide additional help to pupils who may be falling behind, because there is such a gap between his days in school.

Employing James in this way is perceived as being expensive by his school. While they are persuaded of the benefits of making use of expert and specialist teachers, their budget doesn't allow for this very easily. Depending on future budget constraints, there may be a move to using spare capacity within other non-specialist colleagues timetables to deliver the sorts of lessons that part-time specialists currently teach, instead of having a number of additional part-time teachers on their books.

F: Lessons learned: making this work for other people

James' TSL employer feels that part of the reason why this arrangement works so well for them is that James himself has quite a gregarious and open character: he is willing to share his opinions and works well with his colleagues. She wonders whether it might be such a success, however, if he had a quieter nature, and whether not being present in the office full-time could mean that someone less willing to speak up might be "*swept away in their absence*".

However, TSL would strongly recommend that other organisations consider employing someone part-time who also spends the rest of their week teaching:

"It's good for us, and it's good for James too – he's getting more active engagement in a classroom and an office environment. I think this makes him more cerebral and think about things on a deeper level. It's really good to cross-pollinate like this, and to keep your hand in teaching."

**Candida Crawford, Teaching & Learning Team,
Third Space Learning**

James feels strongly that flexible working and braided careers such as his are essential to bring capacity to a school system that is desperately in need of more resource. It also enables schools to bring experience from other professions into the classroom, and to integrate what he terms "real work" into education.

His school line manager's views remain divided:

"Working in this way can be very useful for the right circumstances – James for example. We had a big gap in our staffing after someone else with very specialised skills left, so having the option to employ specialists in certain modules would be great if it were more affordable for the school.

Currently this is not a great option to save money for our school. But, to not employ James would be to experiment by giving these modules to someone who hasn't taught it before and who doesn't have the specialist knowledge he does."

Oana Sandu, Lead teacher for maths, Bishop Challoner School



BRAIDED CAREER CASE STUDY

Dr Sarah Longshaw

Science teacher at Malbank School and Sixth Form Centre and SLP lead, Cheshire and Stockport Science Learning Partnership

SUMMARY

- Sarah secured her braided career herself: she wanted to be able to undertake two roles, so negotiated that each of them could be done on a part-time basis.
- While her workload hasn't changed much since leaving full-time teaching, the variety and flexibility in her work means that she doesn't feel as exhausted as she did as a full-time teacher and is instead happier and more motivated.
- Remaining part-time within the classroom enables Sarah to continue to have credibility in doing other education-based work: she keeps up-to-date with the latest developments or policy changes and has current, relevant experience on which to draw.
- Strong organisational skills, a flexible attitude and clear communication enable these arrangements to work successfully.

A: Profile

Sarah currently teaches science for one day a week at Malbank School and Sixth Form Centre, a mixed 11–18 comprehensive school in Nantwich, Cheshire, and spends two days a week running the Cheshire and Stockport Science Learning Partnership (SLP) from Eaton Bank Academy in Congleton. From September 2018, Sarah will increase her teaching time to 2 days every week at Malbank, and because they have a two-week timetable, she will work Wednesday and Thursday at school in week one, and Monday and Tuesday during week two.

This academic year at Malbank, Sarah has taught science to small groups of Y11 pupils and provided support to the Head of Department. Sarah provides the strategic leadership to the SLP, which delivers quality, relevant and dynamic science-based Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and networking opportunities for primary, secondary and FE staff. This role sees Sarah organising and delivering CPD, networking with schools across the region, marketing the SLP, recruiting participants to courses, and making strategic links with relevant partners.

In addition to these roles, Sarah spends ten days a year working for the East Cheshire SCITT (school-centred initial teacher training), delivering the chemistry content for trainee teachers and visiting and observing their teaching in their schools. She also undertakes ad hoc writing work for publishers and wrote an A Level chemistry revision book in 2018.

B: How these arrangements came about

Sarah was the driving force behind her split roles. She began her teaching career as a chemistry teacher and managed to negotiate her initial job at Eaton Bank Academy down from a full-time to a 0.8 position. She went on to become their part-time Head of Chemistry before going full-time as their Head of Science.

Sarah eventually became disillusioned by the pressures associated with full-time teaching, so decided that it was time to look for something else. Having helped Eaton Bank to secure the contract to host the SLP, she spoke to the school about whether she might be able to lead it.

“Sarah was previously in full-time work here, but it didn't seem to give her everything that she was looking for in a career: she was a very successful head of department but needed to be working in a wider context than just a school. So, when the SLP opportunity came up, we wanted to retain Sarah and her expertise and energy and passion, so this met all of our needs!”

**Elizabeth Whitehurst, Strategic Business Manager,
Eaton Bank Academy**

At the same time, Sarah had been working as a Specialist Leader of Education (SLE) and had been delivering some ad hoc support to Malbank School, supporting the Head of Department and running some small group teaching. Realising how much she loved being back in the classroom, and how comfortable she was at Malbank, she asked if they could make it a more permanent arrangement, and they agreed to employ her for a day a week:

“At the end of the day, there is nothing like standing in front of a class: that Eureka moment; building relationships; getting the question right; guessing the topics that come up in the paper. When children ask me why I’m doing this job – I’ve got a PHD and I’ve had lots of other jobs – it’s because I want to make a difference, I want to do things that will have an impact in the future. It’s that: the immediate feedback on the impact you have.”

Sarah Longshaw

From the school’s perspective, they had wanted to develop the capacity of their science team and wanted to bring someone in whose skills would complement those that they already had. Sarah was offering them this as a SLE, and once they realised the benefits of having her in the department, Malbank did not hesitate to offer her a permanent, part-time contract for a day a week during 2017/18, increasing to two days a week from the 2018 autumn term onwards:

“Sarah had decided that she wanted to leave the classroom to run her SLP, but all the time she knew that teaching was what she loved. For me, I would rather have her here for some of the time than none. The impact that she can have here is very good – it’s demonstratively obvious, and not just on the children, but on the staff as well. What she brings as an ex-Head of Department is support and challenge for our current departmental head, but it also means she has been a breath of fresh air.”

Jeannette Walker, Headteacher, Malbank School and Sixth Form

C: The practicalities

From September, Sarah will be spending two days a week teaching at Malbank, and due to their two-week timetable, this will see her teaching every day except Friday over a fortnight. Given that her SLP work is very flexible – it is not necessary for her to be there on set days each week – this arrangement will actually make the SLP responsibilities easier, as she will be able to make herself available for meetings on every day of the week at other schools over the course of every two weeks.

Sarah has a contract with the Local Authority to work for Malbank, which means that she has been able to opt back into her teacher’s pension and the associated terms and conditions and she has the security of being paid over the summer holidays. This also provides her school with a similar sense of security, knowing that they are guaranteed her time each week with them. In contrast, her work for the SLP (and her SCITT work) is contracted on a self-employment basis because it gives her complete flexibility and she is able to deliver the work that needs to be done on her terms – something that suits both Sarah and the SLP. It also enables her to take on additional work such as consultancy support for another school that is completely unconnected. There is a service level agreement in place between Sarah and Eaton Bank to underpin their arrangements.

Timetabling at school is a little complicated, given Sarah’s part-time status, but she is not the only member of staff who works in this way. The school works hard to ensure that she is able to teach both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, but her availability means she is not able to teach A level classes.

Sarah’s workload hasn’t changed significantly since leaving teaching, but she does now have more flexibility about what she does, where and when, because these arrangements give her more control over her time. It is harder for her to receive the more traditional pastoral support at school because she isn’t there full-time, but her colleagues are very happy to communicate with her by email if necessary. She finds that when meetings are organised, they are much less likely to be moved because she is only in school on two days – if they want to see her, they either have to accommodate her availability or wait for another week. The fact that there are a number of other part-time staff in both Malbank and Eaton Bank means that this is a fairly usual scenario, and Sarah’s colleagues respect her availability, and don’t expect responses immediately if they do email each other.

Running the SLP means that opportunities to take part in CPD are limitless: if Sarah is presenting one session at a conference, there are four others to attend. She has undertaken online CPD with STEM Learning (the organisation that manages the national network of SLPs) which has provided Sarah with “phenomenal” learning, and she tries to select courses that will complement both her teaching role at Malbank and her responsibilities at the SLP.

At the SLP, Sarah has an administrator and a marketing manager supporting her who keeps things running on a day-to-day basis and with whom she is in frequent communication. This allows Sarah to flex her time and helps to keep her motivated and happy, and able to continue to do an excellent job.

All three parties rely on there being clear and open communications between them to keep the arrangement working smoothly. There is a strong element of trust in Sarah's ability to do her job, and both employers have clear expectations of what they would like her to deliver, and what they need to provide in return in terms of support such as: a base to work from; an email address; excellent lab technicians; and IT or reprographics assistance.

D: The benefits

Sarah, her school and her SLP can all articulate clear benefits to the way she is employed.

Sarah feels that she has found the optimum work arrangements for her:

“Having happy motivated, committed staff working in a way that suits them is so much better than trying to employ someone who doesn't want to do five days a week or who can't: it's so important to be more flexible.”

Sarah Longshaw

Similarly, Malbank know that this way of employing Sarah is crucial for them to be able to keep her:

“If you don't do it – you lose outstanding teachers from the classroom. This opportunity will really benefit Sarah: it keeps her credibility with colleagues in the networks she is leading. When you leave the classroom completely you have a sell-by-date, so it is beneficial for the team here to have someone of such standing in school, and our parents recognise that too.”

Jeannette Walker, Headteacher, Malbank School and Sixth Form

Sarah's work with her SLP means that she gets exposure to a lot of other schools and can see what is working elsewhere

(often beyond her local area or region) and can borrow ideas from them to integrate back into her classroom at Malbank. She also gets to increase Malbank's reputation by sharing how they might solve an issue and publicising the way that they do things. Because she doesn't have the same workload as a full-time teacher, Sarah leads Malbank's science Twitter feed, and the school has never had so much outward-facing science content until she took it over. Her colleagues are proud that Sarah is at the forefront of the development of science teaching and her pupils perceive her as an absolute specialist, which sends crucial subliminal messages to her Year 11 pupils about her credibility.

From the SLP's perspective, having someone leading the partnership who is also a practising teacher is essential:

“In order for Sarah to be confident delivering and selling training for the SLP, she needs to fully understand teachers' needs, the changes in the curriculum, and to be able to scan the horizon and be ahead of the changes that may be coming to specifications or exams. She needs to be able to keep abreast of all of that and to have hands on experience: it's really, really valuable for her to be classroom-based.”

Elizabeth Whitehurst, Strategic Business Manager, Eaton Bank Academy

For Sarah herself, she has taken control of her workload and her diary through this way of working which has made her better at managing her time. Having spent the year working for both the school and the SLP, she now knows what it feels like if she takes on too much, so is making plans to be more strategic with any additional work she does agree to do. It has also enabled Sarah to restore her work-life balance:

“You need to step off the treadmill [of full-time working] to decide what's important. I would always say no to social invitations at weekends [in the past] as I had too much work elsewhere. But now I say yes, because I can be more sociable – I needed the change to re-set the balance. You need to feel that it's your choice to work as much as you want to without feeling compelled to do so!”

Sarah Longshaw

E: The limitations

Neither Malbank nor the SLP could articulate any significant disadvantages of employing Sarah in this way. The school does acknowledge that there are issues that come with employing people part-time, but that the benefits far outweigh these:

“Our strongest department is our English team, but there are only three people there who are full-time, and the rest are on 0.8 contracts. If I am flexible [in how I employ people] I will get it back in bucket-loads, and it also means that we don’t force women into decisions to stay or leave the profession completely. If you step out of the classroom for five years until your children go to school so much changes, and for your wellbeing when you try and re-enter the profession it is so much of a bigger mountain to climb. So, if you can keep them somehow, you get the benefit.”

Jeannette Walker, Headteacher, Malbank School and Sixth Form

Sarah finds that she has to be very disciplined: being able to say no to things or making sure that your commitments fit within the time you have available is important. She has to be phenomenally organised to make it all work – it can sometimes be difficult to keep in touch with what’s going on in each organisation, so it takes extra effort to do this. And, on occasion she misses out on networking opportunities in her own school if something is scheduled for one of her non-work days.

F: Lessons learned: making this work for other people

During the 2017/18 academic year, there has been the potential for Sarah to feel a little isolated, conducting so much of her work outside of school. So, her decision to increase her classroom-based time to two days a week from September onwards will mitigate this. It will also allow her to act as a critical friend for science meetings, to feel more part of the team, and to establish herself more with her pupils. It is important, she feels, that anyone considering this way of working gets the balance of time right between their two (or more) roles:

“One of the big things that appealed to me [about teaching] was being part of a team again. I missed working that way. I do a lot of SLP work from home, and it can be quite isolating. I missed being part of the day-to-day.”

Sarah Longshaw

Malbank recommends taking a flexible, person-centred approach to employment:

“It’s not possible for everyone to work like this, of course. You need to have a large core of staff doing the day-to-day to provide continuity. But, if you can get the benefits from your staff going out and doing other things – if there’s a benefit for your students, your staff and for the school – if you can answer yes to all three, you should definitely do it. And, if you circulate the opportunity to do it so that it’s fair and equitable, it means people don’t get into a rut.”

Jeannette Walker, Headteacher, Malbank School and Sixth Form

Eaton Bank have a similar attitude:

“I would definitely recommend this way of employing people. And I would add that to allow part-time senior roles, whether that’s combining it with another role or responsibilities is good for society as a whole and the gender pay gap. There is virtually no situation where you cannot accommodate this as a working model in school – where people have multiple jobs, or family or caring responsibilities – it’s all doable. And it works, if people are happy, confident and trusted.”

Elizabeth Whitehurst, Strategic Business Manager, Eaton Bank Academy



BRAIDED CAREER CASE STUDY

Charlotte Evans

Home Tutor: Penrhos Avenue Education Centre (Alternative Education), Education Officer: Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour, and Facilitator: EdComs

SUMMARY

- Charlotte's braided career set-up came about gradually: taking on more and more flexible and part-time or ad hoc jobs in succession.
- She manages her workload herself, made easier in part by the fact that none of her jobs specify that she has to work for them on set days and times every week.
- There are overlaps between Charlotte's roles, and each organisation benefits from the experience she gains in her other positions.
- Flexibility and clear communication are crucial to making this work for Charlotte and her employers.

A: Profile

Charlotte has a truly braided career with a number of flexible jobs. She works as a home tutor, specialising in science and maths, for the Penrhos Avenue Education Centre (Alternative Education) (henceforth: AEC) in North Wales for anything between two and a half and 15 hours a week. She does ad hoc supply teaching for the AEC and a primary special school. She also works for two and a half days a week as the Education Officer for the Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour (ASAB): a small learned society, and as a part-time facilitator (with no set hours) for EdComs: an educational marketing and communications agency that develops corporate social responsibility programmes for businesses such as Sainsburys and Deloitte and runs educational campaigns in schools.

Penrhos Avenue Education Centre (Alternative Education) provides home-based tuition for children who are unable to attend mainstream school for medical reasons. Charlotte gets matched to one or more pupils at a time and provides them with around five hours of science and maths teaching every week. She usually teaches secondary school pupils in years 10 or 11, though could be matched with younger children should the need arise. Usually tuition is focussed on supporting the pupils to complete their GCSEs. The pupil's school is required to provide the teaching materials for each lesson, but this rarely happens so Charlotte will mostly do her own lesson planning and marking or will work on past exam papers for her year 11 pupils. Occasionally, and in addition to the home tuition work, Charlotte provides supply cover at the AEC itself and at another primary school if other teachers are absent on an ad hoc basis. For the last two years, she's spent about four weeks

a year doing supply teaching. Last year this was made up of a fortnight covering a teacher's absence, and then individual days here and there that fitted around her home tuition work.

ASAB supports the teaching of animal behaviour within schools and colleges and produces teaching resources from primary up to undergraduate level. For two and a half days a week, Charlotte acts as their education officer, writing resources, visiting schools, talking to young people, running their social media accounts, and attending science fairs and conferences. Charlotte can deliver most of her work from any location and around her other work commitments as it is completely flexible, and ASAB does not have a formal office base anywhere.

Charlotte works for EdComs as a facilitator on an ad hoc basis, organising education tours, delivering workshops or running training. She spends between six and eight weeks a year doing this work.

B: How these arrangements came about

Charlotte originally trained as a science teacher with a biology specialism and taught full-time in mainstream education for 12 years, eight of which she also spent as a pastoral Head of Year, which gave her experience of working with children who had additional special needs. In 2008, she moved from Guildford to North Wales and decided that she didn't want to be a full-time teacher any more. Given that she doesn't speak Welsh – a requirement for anyone teaching in mainstream education in Wales – Charlotte found herself having to look for opportunities within the special school sector instead (which does not require knowledge of the Welsh language) and

began her teaching job at the AEC:

“Charlotte’s CV appealed to us because of the range of experiences she brought: having myself stepped away from full-time teaching, I could see that the broad perspective she would bring to home tuition would be so valuable. It is so important that our tutors are able to take in a student’s entire circumstances: for some of them they may have been out of mainstream education for more than a year, so we need someone who has the right attitude, and who can see beyond the student’s situation.”

**Joan Cunnington-Johnson, Home Tuition Co-ordinator,
Penrhos Avenue Education Centre (Alternative Education)**

Charlotte began to combine this work with freelance projects at EdComs in 2008, having previously taught in a Guildford secondary school alongside one of their full-time facilitators:

“Charlotte is brilliant with young people in the classroom, and she has senior management and pastoral experience too. She has worked in a lot of different settings from regular schools to Pupil Referral Units to units within hospital settings, so she brings a really important perspective to EdComs. She helps us to think about the student perspective in everything we deliver: having worked with such a diverse range of young people, she knows exactly how they will react both positively and negatively.”

Caroline Cutler, Training & Events Co-ordinator, EdComs

Charlotte began by supporting projects for clients such as Sainsburys and Transport for London. Since that point, EdComs has continued to regularly invite her to undertake ad hoc projects in blocks of days which fit around her teaching commitments. She is currently providing maternity cover for a work experience programme for Deloitte, made possible by her flexible working arrangements.

In 2011, Charlotte applied to an advertisement in the Times Educational Supplement to become the Education Officer for ASAB. They were looking for someone who had classroom experience but who was also still involved in teaching and who was able to work flexibly for 2.5 days a week for them. Her existing commitments meant that this role slotted perfectly into her routine.

C: The practicalities

Charlotte is employed on a permanent part-time contract for ASAB which gives her complete flexibility about where or when she carries out her work for them. In contrast, she is employed as a freelancer by EdComs, though is formally on their payroll due to the volume and frequency of the work she carries out for them which also means that she accrues holiday. The work she does for them is not regular (though she works for them almost every month), and nor is it set days or times: it will depend on the project and the client, as well as the amount of teaching she is doing. Similarly, she doesn’t have a formal contract with the AEC: there is no guarantee about the volume of work that Charlotte will do for them every month. Instead, she is usually matched to two or three young people at any one time, depending on the need. If a year 11 pupil has completed their exams, for example, they will stop receiving home tuition.

Fortunately, none of Charlotte’s roles have regular set days, which allows her to manage her own time and to be flexible about how she undertakes each job. When she is supporting a pupil at the AEC, so long as she is able to fit the required five hours of teaching into a week, they don’t mind when she does it. Equally, this teaching needs to fit around a pupil’s medical appointments or other commitments, which means that it may change from week to week. The five hours are usually split into two x 2.5-hour sessions on different days or into two x two-hour sessions plus a separate single hour on three days. Occasionally, a pupil will have two different tutors for the subjects that they need help with, and in that instance, Charlotte will teach two 1.5-hour sessions and a second teacher would do the other two hours.

ASAB finds that is ideal for them too:

“For us it works really well: there are no fixed days other than the occasional science fair or conference that Charlotte attends for us, so she can fit our work around the teaching that she does. [Our work is] also not place-specific, and can be done over the web, so it doesn’t matter where she is based – she can still do an excellent job.”

Dr Rupert Marshall, Education Secretary, ASAB

Supply teaching work has to take a lower priority than her home tuition teaching as the latter requires Charlotte to see pupils regularly each week. Any supply work she does has to fit around those hours. Financially, however, this is difficult as a day of supply teaching pays more than the two-hour home tuition session she may be committed to delivering. The home tuition work does continue throughout the term, however.

If EdComs has a project for Charlotte, they liaise with her to see if their dates fit with her availability around her other roles, and she will either do all of it, or they will employ her to do as much of it as she can.

Charlotte is offered the chance to take part in training and development opportunities by the AEC: they have regular staff days which, if she is available, she will take part in, though this isn't always possible. EdComs periodically runs safeguarding training for their regular freelancers to which she is also invited. ASAB only has two members of staff who are formally employed – the rest of the society is made up of volunteers. This means that the formal provision of CPD isn't really relevant: it is much more likely that Charlotte will be delivering it for schools.

Charlotte feels that not only does she have to be very flexible in the way that she approaches her work, but she also needs to be good at her job and this arrangement allows that.

Her employers echo this:

“She is brilliant at what she does – she melds it all together. She has spent time working abroad in the past but was still able to do her work for us and came back when she needed to be at a specific event.”

Dr Rupert Marshall, Education Secretary, ASAB

Clear communication helps to make these arrangements work too, along with a sense of adaptability on all sides:

“We have to be happy to work with the constraints that may come from the limits on a tutor's time – we are used to adjusting timetables from week to week. We're able to engage openly with our children and their families, and to say to them: 'this is what we're planning to do but do excuse us if we need to change it'. Equally, however, we are flexible if a family has a medical appointment they need to attend.”

**Joan Cunnington-Johnson, Home Tuition Co-ordinator,
Penrhos Avenue Education Centre**

D: The benefits

This way of working is very successful for Charlotte:

“It suits me! Because I don't have a family – no kids – and I pay rent, not a mortgage, I can afford to live like this. It's a bit 'fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants' – it can be boom or bust! It gives me time – more time to do nice things!

My workload is much more manageable: I have less work now than I did as a full-time teacher. It's not as tiring, it doesn't have the same intensity as being a teacher. Sometimes there's a lot of travelling, but that's interesting and fun. Being a teacher is physically and emotionally exhausting – that tiredness of having to get up every day and face the day – I haven't felt that tired since I left teaching full-time.”

Charlotte Evans

The overlap between Charlotte's jobs is really useful – she can take the experience from one job to benefit another, and she makes connections between them all the time. For example, she draws on her knowledge of animal behaviour from ASAB in her teaching work. Her experience presenting for ASAB at events helps with her facilitation work at EdComs. Doing the home tuition means that she is still actively working in education and has an up-to-date sense of what's going on and how schools are working.

ASAB echoes this:

“What's useful for us is that Charlotte is still engaged in teaching and in the classroom: she is up-to-date on the syllabus and is in regular contact with teachers. It enables us to get into the classroom really effectively: she keeps up-to-date with current trends, and we benefit.”

Dr Rupert Marshall, Education Secretary, ASAB

Charlotte's combined roles bring significant benefit to EdComs too:

“The main benefit for us is the authenticity that she brings. The things that she has learned in the classroom: the behavioural stuff, how you organise children, classroom management etc – it all crosses over with how you manage adults. We need someone who is very calm, organised, confident and who knows exactly what she is talking about. She's a very trusted advisor for us.”

Caroline Cutler, Training & Events Co-ordinator, EdComs

The AEC also values the breadth of experience and the variety that Charlotte's braided career has given her:

“I think what we're getting is someone who is fresh, eager and really interested in what she's able to offer.”

Joan Cunnington-Johnson, Home Tuition Co-ordinator, Penrhos Avenue Education Centre

E: The limitations

The only person who was really able to articulate any disadvantages arising from these working arrangements was Charlotte herself:

“It's the boom or bust thing. Sometimes there's not much going on. Although I have the ASAB work for 2.5 days a week ticking along, if there is none of the other stuff, then it can be a bit tight financially.

I also miss working with other people: having someone else to bounce ideas off. I love the physical proximity of working with other people, where you can have an office chat. The inspiration that you can take from those can help you come up with new ideas: I miss that.”

Charlotte Evans

In contrast, her employers were all certain that there were no limitations from the way she is employed, and all said that they would employ her for more time, were they able to.

“The problem with that, however, is that if she did less of the other work, then she would have less of the experience that we value!”

Caroline Cutler, Training & Events Co-ordinator, EdComs

F: Lessons learned: making this work for other people

ASAB feels that this arrangement could work well for other employers who can be flexible in the way they employ someone:

“It works financially for us – we can't afford to pay someone full-time. It is great that Charlotte can do other jobs around ours – it means she can afford to do our job too. But it also works because it means we can get the person that we need [with ongoing teaching experience]. And, if we had fixed days it would make it much harder, as often teaching needs to be on set days. This is perfect – because the role is flexible.”

Dr Rupert Marshall, Education Secretary, ASAB

Charlotte would recommend this way of working to others, though with a caveat:

“It definitely suits some people more than others. I would recommend it if it suits you: because you get to do lots of stuff, it isn't boring, every day is different. If you're looking to advance your career though, you'd probably have to go back into a 'proper job'. I can do this quite happily, but to get to another level up, I'd have to be employed more formally.

My work gives me time. You get time! Time to do lots of interesting things, meeting interesting people.

And, teaching young people on an individual basis is quite intense, but you can definitely see the difference that you make. It's quite an immediate reward and if you get them back to school it's brilliant.”

Charlotte Evans
