



SMART
SCHOOL
SERVICES

Unlocking Leadership

Doing things better begins with creating leadership headspace.





Foreword

Space To Lead

Our impact, clarity and growth come from our reclaimed focus.

Wandsworth's relentless drive for excellence and commitment to educational innovation is a testament to our community's resilience and aspiration. It is therefore only fitting that we focus on the visionary leadership that makes our schools so unique, different, and special – ensuring that every headteacher has the capacity to lead with clarity, purpose, and the strategic foresight that Wandsworth's children, teachers and community deserve.

From Urgency to Intention



Operating a school in the current climate is a challenging exercise in firefighting. The weight of the operational burden – from complex financial compliance to the rapid evolution of educational technology – can trap leadership teams in a reactive cycle. When the majority of your energy is spent managing the immediate “now,” there is little room left for the “next.” Reclaiming that

time is not just a luxury; it is a strategic necessity for those who wish to move beyond crisis management and toward visionary growth.

According to the National Education Union (NEU), a staggering 83% of school leaders report that they cannot find enough time for the strategic leadership aspects of their job.

This is largely because senior leaders are now working an average of 57 hours per week, with the vast majority of that time consumed by operational ‘fires’ – specifically administration, safeguarding, and reactive staffing issues.

In this issue, we move beyond the theory of efficiency to provide real-world examples of how our services act as a pressure valve for school leaders. We demonstrate how our experts integrate into your school's fabric, handling the intricacies of the everyday – from HR and data evaluation to governor compliance and psychological support. By offloading these high-stakes operational tasks, you create the mental and physical bandwidth required for strategic thought – allowing you to focus on inspiring staff, engaging your community, and elevating the quality of education.

I encourage you to explore these interviews and discover how our services can help you step back from the daily operational grind. By choosing to delegate some of the complex to supportive experts, you can refocus on the transformative work that defines a truly successful school. We hope this serves as a blueprint for a more proactive and sustainable future for your leadership team.

Michael Hallick
Director – Business and Resources
Children's Services

Visit our website:
SmartSchool.Services

Our Smart School Approach



We focus on tailored, integrated solutions that are built around your whole school needs. Providing innovative solutions that support exceptional teaching talent, promote operational excellence and deliver the best learning experience possible.



Feature

The Search for Strategic Thinking Space

We explore how school leaders can break the reactive loop, reclaim their thinking space, and transition from daily firefighting to intentional, high-impact architectural leadership.

It may seem that modern headship is less a role of academic leadership and more one of relentless crisis management. The prospect of Ofsted inspections and other accountability measures; teacher shortages and recruitment; poor student behaviour and AI-emboldened parent complaint; budgetary cuts and SEND funding gaps present an endless round of worries and problems from which there's little relief.

In this context, what school leaders struggle with most is thinking space. Space to slow down. Space to reflect. Space to think clearly in the face of complexity, pressure and responsibility for the whole school learning ecosystem.

As school leaders move into roles with broader accountability, the nature of the work changes. Decisions carry greater consequence. Stakeholders multiply. Ambiguity increases. Yet the space to think often shrinks.

The unspoken expectation is to know, to decide quickly, to have the answer.

This is where leadership quality can quietly erode.

A change in mindset

A successful career in the classroom will provide most headteachers with a firm foundation in understanding teaching and learning. However, the management and leadership of schools has changed enormously in the past few years.

Schools are now essentially small businesses with significant autonomy and great responsibilities. This means that headteachers need core expertise in finance, HR and technology. They must also understand

the legalities of data protection, contract procurement and a host of other areas that a classroom career simply won't have prepared them for.

Beyond NPQs

Surely, the answer to the skills gap conundrum lies in training? NPQs are driving a significant training shift in school leadership by providing access to a common, evidence-based language. The golden thread is raising standards in leadership discussions and equipping educators with the confidence to lead change. The impact is widespread, with NPQs recognised as an essential tool for school improvement rather than just individual milestones.

 **Almost all teachers and leaders (98%) had taken part in some form of CPD in the 12 months prior to interview.**

*Department for Education
Working lives of teachers and leaders:
wave 4*

However, while the current NPQs focus on evidence-informed instructional leadership, they don't quite capture the full breadth of skills required for senior roles. To better support our school leaders, we need to bridge the gap between instructional focus and broader ►

leadership confidence and agency, creating a more comprehensive professional development framework.

In practice, the most effective schools use the NPQ frameworks as a baseline rather than a ceiling. They encourage leaders to use the approved research as a foundation, but then empower them to see how those principles work within their specific situation.

To do that effectively, we need to create strategic space where educators can explore the ‘wicked’ problems their schools face.

From ‘tame’ fixes to ‘wicked’ solutions

The intense accountability culture in England forces many school leaders into a reactive loop. Because the stakes are so high, energy is often diverted toward short-term wins and the specific metrics measured by external bodies.

These ‘tame’ issues are the fires we know how to put out. They have clear boundaries, identifiable causes, and predictable outcomes. Unlike ‘wicked’ issues, that are the deep-rooted, messy, and unpredictable challenges, that require a strategic, long-term approach rather than a quick intervention.

When a school system is under pressure, it invariably defaults to treating ‘wicked’ problems with ‘tame’ solutions. We apply short-term fixes to symptoms because we lack the capacity and headspace to address the root causes. Breaking this cycle requires a mindset shift: moving away from the firefighter who fixes the predictable, toward the strategist who has the time and support to navigate the complex.

The reality is that the school system is highly diverse and the world is changing rapidly. We need to equip leaders with the time to respond effectively.

If we create a culture where every teacher believes they need to improve, not because they are not good enough, but because they can be even better, there is no limit to what we can achieve.

Dylan William, Educationalist

The power of trusted insight

In an era of information overload, the value of a strategic leader lies in the ability to distinguish between available data and trusted insight.

While AI tools can provide rapid summaries, they lack the nuanced, ‘insider’ understanding of a school’s unique ecosystem – the specific cultural history, the subtle shifts in community sentiment, and the hard-won wisdom of years of effective delivery.

As our service interviews show (p.08-15), when leaders partner with suppliers that provide rigorous, expertly designed answers to whole-school questions, something powerful happens. They eliminate the ‘verification tax’ – those hours wasted cross-referencing unreliable sources, fathoming new legislation or second-guessing spreadsheets.

This, in turn, affords absolute confidence in decision-making, and moves school leadership from a defensive posture of verifying information to an offensive one. Time is saved, and energy is now focused on the strategic application of findings, rather than the exhausting search for them.

Investing in your capacity to lead

Investing in your capacity to lead is not merely about personal development; it is about strategic design. If the goal is to move from ‘tame’ fixes to ‘wicked’ solutions, the primary obstacle is the sheer volume of operational noise that floods a headteacher’s desk.

This is where a partnership with holistic school services, designed to work across the whole environment, becomes a transformative strategic move rather than an administrative one.

By outsourcing the time-consuming complexities of school management – financial forecasting, literacy and numeracy support, governance tasks, ed tech deployment, psychological support or HR compliance – you are not just delegating tasks to experts; you are buying back your strategic sovereignty.

Ultimately, the shift from a tactical to strategic leader is only possible when the foundational noise of school operations is silenced. By utilising Smart School Services, you transition from being a solitary problem-solver to a high-impact leader supported by a specialised executive infrastructure.

It is the difference between surviving the academic year and intentionally designing the future of your learning community. By securing the time to think, the headspace to reflect, and the data to act with certainty, you don’t just lead a school – you have the opportunity to transform it.

Transitioning from Tactical to Strategic Headship

The transition from a tactical headteacher to a strategic one is not just focused on reducing your workload, it involves fundamentally changing your vantage point. Tactical leadership is grounded in the *now* – the immediate needs of students, the daily staffing issues, SEND allocation and the urgent emails. Strategic leadership, however, is the art of looking over the horizon to ensure the school is not just running, but moving in the right direction.

To make this transition, a headteacher must evolve from being the school’s Chief Problem Solver to its Chief Visionary Officer.

Redefining the Role: Efficiency vs. Effectiveness

Tactical leadership focuses on efficiency: *Are we doing things right?* Strategic leadership focuses on effectiveness: *Are we doing the right things?* When a headteacher is stuck in a tactical loop, they become a bottleneck. Every decision, no matter how small, flows through them. A strategic leader builds systems and culture so that the school can function – and thrive – without their constant intervention in the minutiae.

The Three Pillars of Strategic Transition

- 1. Creating Thinking Space**
You cannot be strategic while your hair is on fire. The first step is a disciplined reclamation of time. Strategic headteachers treat thinking time as a non-negotiable appointment in their diary. This is not time for catching up on admin; it is time for horizon scanning – looking at demographic shifts, policy changes, and long-term educational trends that will affect the school in three to five years.
- 2. Radical Delegation**
Strategic success requires trusting your Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to manage the *how*. If you are still directing the specifics of the school timetable or the nuances of the behaviour rota, you are acting as a deputy, not a head. Strategic leadership involves setting the strategic intent (the *what* and *why*) and empowering others to execute the *how*.
- 3. From ‘To-Do List’ to ‘Theory of Change’**
Tactical schools have long School Development Plans (SDPs) that read like shopping lists. Strategic schools have a Theory of Change. Instead of simply listing *improve literacy*, a strategic leader asks: “What are the systemic barriers to literacy in our community, and how must our organisational structure shift to dismantle them?”



School Support Systems

Unlocking Leadership Capacity Through Partnership.

We believe that brilliant education begins with supported leadership. The integration of expert external services into the fabric of the school can actively alleviate the weight of the operational burden. Helping you handle the complexities of the environment means focus can be directed to important leadership goals – inspiring and retaining teachers; engaging families and communities; and ensuring every child receives the best education possible.

To explore these benefits in practice, we sat down with a number of our service area Heads to discuss how their expertise translates into tangible school improvements. Through these conversations, we provide real-world examples of how tailored support can streamline school management and enhance the learning environment.



Literacy and Numeracy Support Service

Confidence in Practice, Capacity in the System

When pupils experience challenges with literacy or numeracy, the impact often reaches beyond learning. It can affect classroom dynamics, staff workload, and relationships with parents.

Sarah Styles, Head of the Literacy and Numeracy Support Service, explains that uncertainty is where pressure builds. “When it’s hard to pinpoint a pupil’s specific needs or the best way to support them,” she said, “it can create anxiety – for teachers and for parents.” That anxiety can quickly add to the demands on staff.

For Sarah, the starting point is always the classroom. “Effective classroom practice is the foundation,” she said. “Schools already do so much, and our role is to strengthen that with consistent, evidence-informed strategies so pupils can thrive as independently as possible within mainstream learning.”

When parents know their child is getting the right support, a lot of that anxiety reduces.

Sarah Styles, Head of the Literacy and Numeracy Support Service

From reassurance to independence

One of the most powerful ways to build capacity is by helping pupils become more independent learners. Sarah described how effective teaching and targeted intervention can reduce reliance on constant adult support. “If a child has the right strategies, confidence and self-esteem,” she said, “they won’t need that level of support all the time.” Over time, this frees Teaching Assistants to work more flexibly across the classroom.

Sarah also acknowledged the pressure that can arise when parents feel anxious. “The impact of parental concern on a school can be significant,” she said. Clear assessment and a credible plan help ease those concerns. Specialist input can support this process. “When parents know their child is getting the right support,” Sarah explained, “a lot of that anxiety reduces.”

The Fluency Project is a practical example of this collaborative approach. It’s a short, structured intervention designed for pupils who have the foundations of reading but are not yet fluent. Schools are trained to deliver it themselves, with optional assessment before and after. “What’s really lovely,” Sarah said, “is that schools want to continue it.” The emphasis is on equipping staff to embed the approach confidently, rather than relying on ongoing external delivery.

Whole-school training followed by focused support for TAs makes this sustainable. When schools have the skills, tools and shared understanding in place, pressure eases. Pupils make progress. Parents feel reassured. Staff work with greater confidence.

As Sarah concluded, our ultimate aim is to increase capacity within schools by developing the knowledge and skills needed to confidently support learners with persistent literacy and numeracy challenges to thrive.



Schools Governor Services

More than Admin, a Quiet Power Shift

Most schools think they know what Governor Services does. Minutes. Papers. Deadlines. Compliance. Necessary, but hardly transformational.

That assumption is *exactly* the problem.

Theresa Palmer, Head of Schools Governor Services, sees it time and again. When schools treat governance support as an administrative add-on, they only ever get administrative value. When they use it as a trusted advisory function, something far more powerful happens – real capacity is created for leaders and governors alike.

Schools are operating in a governance landscape that is heavy with expectation and risk. Policies, complaints procedures, reporting timelines and statutory duties sit quietly in the background until something goes wrong. At that point, schools often discover that well-meaning systems have tied them in knots or left them exposed to challenge. Complaints processes, in particular, are a common pressure point. Policies and procedures are written with good intentions, but often structured in ways that escalate issues or leave the school accountable for outcomes that could have been avoided with stronger governance foundations.

A further risk is how governance support is resourced. Many schools under financial constraints may rely on internal staff who work in deference to the headteacher. That dynamic is understandable, but it limits challenge. As Theresa put it, “governance is about difference not deference i.e. people who do what the head demands rather than what is right.” An external governance professional brings independence, objectivity and effective practice and the confidence to challenge constructively, protecting the school rather than the hierarchy.

When governance unlocks leadership

Theresa described working with an organisation that was evolving its governance arrangements. Structurally, things had changed, but ways of working had not yet caught up. Systems were still operating separately, responsibilities were blurred, and decisions were sometimes being made without the right information or frameworks in place.

As Theresa put it, “They were technically operating as one organisation, but in practice some of the thinking was still happening in separate parts.”

Progress came gradually. “You can’t eat a cow in one sitting,” Theresa reflected. Change was built through patient, consistent advice and a willingness to keep asking the right questions. Over time, meetings became more focused.

One of the most important shifts was for the chair. “They weren’t inexperienced,” Theresa explained, “they just didn’t yet have clarity about how to work within their powers.” With a trusted adviser alongside them, the chair had a safe space to test ideas, explore concerns and understand what action was possible. That clarity brought confidence.

As that confidence grew, so did the quality of discussion around the table. Conversations became more strategic, less reactive. Eventually, this led to a strategic away day that brought together voices that had previously been operating in parallel. It created space to step back from day-to-day pressures and focus on collective direction.

“That’s where the real value is,” Theresa reflected. “It’s not just about compliance. It’s about giving people the confidence and headspace to lead properly.”



Schools Finance Services

From Guesswork to Confident Decisions

School finances are rarely short of information. What they are short of is clarity.

Before working with Schools Finance Services, many schools are trying to manage complex financial systems themselves. Data is there, but it is hard to interpret. Reports are produced, but not always understood. Governors are given figures, but not the story behind them. As Gareth Evans, Assistant Director, Children’s Finance put it, the real challenge is not the system – it is “translating what the system is telling you into something that actually helps you run the school.”

Without that translation, financial decision-making becomes uncertain. Leaders second-guess themselves. Spending is delayed. Or worse, decisions are made without a clear understanding of the school’s true financial position. The biggest risk Gareth sees is simple but serious – “schools not really knowing where they stand financially, and therefore not being able to make informed decisions.”

Schools Finance Services does not take responsibility away from schools, but it does remove the burden of carrying it alone. Gareth is clear that responsibility is a fine line. The role of the service is to provide tools, expertise and challenge so schools can manage their finances with confidence, not fear. Schools no longer need to constantly check, chase or worry whether they have missed something critical. They gain assurance that decisions, as far as possible, are grounded in reality, not assumption.

From ‘we think we’re OK’ to ‘we know where we stand’

Gareth described working with schools that were edging towards financial insecurity without fully realising it. “There’s a huge relief when we can help schools see the picture early,” he explained. “It stops that sense of kicking the can down the road.”

Early intervention changes everything. Instead of reacting to problems when options are limited, schools can make informed decisions sooner – adjusting plans, prioritising spend, or seeking support before pressure builds. That clarity creates headspace. “It’s the difference between thinking things are probably fine, and knowing where you stand,” Gareth said.

This is especially important when the unexpected happens. A sudden staffing issue. Additional SEND needs. Costs that were not planned for, combined with funding streams that are far from straightforward. “Headteachers ring us when something’s happened and they don’t have the contingency to deal with it,” Gareth noted. “What they need in that moment is reassurance, clarity, and a sense that someone is working through it with them.”

The service is deliberately collaborative, tailored to what each school needs – from day-to-day finance systems to strategic conversations with governors. The outcome is not just compliance, but confidence. Schools move from carrying financial pressure quietly to making decisions openly, early and with far greater control.



Schools Research and Evaluation Unit

Building Confident Thinking Around Performance

Most schools have access to performance data. Far fewer feel confident using it well.

Before working with the Schools Research and Evaluation Unit (REU), many schools are managing large volumes of information without a clear framework for making sense of it. Attendance figures, attainment outcomes, inclusion data and benchmarking all exist, but they often sit separately. Leaders and governors are left asking important questions, without always having the confidence that they are looking in the right place or asking them in the right way.

Gwen Sinnott, Head of the Schools Research and Evaluation Unit, believes the challenge is not technical. It is conceptual. Schools do not just need better data – they need help developing a shared understanding of what that data is for, and how it should inform decision-making.

REU's role is to act as a thinking partner. Drawing on deep expertise in performance, evaluation and school context, the service works alongside schools to translate complex information into meaningful insight. The focus is not on producing more reports, but on helping leaders and governors develop a clearer, more confident approach to understanding performance across their school.

At the heart of this work is a simple but powerful question: what is your line of enquiry?

From reporting data to developing insight

Rather than encouraging schools to look at everything at once, REU helps them slow down and focus. Gwen believes schools often feel overwhelmed because they are trying to hold too much information at the same time. When schools want to go further, REU can take a more consultancy-based approach, reframing the conversation – starting with what the school is trying to understand, and then using data purposefully to explore that question.

This might involve working with senior leaders, assessment leads or governors to interpret performance information together, test assumptions, and identify what matters most. It builds confidence not just in the numbers themselves, but in the thinking that sits behind them. Over time, schools develop stronger internal capability to interrogate data, spot patterns, and use evidence to guide improvement planning.

This approach is particularly valuable in governance conversations. REU provides an independent, objective view of performance that supports more constructive challenge. Governors are able to engage with data confidently, without it feeling defensive or opaque. Leaders spend less time explaining spreadsheets and more time discussing priorities, risks and next steps.

For some schools, this intelligence is enough on its own. For others, it becomes the starting point for deeper enquiry – using data not just to report performance, but to shape strategic thinking and improvement.



Wandsworth Schools HR Services

The Transformative Impact of Restoring Time and Confidence

HR is one of those areas where schools rarely realise how much time they are losing until someone helps them get it back.

Schools that don't have a reliable and trusted HR Service are often trying to piece things together themselves. Policies from one place. Advice from another. Hope for the best. A rumbling sense of uncertainty about whether they are doing the right thing. As Alison Duke, Head of Schools HR Services, put it, schools without a trusted HR service often end up "cobbling things together" rather than having a clear, confident route through staffing and employment issues.

One example Alison shared was deceptively simple and arose from a headteacher at a school that did not use Wandsworth Schools HR Service at the time making an enquiry. The headteacher was trying to source a standard safeguarding-related employment document. Instead of getting an answer, they were bounced between various sources – from their external HR provider, to another agency, and back again – a long email chain and frustrated calls but no clear answer.

"It wasn't complicated," Alison explained, "but they were stuck in a loop, trying to navigate who to ask and whether what they were being told was actually compliant." That kind of hassle costs time, confidence and headspace. Alison explained how this small example scales up to the most time consuming and complex staffing issues and processes, and how having a trusted HR provider with the right connections is essential.

Wandsworth Schools HR Services stops that spiral of second guessing and piecing together information from various sources. Not by removing responsibility from schools, but by giving them a single, credible place to turn. Talking positively about schools who buy into their service, "They know where to go, they know and trust our team and our resources" Alison said. "They know they're getting something that's right, from a team who genuinely care about getting it right and supporting School Leaders with difficult staffing challenges and decisions." That alone lifts a huge cognitive load from already stretched leaders.

From searching for answers to planning with confidence

Alison described how HR issues rarely arrive neatly packaged. Staffing problems escalate. Situations become personal. Leaders can find themselves firefighting while trying to keep the school running. "You can't remove unpredictability entirely," she said. "But what we do is bring predictability and structure around it."

A key part of that is scenario planning. Rather than reacting at the point of crisis, the team works through options early on. "We talk through different routes, discuss the risks and benefits, and what each decision might mean," Alison explained. "Then it's over to the Head to decide - but they're deciding with clarity, not guesswork. We aim to enable and empower Headteachers to make an informed decision".

What makes this support particularly powerful is how joined-up it is. Alison described a range of scenarios and cases where HR concerns triggered wider conversations across finance, governance and school improvement. "If something is making a school vulnerable, we don't sit with it in isolation," she said. "We talk to colleagues, share insight, and bring the right support around the school." That collaboration and partnership across services protects leadership capacity, not just compliance. At its heart, the service is deeply human.

"Sometimes headteachers ring and just crumble, and that's ok," Alison reflected. "We listen. We help them think. We help them feel less alone." In a role often associated with process and policy, that may be the biggest capacity creator of all.

It wasn't complicated, but they were stuck in a loop, trying to navigate who to ask and whether what they were being told was actually compliant.

Alison Duke, Head of Schools HR Services



Schools and Community Psychology Service

Holding the System so Schools can Keep Going

Some of the heaviest pressures schools face are not visible on a timetable or a data dashboard. They sit in relationships, in unresolved conflict, in the emotional weight of complex cases, and in the quiet exhaustion of staff trying to do the right thing in impossible circumstances.

Theodora Theodoratou, Head of Wandsworth Schools and Community Psychology Service (SCPS), is clear that without the right support, schools can get pulled into an endless cycle of individual case management. “The hamster wheel of casework never ends,” she explained, “and it doesn’t create long-term impact for the school as a whole.” Time and energy are absorbed by responding to one issue after another, without space to address the wider systemic factors that are creating barriers to learning.

SCPS takes a different approach. While individual casework remains a vital part of the service, the focus extends beyond this to strategic and systemic work – supporting schools to make sense of complex individual circumstances while also understanding the patterns, relationships and pressures that sit around them. “Our focus on strategic, whole-school approaches definitely saves capacity,” Theodora said. Just as importantly, the service is deeply connected into the wider system. “Because there’s so much work happening in the background between services,” she explained, “we save schools from having to repeat the same stories to different people, or working in silos that overlap but under-deliver,” often acting as a critical friend when schools are deep in day-to-day firefighting.

At its heart, this work is about reducing pressure. Not by taking responsibility away from schools, but by sharing the load. “We don’t take responsibility from the problem holders,” Theodora said. “But we do lift some of the pressure – especially around having to bridge between agencies or hold all the statutory knowledge on your own.”

Creating space to hold the hard stuff

One of the most powerful ways the service creates capacity is through reflective space and supervision. SENCOs, in particular, often feel isolated when holding complex cases and fractured relationships with parents. “We really lift that isolation,” Theodora said. “Schools tell us that again and again – helping them to hold the hard stuff.”

This is also where SCPS often complements the work of private Educational Psychologists. While private EPs may be closely involved in individual assessment or casework, SCPS brings independence, a whole-school perspective and strong connections across council and statutory services. “Because we’re a large team,” Theodora explained, “we can bring in someone who isn’t directly involved with the child or family, but who understands psychology, schools and the wider system.”

In practice, this can mean providing supervision for a SENCO managing ongoing complaints, statutory processes and high parental pressure. The purpose is not to solve the case, but to contain it. “It’s a space where staff can bring their own feelings safely,” Theodora said, “so they can stay focused, compassionate and professional in school.” That support can be the difference between a skilled professional burning out and being able to continue in role.

The same principle applies at leadership level. Reflective space for a headteacher, particularly following a turbulent period, allows time to reconnect with values and priorities. “By supporting the headteacher,” Theodora explained, “you’re indirectly supporting the whole system – and hundreds of children underneath that.”

Across all of this work, SCPS shares the load rather than taking responsibility away – creating capacity where it matters most: with the people holding the greatest emotional and professional risk.



Ed Tech and Learning Resources

Safe Innovation = Real Headspace

When schools try to keep up with digital change on their own, the pressure rarely comes from a lack of ideas. It comes from uncertainty, inconsistency and risk.

Alex Purssey, Head of City Learning Centre, the Learning Resources Service and Wandsworth Professional Development Centre, sees this regularly. Before schools work with the service, Ed Tech adoption is often “piecemeal and scattergun,” he explained. “Schools are relying on nuggets picked up from other schools or networks, and that information isn’t always fully understood.”

That lack of shared understanding leads to inconsistency. Tools are used differently across classrooms. Decisions are made in isolation. And in the background sit unanswered questions about safeguarding, GDPR and exposure. “People are trying things out,” Alex said, “without really knowing how exposed the school might be – whether that’s staff or pupils” what starts as innovation can quickly become a source of anxiety.

For Alex, this is the moment where capacity starts to drain. Time is lost second-guessing decisions. Leaders carry risk they cannot fully see. Teachers hesitate between wanting to innovate and worrying about getting it wrong.

Where confidence replaces guesswork

The shift comes when safety becomes the starting point. “We put safe implementation first,” Alex said. “We’ve already done a lot of the testing, so schools don’t have to.” Instead of staff experimenting alone, tools are explored, tested and understood within an

education setting before being introduced more widely. Schools no longer need to individually trial platforms, interpret complex terms or worry about hidden risks. The service creates something close to a walled garden, where staff can learn safely without being exposed to vulnerabilities.

That reassurance changes behaviour. Teachers begin to use approved and piloted tools to support lesson planning, generate resources and manage communication more efficiently.

The City Learning Centre are currently supporting schools with their adoption and implementation of AI. Schools initially implemented AI in a patchwork fashion until the CLC developed draft guidance and a policy for school leaders to help them implement AI strategically and then provided training and support through consultants and linking schools together. “We want teachers to focus on the personal skills that AI can’t do,” Alex said. “So we’re about taking away some of the bureaucratic load and giving that time back.”

Professional learning underpins this shift. Through training and CPD delivered via the Wandsworth Professional Development Centre, schools build shared understanding rather than relying on individuals to work things out alone. “It’s about learning together, in an education context,” Alex explained, “not experimenting in isolation.”

As Alex put it, “Being Wandsworth approved and supported is the golden egg.” It gives schools the confidence to innovate safely, reduces risk, and creates real headspace for staff to focus on what matters most.

Learning Resources Service: One to Watch

The Learning Resources Service is evolving how it designs and delivers physical resources for schools. By using AI and automation to support planning and selection, the service is developing a more systematic way to build termly resource boxes around subject areas and school priorities. School librarians remain central to the process, using their expertise to shape, sense-check and quality-assure each box. The result is a more responsive, future-facing service that saves schools time while keeping physical resources purposeful and relevant.

Wandsworth Professional Development Centre (WPDC): One to Value

WPDC is fully equipped for hybrid and digital learning, but its real strength lies in bringing people together in person. Especially when exploring Ed Tech, there is no substitute for shared space to think, plan and learn collaboratively. Being in the room allows educators to test ideas, ask better questions and learn from one another’s experiences. In a fast-moving digital landscape, WPDC provides something essential – time and space to slow down, explore thoughtfully, and build confidence together.

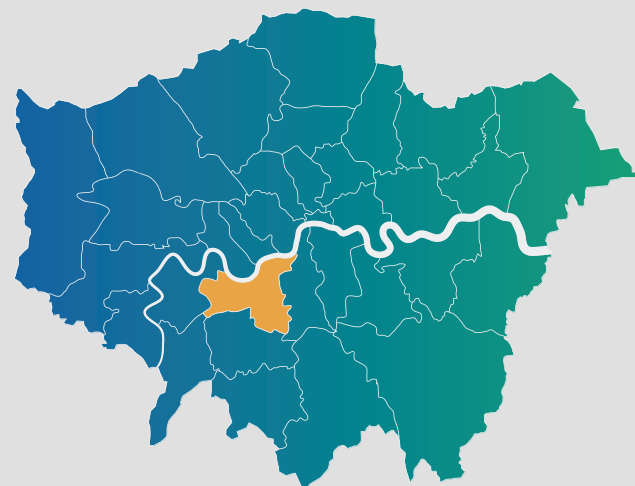
Smart School Services

We build partnerships with schools to ensure every child receives the best education possible.

Backed by Wandsworth Borough Council, our network of expertise has been built using local delivery experience gained from working alongside schools just like yours.

We use that knowledge to partner directly with school leaders – giving you the confidence, creativity and capacity to be your best and deliver the vision that you want for your school.

Wandsworth Based



London Focused



With specialist expertise extending across the UK

Our Smart School Approach



We focus on tailored, integrated solutions that are built around your whole school needs. Providing innovative solutions that support exceptional teaching talent, promote operational excellence and deliver the best learning experience possible.



Brilliant Learning

Working collaboratively with schools, our mission is to be a catalyst for learning by providing teachers and schools with access to best-in-class ideas, research and resources.

- Learning Resources Service
- Literacy & Numeracy Support Service
- ICT Teacher Support
- Business & Education Succeeding Together (BEST)
- Education Welfare Service
- Schools and Community Psychology Service
- Research Evaluation Unit



Empowering Professionals

Giving school leaders the confidence that every person is being developed to the best of their ability and every process and procedure has been put in place to support optimal learning.

- Human Resources
- Governor Services
- Occupational Health
- Wandsworth City Learning Centre



Intelligent Operations

Our adept handling of systems, management and contracts promotes genuine partnerships with outstanding suppliers, while freeing school leaders to spend more time focusing on school life.

- Admin & School Business Support
- ICT Support
- Financial Management
- Facilities Management
- Payroll
- Health & Safety
- Emergency Planning
- Central Procurement
- Cleaning
- Catering
- Arboricultural
- Courier
- Transport



Book Your Head to Head

Meet with our head team at school services to see how we can work together.

New to Smart School Services?

Book a *Head to Head* to talk to us about where you are today, where you want to be in the future and how we can help you realise your ambitions.

Do you currently access services?

A *Head to Head* is a great way to evaluate, reassess and enhance existing provision.

To arrange your *Head to Head*, or for any other enquiry, simply fill in the contact form online and we'll be in touch shortly.

smartschool.services



**Talk to us. You'll find
we're really passionate,
responsive, inquisitive,
straight-talking,
refreshing, open,
trustworthy, people.**

Our senior team:

Gary Hipple, Assistant Director Children's Support Services
Lewis Brunton, Children's Support Services Manager
Alex Pursey, Head of Educational Technology and Resources