

# Irreplaceable YOU

As his inimitable deputy Mr Drew leaves Passmores for a headship elsewhere, Educating Essex's Vic Goddard has some thoughts on continuity...

If you have read anything about the future leadership of schools or browsed through much stuff from the NCSL, you will probably have heard enough about succession planning. This is a phrase that has become part of the language of leadership for all head teachers, but is it really possible? What does it really feel like to lose a trusted colleague, a brother in arms, a friend with whom you have stood side by side for years? I can tell you, after the experiences of having to replace 'my wall' this summer, it is tough.

For those that don't know, my deputy, the telegenic Mr Drew, moved on to headship this term. I was really pleased for him and ready for him to move on, and so was he of course, but – and this is a big but – how easily replaced is any influential individual?

I know that head teachers generally take the very strong view that the job is not only to ensure that the students reach their potential but that all staff do, too. If we are serious about this then that means we have to be pleased for them when they get the next step in their careers and no matter how hard they are to replace.

We talk a great deal about legacy at Passmores – 'in order not to take all your brilliance with you make sure you leave more than a footprint in the sand etc.' – but trying to ensure that when someone leaves the school doesn't move backwards should form part of every staff member's moral purpose (as opposed to just cramming a USB stick full of as much stuff as you can get your hands on as you head out the door...)

What I found during my search for a new deputy, who will help Passmores move on, is

that the task is actually being made more difficult by the very work going on within 'the system' to create more headteachers – NPQH being the biggest culprit.

One major problem is that formulaic letters of application really don't help sort out the wood from the trees. Trying to work out what any individual truly stands for is difficult – and, above all else, that is the most important thing to me. When under pressure we all revert to our core values and that is what I am desperate to know about, because we are in the 'pressure business' more so than ever these days.

As it happens we were lucky with a strong field and very appointable candidates for our one-day interview. I highlight this because I am really sceptical of the need for two-day (I have even heard of three-day) interview processes. How much of that is about finding the right person and how much is to try and stress just how important the position/school is? In my mind I can judge whether the room lights up when a person enters or when they leave within the first hour and the rest is just about discovering

VIC GODDARD IS HEAD TEACHER AT PASSMORES ACADEMY – AS SEEN ON CHANNEL 4'S 'EDUCATING ESSEX' SERIES



which candidate has the best match for what is needed and will fit into the family most effectively. So, as we are doing the most important job in the world lets try and not take people away from it for longer than we have to.

I feel like that was a bit of a rant – sorry! Needless to say, we've appointed a deputy, he's already taking things on from where we were and Mr Drew is currently making Brentwood an even better place to send children to school; and so, as ever, the journey continues...



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