

# Partner up!

Dr Julian Grenier of Sheringham Nursery School and Children's Centre in East London talks to *Marianne Sargent* about collaboration in part one of a new series on National Teaching Schools

**S**heringham Nursery School and Children's Centre in Newham, East London, which was granted National Teaching School (NTS) status earlier this year, is credited by the National College for Teaching & Leadership as having an 'outstanding track record of raising standards through supporting other schools'.

The nursery school's head teacher and National Leader of Education (NLE) Dr Julian Grenier says that it was the opportunity to work more closely with other settings and the benefits that could be gained from sharing practice and learning from others that attracted him to apply for NTS status.

'The research for my doctorate in education was about working with practitioners who are offering the two-year-old places and supporting them in reflecting on the quality of their provision, so I do have a strong personal commitment to that sort of partnership working with early years practitioners,' he explains.

Before becoming a teaching school, Sheringham was designated a Community Childcare and Education Hub working with 4Children. The school still acts as a hub and Dr Grenier says the work with 4Children helps the school to consider, develop and improve practice through working with local settings. Becoming an NTS seemed like a natural progression.

'We applied for NTS status because we felt that it was something that would benefit our school and the children who attend. Being at the centre of all this activity around training and development, research and evaluation and working with other schools helps us to develop our practice and the quality of what we can offer here.'

'We felt it would strengthen the partnerships we have with schools and settings in Newham and Tower



Hamlets,' Dr Grenier adds. 'We also feel that nursery schools have a particular contribution to make in terms of supporting the development of early years practice across their neighbourhoods.'

'So, we wanted to make sure that as a nursery school we weren't just focused on the children on roll here, but that we had a wider impact on quality and outcomes for children locally.'

'I think that it is the way forward in early years for schools and settings to work more closely together, particularly because the levels of support from local authorities are going to begin to tail off with cuts to funding and other changes.'

## WORKING IN ALLIANCE

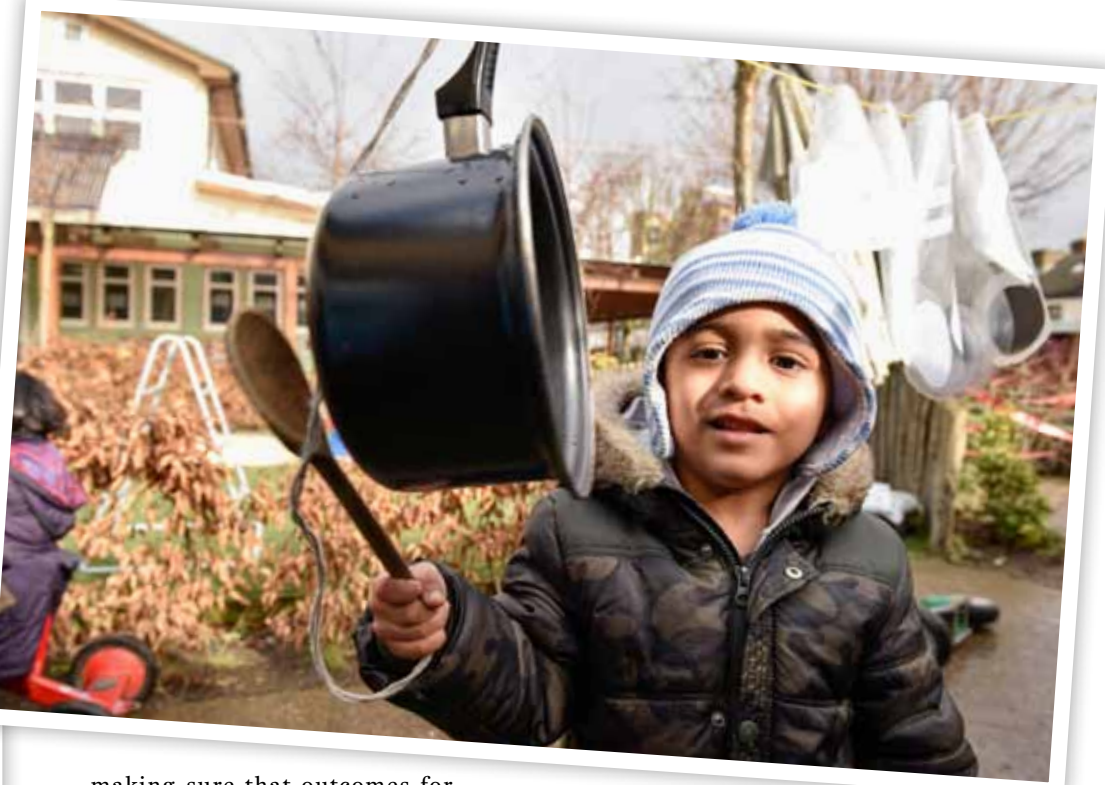
Sheringham Nursery School works in partnership with National Support School (NSS) Alice Model Nurs-

**'We would urge people to make contact with their nearest teaching school and find out about what they're offering to support development in the early years'**

ery School and Kaizen Primary School to lead NTS alliance the East London Early Years and Schools Partnership. Dr Grenier explains that the alliance aims to offer early years expertise across a number of different aspects.

'We wouldn't want to just narrowly focus on one or two areas, we want to lead quality and improvement in the early years, working with a wide range of settings and schools and across all of the different areas that make up high-quality early years provision.'

'Thinking about the East London context, there are some really key areas that we have to focus on here,' he adds. 'One is effective support for children speaking English as an additional language, as well as inclusion and effective inclusive practice. We also have a very strong focus on the early years pupil premium and



making sure that outcomes for EYPP-eligible children are good.'

Dr Grenier is keen to stress that the aim of the alliance is to work in partnership with other schools and settings rather than preach 'good practice'.

'We're not trying to disseminate practice from here to others, but trying to build our knowledge and understanding of early years practice in collaboration with the different schools and settings,' he says.

### INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING

As part of the alliance, Sheringham offers placements for trainee teachers in partnership with the University of East London through the Government initiative School Direct. Dr Grenier highlights the benefits of on-the-job initial teacher training.

'Programmes like School Direct allow trainees to really tap into the expertise of the different schools in the alliance. They can take part in

**Sheringham leads NTS alliance the East London Early Years and Schools Partnership**

the wider activities; for example, if one of the schools is hosting a training day which might be of interest, we'll offer that to all of the trainees on School Direct.'

However, he also emphasises the value of the collaboration between schools and universities that the NTS programme facilitates.

'The universities do play a really important role in teacher training, so for us it's about the partnership, not about saying that schools can do it better than universities or the other way around. We do think that a PGCE should have the academic rigour and that university experience is an essential component.

'We feel that we can offer the best of both worlds, if you like, which is that our trainees do get a proper university experience but also very strong input from schools in our alliance, ensuring that they are really well prepared for all sorts of challenges and issues that they'll be facing in classrooms in East London.'

### CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The alliance delivers the newly qualified teacher (NQT) and NQT+1 programmes that support and develop newly qualified teachers in Newham. As well as this, it provides continuing professional development ➤

## THE NATIONAL TEACHING SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

Based on the model of teaching hospitals, the National Teaching Schools (NTS) programme was introduced in 2011 following the publication of the 2010 Schools White Paper, *The Importance of Teaching*.

In this White Paper, the coalition Government set out a vision for achieving a self-improving, school-led system by creating a national network of teaching schools that would work together to drive up standards. Schools and early years settings would be given more freedom and responsibility for managing the education system, while improving outcomes through school-to-school support, peer-led training, continuing

professional development and research.

The Government has already far exceeded its goal to reach 600 designated teaching schools by 2016, with a current total of 691 in England, including 32 nursery schools, 180 primary schools and 127 primary academies.

Over the past six years these schools have been forming local 'alliances' and working together to identify needs, offer support and share knowledge, skills and innovative practice. They work with a range of partners including other schools, academies, early years settings and universities to provide high-quality training and development for new and experienced staff.

There are six core areas of responsibility for teaching schools:

- school-led initial teacher training
- peer-to-peer continuing professional and leadership development
- supporting other schools
- identifying and developing leadership potential
- designating and forming links between specialist leaders of education; and
- engaging in research and development.

In order to become an NTS, a setting must have an Outstanding rating from Ofsted and demonstrate a track record of successful collaboration with other schools that has resulted in improved outcomes.

The setting must also have an Outstanding head teacher and a leadership team that has the capacity to lead in each of the six core areas of responsibility.

Teaching schools are led by head teachers who have applied to become a National Leader of Education (NLE). The role of the NLE is to work with schools identified as needing significant improvement by working alongside other head teachers and supporting their staff. It is possible to become an NLE without applying for NTS status. Schools with NLEs at the helm are automatically designated National Support Schools. There are currently over 1,000 NLEs in England who collaborate with and support schools in their local areas.





## MORE INFORMATION

- Sheringham Nursery School and Children's Centre, [www.sheringham-nur.org.uk](http://www.sheringham-nur.org.uk)
- East London Early Years and Schools Partnership, [www.eleysp.co.uk](http://www.eleysp.co.uk)
- Manor Park Talks, [www.nurseryworld.co.uk/nursery-world/feature/1143281/learning-development-communication-manor-park-talks](http://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/nursery-world/feature/1143281/learning-development-communication-manor-park-talks)
- Teaching Schools Council, <http://tscouncil.org.uk>
- National College for Teaching & Leadership, [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-college-for-teaching-and-leadership](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-college-for-teaching-and-leadership)
- Full list of teaching schools: <http://tinyurl.com/zbjbz6z>
- How to get involved in the NTS programme: [www.gov.uk/government/collections/teaching-schools-and-system-leadership-how-you-can-get-involved](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/teaching-schools-and-system-leadership-how-you-can-get-involved)

programme with the IoE,' says Dr Grenier. 'Our aim is that this will be participant research, with the members of the programme taking an active role in researching its impact. Sometimes schools feel that universities come out and "do research" on them, and sometimes universities feel that schools misapply the term "research" to activities which are not rigorous enough to generate new understandings. We're interested in the third space where early years practitioners are working with universities, collaborating and creating something that's completely new.'

## POSITIVE OUTCOMES

The East London Early Years and Schools Partnership has made a significant impact on early years practice in the Manor Park area. The locality boasts a high number of settings achieving Good and Outstanding ratings from Ofsted, with none rated as Inadequate, and Dr Grenier would like to bring more providers into the fold.

'In our alliance here in East London we're really keen and open to working with schools and settings across Newham, Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Waltham Forest. Any school or setting in those areas is very welcome to get in touch with us via our website and to join our alliance,' he says.

'It's very easy to become isolated either as an early years practitioner in a school or as a setting facing the sort of challenges that PVI settings can encounter. We would urge people, wherever they are in the country, to look up where their nearest teaching school is and make contact with them and find out about what they're offering to support development in the early years.' ■

(CPD) for schools, settings and childminders across East London and collaborates with equality in education charity TeachFirst to deliver its Teacher Training and leadership development programme.

'Our CPD offer is particularly focused on our early years expertise, and our aim really is to offer CPD which isn't just a day's training that you attend and then that's it. What we're trying to do is build knowledge and develop pedagogy in partnership with a range of schools and settings,' Dr Grenier explains.

'So, for example, we have an Every Child a Talker (ECAT) project that we run for schools and settings in East London, which is three days of training spread out across the year. In between the sessions, the trainer, Judith Stevens, visits the schools or settings to help them with implementation, and we also help them to gather assessment information about the outcomes for the children and the quality of teaching and learning.'

The alliance is also piloting additional CPD support through the creation of an online community of practice development using the Twitter hashtag #EYTeaching.

## CROSS-SECTOR IMPACT

Dr Grenier says the NTS programme has an equal contribution to make to early years practice in private, voluntary and independent settings, as well as maintained nurseries and primary schools.

'We're trying to work cross-sector. That's our ambition. There are a lot of historical and other issues that can sometimes get in the way of

cross-sector working. There are a lot of controversies about funding and other issues and we don't seek to deny the significance of those issues, but we think that everyone will benefit if different sectors can collaborate in the early years.

'We're particularly pleased that we are working collaboratively with Bright Horizons and London Early Years Foundation, and we have close links with the PVI settings in our local area and across East London. We really value those links.'

## RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

As well as providing training and support for trainees and teachers, the East London Early Years and Schools Partnership engages in research and development with the University College London Institute of Education.

'We are currently working to research and evaluate our Outstanding Early Years Teaching Pro-

## MASTERCLASS: EARLY YEARS IN SCHOOLS

Join Dr Julian Grenier, Professor Tina Bruce and other eminent early years experts for a morning masterclass at the Nursery World Show 2016 on 6 February.

Forming part of an extensive seminar programme, 'Early years provision in schools – policy and practice' aims to help schools achieve the best outcomes for young children through high-quality enabling environments and skilled and supportive practitioners.

Dr Grenier will outline the current challenges and essential starting points for setting children

on the path to becoming effective learners. Professor Bruce will set out the principles of best practice in the early years, followed by 'best practice' case studies. And rounding off the morning's session is Jan Dubiel, national development manager at Early Excellence and former QCA lead on the EYFS Profile, who will look at how to build a holistic picture of the child while meeting all 'baseline' requirements.

- To find out more and book a place, visit: [www.nurseryworldshow.com](http://www.nurseryworldshow.com)