

SPOTLIGHT ON SCHOOLS - COO

School leadership takes many forms, but despite the differences in each role, they are unified by their dedication to excellence in education and creating an atmosphere where students and teachers can thrive.

Hayley spoke with Dr Thomass Flynn, Chief Operating Officer of the Girls Learning Trust. Thomas has an extensive background in charity governance and leadership before moving into an executive role at a Multi Academy Trust. We asked what leadership means to him.

What does leadership mean to you in your role as COO in a MAT?

Leadership in a COO for MAT covers lots of different areas of the school and the Trust. My role focuses on strategic planning, managing risk, providing strategic support to headteachers and ensuring we have the right expertise in our corporate support services, including HR, finance, IT, estates and legal, that underpins the educational delivery.

There is also a big element of governance and compliance through ensuring up to date information is available and accessible to all. I also champion all the professional support service roles across the Trust in our schools, ensuring that we recognise individual careers and can attract the best people, not just in academic roles.

What do you think is the biggest impact your role has across the Trust?

When I joined, the Trust was working towards an effective shared service model. I clarified our operating model by formalising process systems and setting expectations. Everyone in the Trust now knows what to expect. The Trust really sees the value of having professional services teams that underpin the educational offering, and we can all work together with a common goal. My background has also allowed me to bring learning from different parts of the education sector – higher and further education – to the role.

SPOTLIGHT ON SCHOOLS - CHAIR

What do you see as the biggest challenge to the education sector?

It is an exciting but challenging time within the education sector. We are on the edge of change but still finely balanced against the aftermath of the pandemic, a cost-of-living crisis, staff shortages and financial constraints. We must ensure that we keep momentum and pace with changing student expectations. Climate change and sustainability are important for our pupils, so how do we factor this into delivery?

Getting the right people in the right roles is also key; in a post-pandemic world, schools appear to be the least flexible places to work, as remote work isn't an easy option. We have to look at how to accommodate staff needs, what our employer brand and get the balance of teaching and support staff.



Hayley Mintern joined Anderson Quigley as a Partner in 2022 to further develop the schools and colleges practice. She specialises in the education sector and connecting talent that is passionate about providing high quality inclusive education. She built a track record with education leaders and helped many organisations identifying top talent.

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Dr Thomas Flynn is an education and charity sector leader with over 10 years experience in various senior roles. He is also an associate consultant in governance and charity trustee.

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