



PUBLIC BENEFIT PUBLIC RELATIONS

Dick Davison - Senior Consultant
mtmconsulting ltd

Practical Strategies for Challenging Times
15 September 2009



Public Benefit, Public Relations

IV Independent Schools

COVER STORY

The perfect solution?

Fee-paying schools are opening the doors of their science classes to state pupils - and both sides are benefiting. By Hilary Wilke

Can you spot the difference between the state school pupils and their fee-paying counterparts who are all busy creating oil of wintergreen in an independent school chemistry lab in Cambridgeshire? Answer: it isn't easy. Key young scientists no matter what their background, and for this mixed-up group of Year 9s and 10s it makes sense to share facilities across the school divide.

"We don't always have all the equipment at our school, so it helps to do it here," says Martin Lindsay, 15. "And we get to do loads of different things," says Rhiannon Cope, 15. "It's definitely more interesting."

"It's good," says Latoya Butcher, 15, who plans to be a forensic scientist. And Harlan Kohl, also 15, a student at the home school, agrees it's good to share. "Yeah, I think it's OK. Yeah, definitely."

The Chemistry Network is run and hosted by The King's School, Ely, and is designed to bring together gifted and talented students from within the school and three local maintained schools to study challenging chemistry modules and encourage them to take chemistry at GCSE, A-level and university. It also exists to share information and link teachers for training and development.

This is a pilot project, to be rolled out on a national basis later, and at the end of its first year all the signs are that it has hit the ground running. From a crime scene investigation day to Saturday master-classes ("Tetrachloromethane proved to be a real challenge, but some groups cracked it"), through visits, lectures, and the publication of a termly magazine, it is proving to be a robust collaboration between schools that are very different, but committed to boosting their pupils' interest in chemistry.

In the partnership alongside The King's School are Witchford Village College, a school specialising in sports, Abbey College, which specialises in technology, and the City of Ely Community College, specialising in business.

Susan Preststone, head of The King's School, says the project is "a community-wide flagship partnership that does what it says on the tin. It gives young people the kind of opportunities to do things that they would not do in the normal run of events". She believes passionately that private schools should build links with maintained schools and help to raise aspirations, but she also knows from her years on the national advisory group on independent-state school partnerships there is nothing new about such links and that thousands have been going on quietly for a long time.

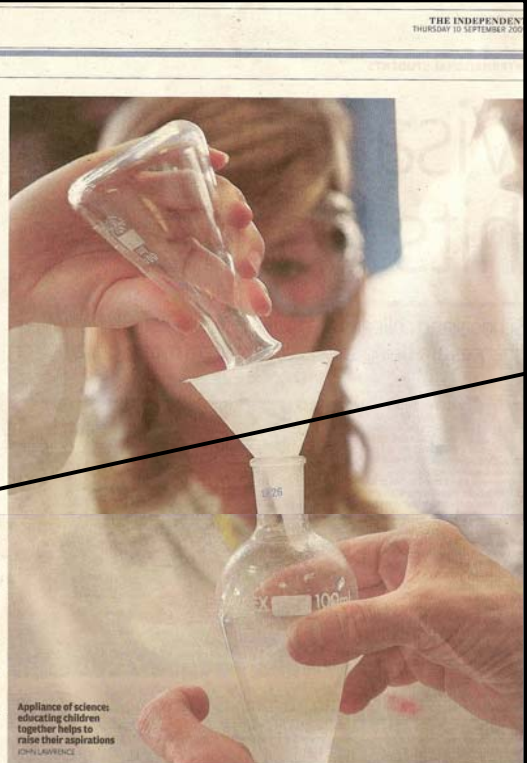
"This is something that New Labour opened up and talked about more publicly, but it has always been part of the thinking of independent schools," says Preststone.

The Chemistry Network has been a great success, she says. "Our main challenge has been to accommodate the numbers who want to come". As for her students' exposure to local pupils: "I think they'd probably say that they've found out that, in their fears and aspirations, they are just 'like us'", she says.

The network has been given £100,000 of government funds for three years, and is backed by the Royal Society of Chemistry and the Science Learning Centre East of England. Chemistry teacher Andrew Thompson, of The King's School, has been taken off teaching duties to become its full-time director - something he says is vital, given the enormous amount of liaison and planning that the network involves. Many local bodies, from the University of East Anglia through to large pharmaceutical

companies in Cambridge, are involved, and the organisation of programmes between different schools is time-consuming and complex.

"We use the labs on Saturdays, when they are more easily available, and we do full days in different schools," says Thompson. "I tend to go wherever, and there are eight here this afternoon."



Appliance of sciences educating children together helps to raise their aspirations. JOHN LAWRENCE

"It's important to me to sell the project to them when I'm in school, but once they are over here they are fine. I had nine students here last Saturday and there are eight here this afternoon," says Wright. Like Thompson, he sees gains on both sides. "It works the other way just as much as it works for us."

This becomes clear watching the attentive help being offered in the well-equipped lab. With so many science teachers and classroom assistants to hand, all these gifted and talented pupils benefit from the new materials and support.

As well as developing new modules and good teaching practice, the network aims to help identify students who are gifted in chemistry and to ensure that disadvantaged students have full access to the programme, while mentors and taster days are also used to encourage students to continue with chemistry at A-level and university. These are early days, however, and it is too soon to say

whether more pupils will ultimately take up chemistry at university. But encouraging anecdotal evidence is already coming in.

"It seems to be having an impact," says Thompson. "There's more interest in taking chemistry at A-level, and we know that pupils are talking to their friends about doing chemistry and coming to these events." There are also indications that some younger pupils are becoming more interested in taking three separate sciences at GCSE instead of the easier double award.

Yet to keep such a partnership running needs inexhaustible supplies of flexibility and mutual understanding. Today, in the laboratory students from the King's School are thin on the ground because of a school-wide end-of-term activity, while the City of Ely Community College students have to hurry to finish their experiments because a taxi is waiting to take them back to their own school.

"You need the commitment on all sides," agrees Thompson. "You need someone who's enthusiastic in every school, because that's what makes things happen."

Can you spot the difference between the state school pupils and their fee-paying counterparts who are all busy creating oil of wintergreen in an independent school chemistry lab in Cambridgeshire? Answer: it isn't easy.

PR isn't easy either but there's PR gold in public benefit



Two views:

- “Our assessments did not just consider the extent of means-tested bursaries – we took account of all the means by which the schools met the public benefit principles.”

Andrew Hind, Chief Executive, Charity Commission

- “In its findings on MGS, the Commission devoted far more space to our means-tested bursary scheme – just one of the ways we provide public benefit – than to the numerous other ways put together. In its looking-glass world, the Commission says there are no benchmarks for bursaries, which provide just one option. But its meaning is now clear: focus on the other elements at your peril.”

Christopher Ray, High Master, Manchester Grammar School



Let's talk about bursaries first:

Do you want to:

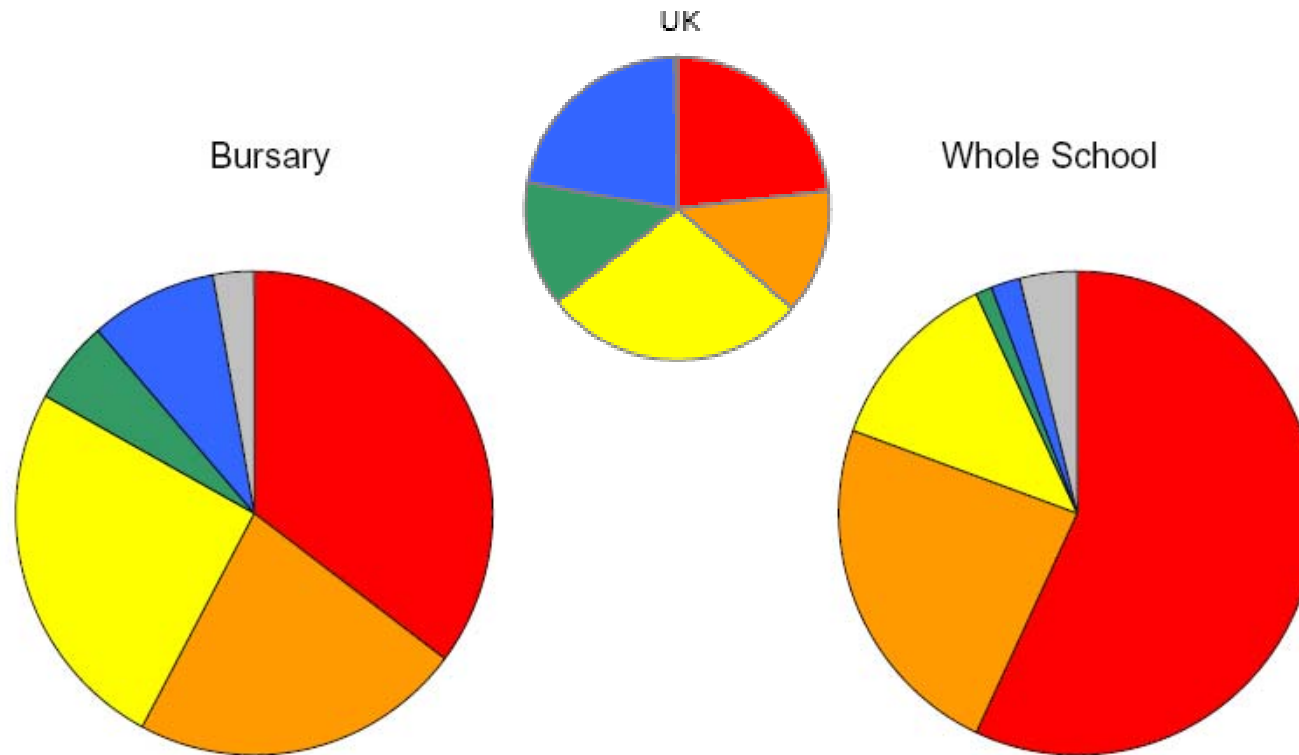
- Simply seek out more prospective bursary pupils from your existing social profile?

or

- Genuinely widen your potential client base, and actively recruit from more disadvantaged areas?



Are your bursaries helping the right people?



■ 1 Wealthy Achievers ■ 2 Urban Prosperity ■ 3 Comfortably Off
■ 4 Moderate Means ■ 5 Hard-Pressed ■ Unclassified

■ 1 Wealthy Achievers ■ 2 Urban Prosperity ■ 3 Comfortably Off
■ 4 Moderate Means ■ 5 Hard-Pressed ■ Unclassified



Outreach

- For senior schools, state primary schools are vital gatekeepers
- A coherent outreach programme is critically important
- Selective universities are facing the same issues
- Oxford University: “Target Schools”
- Sutton Trust: Outreach officer at The Belvedere increased applications to the school by 150%.

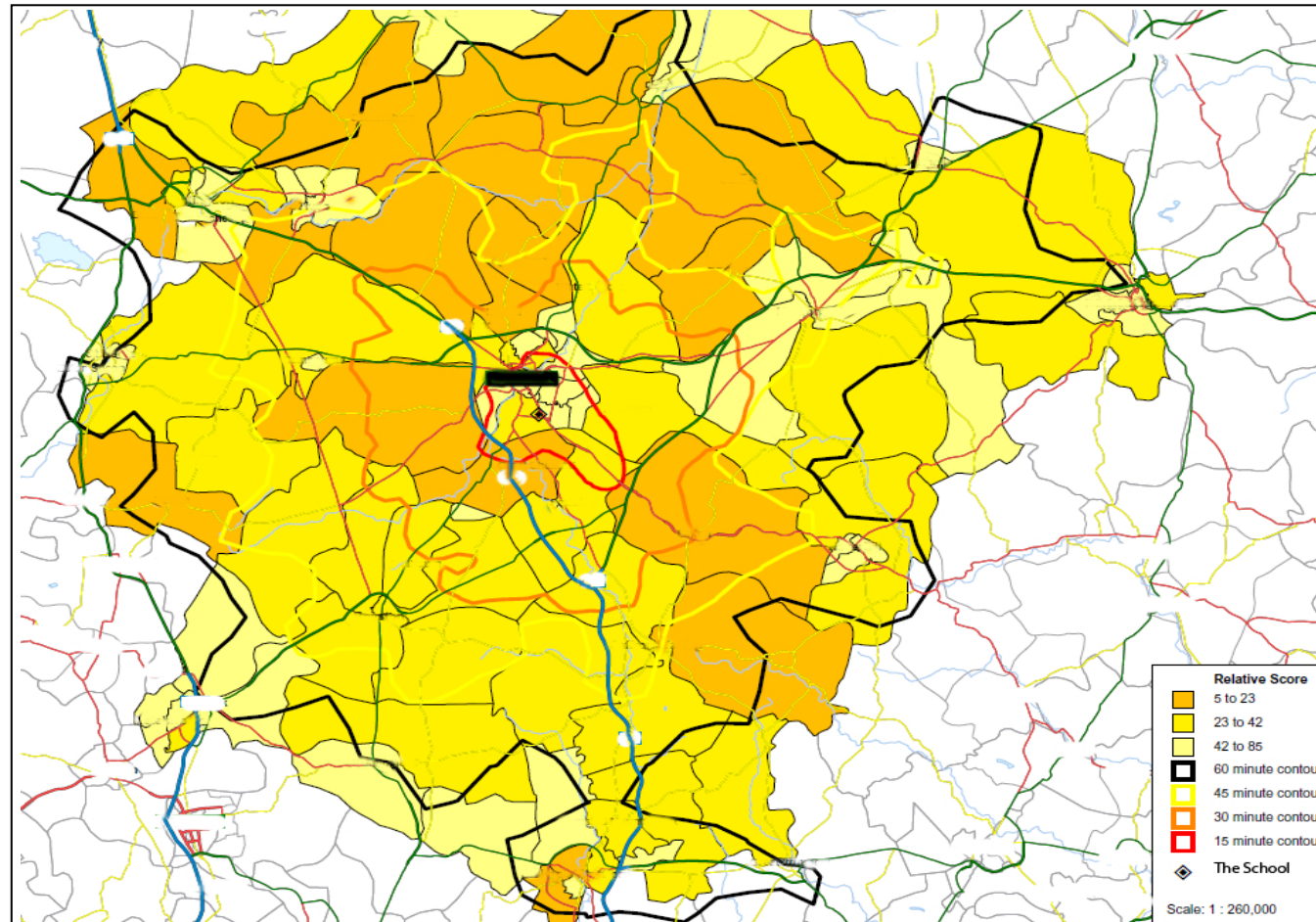


Target list of priority feeder schools

- Schools with which you already have good relationships
- Schools from which bursary-assisted pupils have come in the past.
- Schools in areas of social disadvantage but which achieve a high general standard of education.
- E.g. % achieving Level 5 in KS2 tests in Maths and English



Targeting primary schools: 1



Gold areas indicate concentrations of target families for marketing: i.e. wealth and advantage



Build relationships with primaries

- Invite – but be prepared to visit yourself
- Specific literature for target schools – letters, leaflets
- Specific literature for target parents – “Your Guide to Opportunities at Harchester School”
- Co-ordinate contacts with advertising campaign
- Invite primary heads to open days, school events, even give out prizes
- Keep them informed about former pupils
- Saturday schools



The media



A free chance to shine

Which two of these East End pupils will land a place at one of our top private schools?

It's a Pygmalion-style experiment: in the music room of Brighton College, 11 bright children from a comprehensive in one of the poorest parts of east London are slugging it out for a free place at this top private school.

Sixteen-year-old Tosin Teriba ("most people call me Tossi") is telling the interview panel how she recently gave a speech at a memorial service for a friend who "died due to knife crime". "I said we have to stand away from knife crime and drugs," she tells the panel solemnly.

.....

Then there's Luke and Natasha and Maureen and Mohammed, William, Nick and Thomas. They all seem desperate to join a school house in the autumn and unpack their suitcases in one of the little boarding rooms of the college, where fees can be £24,000 a year. But there are only two free places on offer. "I want to take them all," sighs head Richard Cairns.

Whoever is chosen in this new scheme, it's a decision that will change their lives irrevocably. Every pupil at Brighton college went on to university last year, 16 of them to Oxford or Cambridge. At the 1,500pupil Kingsford community school, in one of the most deprived parts of London, fewer than half the pupils get even five good GCSEs (below the national average). It sends nobody directly to university because it has no sixth form. Two pupils have been murdered in three years — one boy stabbed to death over Christmas.

The Charity Commission made clear on Wednesday that private schools stand to lose up to £88m in tax breaks unless they can show how their charitable status benefits the poor. The result will be schools scrambling to enrol children whose families can't afford the fees.

.....



Heightened reality

- The BC approach may not be to everyone's taste – but it's effective
- News is not reality – it's heightened reality
- It's not enough to describe worthiness – it needs to be re-packaged with a wow factor
- Surveys, picture ideas, competitions, controversy all help to make the media take notice



What IS News?

News is:

- Topical: happening now or in the future, not “recently”
- New/rare/surprising
- Controversial
- Significant: what does it cost, or what will it save?
- About tragedy – or the avoidance of tragedy
- Funny - sometimes
- It’s about PEOPLE – individual children

Does your story pass the SO WHAT test?



Advertising issues

- Co-ordinate your campaign
- Look for opportunities where your target audience will be – supermarkets, poster sites, bus shelters, football match programmes
- Leaflet distribution
- Specific literature for target parents – “Your Guide to Opportunities at Harchester School”
- Radio advertising
- Your own website – how many clicks to discover bursary opportunities?



Make the message intelligible

The James Worthy Trust



The James Worthy Trust is a local charity founded by James Worthy, Lord Mayor of London in 1592 provide education for the young in his home town of Easthampton. The Foundation runs two Independent Day Schools: Easthampton Grammar School and the James Worthy High School for Girls, which together provide selective education for nearly two thousand children. The Trust provides generous bursaries and scholarships and last year awarded over five hundred bursaries and scholarships to academically able children from modest financial backgrounds.

Scholarships

Girls and boys can gain a scholarship to the Schools because he or she is particularly talented. This could be for academic, music, sport or creative ability. Each School has its own separate arrangements for awarding scholarships. The value of a scholarship can be up to 50% of the fee.

Bursaries

Bursaries (reduced fees) are available to a number of parents whose child wishes to attend one of the Schools and whose income falls below a given level. At Easthampton Grammar School it applies only to students in the Seniors. As funds are limited, a bursary award will be offered to a selected number of students following the entrance tests. They will keep their bursary place throughout their time at the School subject to annual reassessment and satisfactory academic results.



Make the message intelligible





Preserve your brand

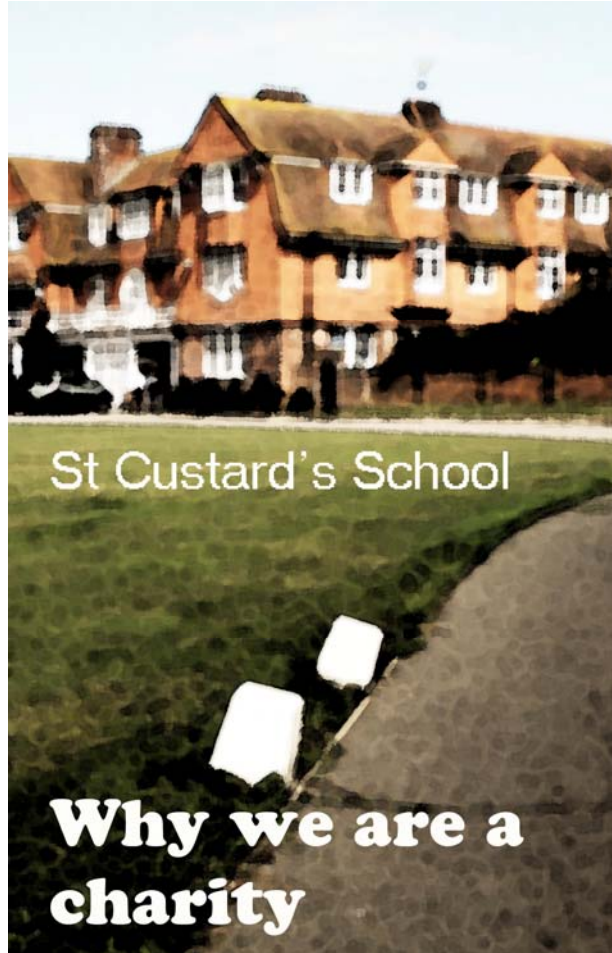
- Is your school's brand affected by promoting bursary opportunities?
- What are the risks in advertising in non-traditional media – radio, supermarkets, poster sites, bus shelters, football match programmes?
- The importance of PR:
 - Externally, in preserving the school's chosen profile
 - Internally, in keeping the school community onside



Parents



Public Benefit, Public Relations



- Charity is not just about giving – education has been a recognised charitable activity for 400 years
- We value our charitable status – it reminds us that education is about serving people, not about making a private profit
- We educate n children, which saves the state ($n \times \text{£}5,000$) per year
- Charitable status brings us very small financial benefits – business rate relief, a little tax relief on invested funds
- We also *[PB activities from CC audit report]*
- We also believe it is right to offer a small number of bursary-assisted places to children who can benefit from what we do
- We can't, even if we wanted to, just stop being a charity