

British Council Partner Schools

Schools Now! 2023

Dear Partner School Leaders

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Schools Now! 2023 - Transforming Schools: Leadership at all levels. Whether you are joining us virtually or here in Dubai, I hope you find the next few days enriching, valuable and energising.

It's hard to imagine that the last time we came together for Schools Now! in person was before the world would change as we know it. As school leaders you navigated this time with tremendous skill, determination and resilience, and the challenges you faced during that time undoubtedly continue to shape your leadership.

At our virtual Schools Now! 2022, we explored the recovery from the pandemic and the importance of wellbeing. This year we turn to leadership, and how effective leadership across all levels helps build on this recovery and can help transform your school.

You'll hear from a range of expert speakers, and I'm also looking forward to hearing from you, our Partner School leaders, about the challenges you face, and how you and your colleagues are ensuring effective leadership is creating positive change across your school, for your staff, students, and community.



British Council's Schools Now! conference is a special highlight of our Partner Schools offer. We have school leaders from over 40 countries joining us, bringing a wealth of knowledge, expertise and experience. I encourage you to network, share ideas, start conversations, and build long lasting connections with fellow delegates.

For those of you in Dubai, I look forward to seeing you in person. For those joining virtually, I hope we can connect via the conference app.

Many thanks,
Simon Higgins
Global Head of School Exams, British Council







Conference Agenda Day 1


Wednesday 1 March 2023

Delegates are required to sign up to their chosen workshops via our conference app - [click here to download](#)


 : In person session


 : Virtual session


Time	Session	Description	Location
07:45		Registration	Al Manzil - Lobby
09:00	  Opening ceremony	Aida Salamanca, Country Director, British Council, UAE His Excellency Patrick Moody, British Ambassador to UAE His Excellency Dr Ahmad Belhoul Al Falasi, Minister of Education, UAE	Al Maha Ballroom
09:40	Performance	British Council Partner School, UAE	Al Maha Ballroom
09:50	  Keynote 1	If we always do what we have always done.... Sir Mark Grundy, CEO, Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust, UK One of the biggest issues at present preoccupying schools is positioning our schools and indeed school, as a great place to work in comparison to other roles. The work that our staff do in school, changes lives and shapes futures but the pressure on staff is unceasing and we have to think creatively if we are to retain our best staff and achieve the highest and most specific levels of achievement for our young people. So you have to think differently and you have to act differently! Our initiatives around workload reduction and specifically our online curriculum have certainly helped us to retain staff and undoubtedly supported our recruitment processes whilst ensuring that our young people achieve their goals.	Al Maha Ballroom




Time	Session	Description	Location
10:35	Q&A	Alison Willmott, Education Consultant and University Lecturer, St Mary's University, UK	Al Maha Ballroom
10:50		Refreshment Break	Terrace and Foyer
11:30	 Partner School presentation	Building an intentional community of young leaders – A case study of the Adinkrahene Leadership Programme Dr Naomi Adjepong, School Director, Alpha Beta Christian College, Ghana Student leaders play an important role in the architecture of every school system. This presentation will use a case study to highlight the need and benefits for schools of having an intentional approach to developing young leaders, through a school-based leadership programme that nurtures student leaders to become key actors in decision making, policy implementation, school culture, positive classroom practice and raising the standard of expectation amongst all students.	Al Maha Ballroom
		Building learners' life skills synchronized with the global society to keep their future sustainable Hassan Iqbal, International Curriculum Director and Educational Consultant, Paradise International College, Peru Traditional school structures never let the students think outside the box, feel deep human concerns, or evolve all types of intelligence including emotional intelligence. Due to recent pandemic circumstances, it was globally noticed that leadership skills were always there but have never been treated with their true nature nor been awarded the opportunity to grow. We will address and accomplish this by Redesigning, Reshaping and Reimagining future student-centred approaches.	Loft 1


Time	Session	Description	Location
11:30	 Partner School presentation	<p>“SEED” – Social Emotional Enrichment Development for better learning Suha Jouaneh, Director, Jubilee Institute of King Hussein Foundation, Jordan</p> <p>At Jubilee School, the Personal Development Program is compulsory for all students (grades 9-11). The school adopts the Universal Design for Learning Guidelines- Engagement, Representation, and Action and Expression to implement it through scheduled classes, training workshops, and projects. The program ensures that all learners can access and participate in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities. The Jubilee School uses leadership skills to improve students’ learning. The success of this approach depends on how much the school creates spaces and environments that facilitate and support organisational learning, which will ultimately result in better learning opportunities for students.</p> <p>SEED is a way to make use of leadership skills to instil the learning of emotional intelligence. This brings out the characteristics that help students grow towards their strengths and shift from users to producers of knowledge through becoming passionate, responsible learners.</p>	Loft 2
		<p>Emerging Leaders Quratulain Babar, Principal, Hira Foundation School, Pakistan</p> <p>Hira Foundation School pursues to improve students’ organisational skills. They present their prowess from various avenues. The emerging qualities of our students are displayed throughout their studies. The greatest venture of Hira Foundation School is to help future generations, particularly females,</p>	Shodoun


Time	Session	Description	Location
11:30	 Partner School presentation	<p>blissfully fight all the challenges of society by exploring various career pathways, making them technically smart and globally fit to grow as better leaders and individuals. 'Being a Hira Foundation School ambassador, I firmly believe that a school curriculum integrated with technology and skill development enriches learning opportunities to produce effective leaders'.</p>	
		<p>Identification and development of sustainable student leadership density in schools through participatory engagement: A case of Masuka Christian High School Benjamin Muridzo, Principal, Masuka Christian High School, Zimbabwe</p> <p>The quality of student leadership at the school had deteriorated significantly and so there was a need to revamp the selection and training process. A well-coordinated research initiative was introduced in order to capture the vision of the school. The research methods involved observations, interviews, questionnaires and personality tests. Form one students were used in the research because they had no previous knowledge about the disenchantment that had characterised the other student leaders. The practical implications were that student leaders should be carefully selected and trained.</p>	Ghrasheeb A
		<p>Professional Learning Community: a pathway to the development of successful leadership Imrana Moiz, Lead Coordinator Training and Development, Generation's School, Pakistan</p> <p>This session will provide an overview of the latest trends and research about the characteristics of an effective educational leader, emotional intelligence, the core of leadership practice</p>	Ghrasheeb B


Time	Session	Description	Location
11:30	 Partner School presentation	<p>and self-evaluation to improve skills and knowledge in becoming an inclusive leader. The opportunities provided to work together will help develop a 'Professional Learning Community' (PLC) that will share the vision to promote and sustain successful educational leadership practices.</p>	
		<p>School leadership - The paradigm shift Neeti Tripathi, Vice Principal, CIDER International School, Bangladesh</p> <p>This presentation covers the strategies that educational leaders must employ to implement changes, the characteristics they must bring to their responsibilities, their leadership styles, and the contextual factors that influence their efforts to change. Considering leadership as an action learning process, this presentation focuses on the leadership approaches required to foster the growth of a great school and highlights the importance of developing a collaborative school culture to create a learning platform that meets the demands of children growing up in an information-rich environment.</p>	Ghrasheeb C
		<p>A profile of acclaimed school leaders: Perceptions of internal and external clients Dr Omneya Kassabgy, Managing Director, Winchester British International School, Egypt</p> <p>This presentation will draw a profile of “acclaimed school leaders” based on the perceptions held by key internal and external stakeholders. It will discuss implications on designing leadership development training programs to empower school leaders with the competencies identified by the research. This will also explore designing competency-based role descriptions.</p>	Ghizlan B

Time	Session	Description	Location
11:30	 Partner School presentation	<p>Girls in the lead for action Pastor Bernard Boaheng, Principal, International Community College, Ghana</p> <p>Girls in the lead for action explores the pedagogical implications of expanding the frontiers of student leadership by harnessing the leadership energy of girls. It achieves this through the intentional creation of a star female leader who serves as a model to guide others through the maze of difficulties they face in their attempt at leading. Finally, it discusses the salient findings and their implications for other educators and teachers.</p>	Al Anoud
		<p>The effects of a professional learning community on a school in Nigeria: An action research Olufemi Olawale Folaponmile, Head of Academics, Aduvie International School, Nigeria</p> <p>Using mathematics as a basis for its Professional Learning Community (PLC) activities, action research evidence was used to explore professional development activities among teachers at Aduvie International School, Abuja. The research was carried out as part of efforts to revamp the school's teacher professional development programme using questionnaires, documentary evidence and interviews as data collection tools. The findings revealed that, the PLC framework influenced three major aspects of teachers' practice – teaching methods, data management and systems thinking. The framework also led to collaborative practices among Aduvie International School teachers – a major hallmark of many PLCs.</p>	Online
12:00		Repeat of above workshops	

Time	Session	Description	Location
12:30		Lunch	Al Manzil - Lower Floor
13:45		Welcome back – Alison Willmott	Al Maha Ballroom
13:45	 Keynote 2	<p>Leading for inclusion, issues, challenges and the way forward</p> <p>Prof. Eman Gaad, Dean of the Faculty of Education and a Professor of Special and Inclusive Education, British University in Dubai (BUID)</p> <p>The presentation will explore the perceptions of educational leadership for inclusivity. It will offer education stakeholders, particularly leaders, a realistic account on issues and challenges related to their role in providing a meaningful, inclusive experience for all learners. The four pillars of inclusion will be discussed to support leaders understanding of the influential factors that may affect their leadership for inclusion journey. Examples from the UAE, and the region will be given to identify the main related issues, and the presentation ends with recommendations for best practices in this sensitive area that is currently popular, but maybe hard to achieve meaningfully.</p>	
14:15	Q&A	Alison Willmott	
14:30	 Workshop	<p>Recruitment and Retention Reimagined</p> <p>Lady Kirsty Grundy, Principal, Shireland Technology Primary School, UK</p> <p>Recent years have seen schools under increasing pressure as recruiting and retaining staff across all education roles have become more difficult. Over the last two years we have looked to reassess and rethink how we create a stable and happy</p>	

Time	Session	Description	Location
14:30	 Workshop	<p>workforce for our growing multi-academy trust by forming a different kind of relationship with the local university that has the largest number of young trainee teachers and other key roles in education such as social work and speech language. This involves creating structures and a central Trust team that supports and declutters for schools and their leaders.</p> <p>Lady Kirsty Grundy will share the journey of one Multi-Academy Trust in the UK trying to find a solution to the current staffing crisis.</p>	
		<p>Whole school improvement through middle leaders Sam Inder and Brian Lynch, British Council School, Madrid, Spain</p> <p>How do we harness the middle leaders of schools to improve the whole school? This workshop will focus on the challenges and opportunities presented to middle leaders to better understand how to increase their impact. Considering the pressures of dealing with operational demands whilst needing to think strategically, there will be a chance to review what can be done to develop staff in these roles. Sharing approaches used at the British Council School, Madrid, the workshop will provide examples of the types of training and dialogue required to improve middle leadership.</p>	Loft 1
		<p>Empowering and challenging teachers in classrooms Sian Montoro and Jo Parkes, British Council School, Madrid, Spain</p> <p>How do we improve standards in the classroom to support and stretch pupils?</p>	Loft 2

Time	Session	Description	Location
14:30	 Workshop	<p>This workshop will look at the ways that leaders in schools can raise standards of teaching and learning in classrooms. The priority of a school is the progress of pupils through effective planning, delivery and assessment of learning. There are always opportunities to get better, and empowering teachers to be responsible for their own improvement is a key component of successful schools. Providing examples of approaches used at the British Council School, Madrid, the workshop will outline how leaders can challenge teachers effectively to build this culture.</p>	
		<p>How to develop a strategy for student leadership in your school Joan Deslandes OBE, Head Teacher, Kingsford Community School, UK</p> <p>The workshop will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider the development of a whole school strategy and vision for student leadership - driven through expert research, to achieve an inclusive and nurturing student leadership provision. 2. Consider how student leadership can contribute to student wellbeing and mental health provision. 3. Explore the need for investment of time and financial resources into leadership training for your people whilst working effectively in collaboration with other providers to ensure that young people have a broad awareness of how good character and valuing equal opportunities contribute to being a resilient, contributing global leader and citizen. 	Shodoun

Time	Session	Description	Location
14:30	 Workshop	Supporting school leaders to support inclusive education, what works? Prof. Eman Gaad, Dean of the Faculty of Education and a Professor of Special and Inclusive Education, British University in Dubai (BUiD) The purpose of the workshop is to support, in practical, step-by-step scenarios, how inclusion works in a school with a focus on role of school leaders in driving this delicate process. Latest international best practices will be shared as well as case scenarios in group work. Thematic analysis of main challenges that will stem from group discussion and brain storming will be performed on the hope of offering solutions and best interventions for a meaningful inclusive experience for all at school/educational establishment.	Ghrasheeb A
		Developing your own school leadership programme Adam Arnell, Director, Oxfordshire Teaching School Hub, UK There is a plethora of regional, national and international school leadership programmes from which to choose, but sometimes it can make more sense to design a bespoke programme for your own school or group of schools. Adam Arnell will talk about his experiences of leading the development of school-led leadership programmes and delegates will have the opportunity to consider the practicalities of creating their own in-house leadership courses and programmes, including establishing the aims of the programme, the content, the nature of delivery, the delivery team, evaluation and measurement of impact.	Ghrasheeb B
		Leading and flourishing with excellence and evidence Sonia Thompson, Head Teacher/Director, St Matthew's Research School, UK	Ghrasheeb C

Time	Session	Description	Location
14:30	 Workshop	<p>Professor Becky Francis states, ‘Evidence does not provide easy solutions, but evidence-informed improvement is a process that has integrity and holds greater promise than any alternative’. In this workshop, Sonia will explain her school’s role, as an Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) Research School. She will examine the evidence-informed school improvement journey within her own setting, offering practical ideas and resources. She will also examine the successes, challenges and how good implementation is central to any evidence-informed improvement process.</p>	
		<p>Re-engineering our teams Sir Mark Grundy, CEO, Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust, UK</p> <p>We have worked for over a decade to change the way that all of our staff work, to change the manner in which our learners learn and how we engage with our families and local communities. Our Multi Academy Trust has Nurseries, Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and post 16 facilities who collectively reduce workload by actively sharing and refining to improve our delivery to our young people. In this workshop we will show a number of innovative ways that we have reduced workload and retained and recruited staff.</p>	Ghizlan B
	 Presentation/ Case study	<p>Leading on a culture of mental wellbeing Rolla Khaddage, Independent Educational Consultant, Lebanon</p> <p>Everyone in education has been concerned about mental wellbeing. School leaders have been in constant search on how to improve and support mental wellbeing in their schools. In this workshop there will be a discussion on how the leader’s role and leadership skills can support in promoting mental wellbeing in schools.</p>	Al Anoud

Time	Session	Description	Location
		There will be an introduction to the different aspects needed to initiate or develop further mental wellbeing. The leaders will have the opportunity to contemplate on the next steps to be taken to improve mental wellbeing in their schools.	
15:30		Refreshment Break	Meeting Room Foyer
16:00	 Round up	British Council Partner Schools special announcement	Al Maha Ballroom
17:20	Meet for transport to gala dinner	Coaches to depart in 15 minute intervals	Gala dinner coach meeting point
19:00	Gala dinner and entertainment	Hosted by Martin Lowder, Head of Global Exams Services, British Council, UK	British Embassy Residence





Conference Agenda Day 2



Thursday 2 March 2023


Delegates are required to sign up to their chosen workshops via our conference app - [click here to download](#)


 : In person session


 : Virtual session



Time	Session	Description	Location
09:00	  Opening Remarks	Alison Willmott, Education Consultant and University Lecturer, St Mary's University, UK	Al Maha Ballroom
09:05		British Council UAE Spotlight	
09.15	  Keynote 3	<p>Developing 21st century student leaders</p> <p>Joan Deslandes OBE, Head Teacher, Kingsford Community School, UK</p> <p>Developing active learners, critical thinkers and young people who understand and value their own role as global citizens and leaders, is critical to the personal development education of young people in the 21st century. Facilitating young people to be active leaders and effective citizens within their school communities and beyond, and the necessity for young people to develop leadership skills, become role models and 'pay it forward' to inspire their peers is paramount. Critical to this is the wellbeing and mental health of young people, particularly following the pandemic.</p> <p>This session will highlight the necessity for schools to empower young people to develop the skills to be resilient, overcome challenges, take advantage of opportunities and value being an ally of equal opportunities as an imperative of student leadership. The importance of strategic school leadership when developing systems to maximise impact on student leadership and character development will also be explored.</p>	

Time	Session	Description	Location
10.00	Q&A	Alison Willmott	Al Maha Ballroom
10.15	 Panel Discussion	Young Voices: School leaders respond Joan Deslandes/Sir Mark Grundy/ Rolla Khaddage Chair: Yvette Hutchinson	
10.45		Refreshment Break	Meeting Room Foyer
11.15	 Workshops	Recruitment and Retention Reimagined Lady Kirsty Grundy, Principal of Shireland Technology Primary School, UK Recent years have seen schools under increasing pressure as recruiting and retaining staff across all education roles have become more difficult. Over the last two years we have looked to reassess and rethink how we create a stable and happy workforce for our growing multi-academy trust by forming a different kind of relationship with the local university that has the largest number of young trainee teachers and other key roles in education such as social work and speech language and creating structures and a central Trust team that supports and declutters for schools and their leaders. Lady Kirsty Grundy will share the journey of one Multi-Academy Trust in the UK trying to find a solution to the current staffing crisis.	Al Maha Ballroom
		Developing your own school leadership programme Adam Arnell, Director, Oxfordshire Teaching School Hub, UK There is a plethora of regional, national and international school leadership programmes from which to choose, but sometimes it	Loft 1

Time	Session	Description	Location
11:15	 Workshops	<p>can make more sense to design a bespoke programme for your own school or group of schools. Adam Arnell will talk about his experiences of leading the development of school-led leadership programmes and delegates will have the opportunity to consider the practicalities of creating their own in-house leadership courses and programmes, including establishing the aims of the programme, the content, the nature of delivery, the delivery team, evaluation and measurement of impact.</p>	
		<p>Supporting school leaders to support inclusive education, what works? Prof. Eman Gaad, Dean of the Faculty of Education and a Professor of Special and Inclusive Education, British University in Dubai (BUiD)</p> <p>The purpose of the workshop is to support, in practical, step-by-step scenarios, how inclusion works in a school with a focus on the role of school leaders in driving this delicate process. Latest international best practices will be shared as well as case scenarios in group work. Thematic analysis of main challenges that will stem from group discussion and brain storming will be performed with the hope of offering solutions and best interventions for a meaningful inclusive experience for all at school/educational establishments.</p>	Loft 2
		<p>How to develop a strategy for student leadership in your school Joan Deslandes OBE, Head Teacher, Kingsford Community School, UK</p> <p>The workshop will:</p>	Ghrasheeb A&B

Time	Session	Description	Location
11:15	 Workshops	<p>1. Consider the development of a whole school strategy and vision for student leadership - driven through expert research, to achieve an inclusive and nurturing student leadership provision.</p> <p>2. Consider how student leadership can contribute to student wellbeing and mental health provision.</p> <p>3. Explore the need for investment of time and financial resources into leadership training for your people whilst working effectively in collaboration with other providers to ensure that young people have a broad awareness of how good character and valuing equal opportunities contribute to being a resilient, contributing global leader and citizen.</p>	
		<p>Leading and flourishing with excellence and evidence</p> <p>Sonia Thompson, Head teacher, St Matthew's Primary School, UK</p> <p>Professor Becky Francis states, 'Evidence does not provide easy solutions, but evidence-informed improvement is a process that has integrity and holds greater promise than any alternative'. In this workshop, Sonia will explain her school's role, as an Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) Research School. She will examine the evidence-informed school improvement journey within her own setting, offering practical ideas and resources. She will also examine the successes, challenges and how good implementation is central to any evidence-informed improvement process.</p>	Ghrasheeb C
		<p>Re-engineering our teams</p> <p>Presenter: Sir Mark Grundy, CEO, Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust, UK</p>	Ghizlan B

Time	Session	Description	Location
		<p>We have worked for over a decade to change the way that all of our staff work, to change the manner in which our learners learn and how we engage with our families and local communities. Our Multi Academy Trust has Nurseries, Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and post 16 facilities who collectively reduce workload by actively sharing and refining to improve our delivery to our young people. In this workshop we will show a number of innovative ways that we have reduced workload and retained and recruited staff.</p>	
		<p>Leading on a culture of mental wellbeing Rolla Khaddage, Independent Educational Consultant, Lebanon</p> <p>Everyone in education has been concerned about mental wellbeing. School leaders have been in constant search on how to improve and support mental wellbeing in their schools. In this workshop there will be a discussion on how the leader's role and leadership skills can support in promoting mental wellbeing in schools. There will be an introduction to the different aspects needed to initiate or develop further mental wellbeing. The leaders will have the opportunity to contemplate the next steps to be taken to improve mental wellbeing in their schools.</p>	Al Anoud
12:15		Lunch	Al Manzil - Lower Floor
13:30	 Keynote 4	<p>Lessons from experiments with school-led continuing professional development and leadership development Adam Arnell, Director, Oxfordshire Teaching School Hub, UK</p> <p>An effective school is one where leadership is distributed among staff members; those working in the classroom and those working equally hard to ensure that the school runs smoothly.</p>	Al Maha Ballroom

Time	Session	Description	Location
		In order to develop staff and provide a safe and enriching environment, school leaders need to consider career pathways for all staff members so that they can aspire to improve their skills for themselves as individuals, for the school and for their wider contribution to education. Over the past 25 years Adam has led on professional and leadership development at a variety of scales, ranging from working with individuals, groups of teachers and non-teaching staff through to system leadership involving hundreds of schools. In this talk he will reflect on what has worked well, what hasn't worked and share thoughts and ideas that delegates may consider in their own contexts.	
14.15	Q&A	Yvette Hutchinson	Al Maha Ballroom
14.30	 Panel Discussion	Responding to what we have learned: Next steps and future actions Chair: Alison Willmott	
15:00		Group Photograph	Al Maha Ballroom
15:10		Refreshment Break	Meeting Room Foyer
15:30	 Announcement	Winners of poster competition – Alison Willmott Partner Schools Connect – Douglas Wood, British Council, UK	Al Maha Ballroom
16:00	Closing remarks	Simon Higgins, Global Head of School Exams, British Council, UK	

Schools Now! 2023 KEYNOTE SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES



Eman Gaad

Dean, Faculty of Education University of Dubai (BUiD)

Professor Eman Gaad is the Dean of the Faculty of Education and a Professor of Special and Inclusive Education at the British University in Dubai (BUiD).

She is also an Affiliate Lecturer at the University of Glasgow, UK. She has established herself as a world-class researcher, advocate, international social development consultant and expert in the field. In 2022 she became a Goodwill Ambassador for Bangladesh.



Sir Mark Grundy

CEO, Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust

He is passionate about ensuring that all pupils are given access to an exceptional education. In 2006, he was knighted for his services to education and technology in the UK.

Sir Mark is a former Principal of a number of schools and has worked extensively with the Department for Education to encourage schools to use Educational Technology. Sir Mark has been an Advisor to the Regional School Commissioner for the last nine years. Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust leads a network of 14 schools and nurseries in the West Midlands.



Adam Arnell

Director, Oxfordshire Teaching School Hub

Adam Arnell is the Director of the Oxfordshire Teaching School Hub, a partnership of over 300 schools delivering school-led professional development from Initial Teacher Training through to executive leadership.

He previously had a variety of teaching and school leadership roles having trained as a Geography teacher at Oxford University.



Joan Deslandes OBE

Head Teacher, Kingsford Community School

Joan Deslandes OBE is Head Teacher of Kingsford Community School, a secondary school in East London which has held the International School Award for over a decade and is a Confucius Classroom.

Joan is a founding trustee of the Chartered College of Teaching and has been named three times by the Evening Standard as one of London's most influential educational thinkers. In 2017 she was awarded an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours for her services to education.



We will continue to share more updates and information with you and look forward to meeting you at Schools Now! 2023.



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