

Becoming a member of The Key as part of a consortium



Birmingham City Council has been working in partnership with The Key to encourage schools to take up membership of the service. In the summer term 2012, Birmingham's Sparkhill Consortium approached The Key to arrange a group membership for their primary and special schools.

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Tony Lacey, Headmaster of Arden Primary School, speaks to us about his membership of The Key as part of a consortium of schools.

Tony first heard about The Key through a colleague at the Sparkhill Consortium meeting. He said, "I tried it and that experience made me want to have full membership".

"After asking other schools' senior leaders, I discovered that they too had previously enjoyed trialling The Key. This made setting up the consortium membership much easier."

When discussing how The Key supports his senior leaders, Tony said, "It ensures that we undertake something with proper proven guidance. Most recently we were looking at assessment and so went to The Key's website. We found that there was a whole section on things we had not even thought about. We were then able to resolve our issue."

"My assistant heads and the phase leaders are new, so I will ensure that they are set up with access to The Key, which will empower them with knowledge for their continuing professional development."

After the schools in the consortium had trialled the service, 24 out of the 26 schools chose to join. Tony believes that most of them will want to renew.

He is encouraging others to join, including school leaders not in the Sparkhill Consortium: "I have told my colleagues in schools outside the consortium about The Key because I want them to be able to benefit from it too".

Tony comments that the main advantage of being part of a cluster membership is in meetings and when discussing current matters. "We can all look for different things and then share them with one another because we all have access. The service saves time in meetings because we have looked and prepared in advance; we are better informed and ready to discuss agenda items."

"In the Consortium we have four academies which all converted at around the same time. The Key provided them with information on the process, which they could use to inform their discussion and support one another."

Consortium members are full of praise for The Key's customer service: "Whenever schools have rung up with a query, the people on the other end of the line were lovely and really helpful".

Tony adds, "Knowing that the researchers are experts and are aware of what is going on in the education sector means you can trust them when you ask a question".



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Headmaster at Arden Primary School,
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The Key is an independent service that supports school leaders by providing practical, expertly researched answers to questions on all aspects of school leadership and management.

To find out more about The Key, visit www.usethekey.org.uk, or call 0800 89 00 52.