

Lilac Sky Schools

School Transformation



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I have been the Headteacher of 3 London Schools, in Dagenham, Islington and Edmonton.

Like many things in life I discovered that there was much less that separated these 3 schools than there was similar. Schools generally are organised around classrooms, teachers and students and haven't changed for a 100 years or more. Likewise the problems that lead to school failure, in my view are similar. That has been my personal discovery and unsurprisingly Lilac Sky School Schools is based on the same premise.

Lilac Sky School has worked with up to 100 schools in the UK. Over the last 14 years they have developed the Lilac Plan. It is not rocket science or all brand new, but it is tried, tested and works. When Tesco's open a new store in a town they don't hire the best manager they can and say "we don't know much about Retail Management, how would you run the store and hope for success", they do (I imagine) employ the best person they can and then hand over the "Lilac print", train that person and monitor them carefully in implementing the 'Tesco Design'.

I believe that schooling should be regarded more like this and we should stop attempting to reinvent the wheel every time a new Headteacher is appointed.

"The Lilac Plan"

Is pretty straightforward in a number of ways, it is 7 "components":

- Relationships for learning
- The Quality of Teaching for Learning
- Assessment for Learning
- The School Environment
- Pastoral Support
- School organisation and leadership
- Communications and Public Relations

Each component is inextricably inter-connected and none are exhaustive. I am not going to say very much about Teaching Quality and Assessment for Learning because it surely goes without saying that great teaching and proper assessment are essential for a school to improve.

The route that you take to get there, I will say something about.

Leadership, Communication and Public Relations

A lot of emphasis is put on Leaders in schools, youve got to have them and they need to be inspiring. There are 3 areas under leadership that I believe contribute to sustaining Transformation however, and they are:

- Organisational capacity
- A marketing strategy
- And motivating staff (and students)

A school wins or falls by its organisation and in my experience it is the issue that goes hand in hand with school failure.

Failure to organise IT systems, failure to set clear lines of communication, failure to have simple admin procedures, failure to organise the premises and other resources properly (often including finance), I could go on.

These failures lead to a daily crisis, absorb Senior Staff, soak up finances and wear everyone down.

On my first day as a new Head, a teacher came and asked me if it was ok to run the usual PE Trip, I simply asked, "Is it on the calendar", "have you filled in the visit forms and risk assessment" and "have you completed a planned absence proforma".

The answer to all 3 was "no", because the school didnt have any!! "How do you normally get permission", I asked, by coming to see the Head. It quickly became clear hat the Head had been a kind of "Clerk of events" ensuring other staff never had to worry about paperwork, meanwhile he himself never left the office as a result!!

My second headship was a school which had no school rules. "The children know whats right and wrong" said John the longstanding deputy. "They obviously dont" was my retort which the 400 exclusions bore testament to.

Poor organisation puts a school in perpetual crisis. No surprise that in my third school my first move was to appoint a Director of Business and Resources.

Marketing and Public Relations

Is a dirty word in schools but again without a proactive handle on your image in the community amongst staff, students and parents, all the improvements in the world will be spoilt by news of the "big fight" at the gate.

Leaders need to give a narrative to their "communities journey", and it should be done via, newsletters, assemblies, the website, brochures, TV, Radio, DVDs the press and visits to primary schools. Keep telling everyone that "things are getting better" and they will!!

Motivation through good communication

Staff (and students) need reward and recognition. We all know that we remember it (sometimes) for students (but only just) we nearly always forget the adults. We write 30 'quality circle letters a week recognising individual members of staff, for something nominated by a colleague in one of our regular meetings, we give everyone a birthday card, give out staff prizes, pizzas on the last Friday of the month in the staffroom and a swanky meal out (the end of the meal with champagne a long the way).

You have to make someones day!!

The School Learning Environment

Lilac Sky Schools really believes in the physical environment looking great. Paint the school one nice colour (mine is purple!!), paint is cheap but brightens everyones day!

Also believe in your core values, display them everywhere, talk about them regularly with staff, students and parents.

Ours are:

Wisdom, justice, courage, compassion, respect, responsibility, integrity.

It is surprising how writing it is when you all agree how and why you do this job. And when a colleague does not act wisely or with respect make sure you point it out.

Key Notes & Ideas

Lilac Sky Thinking - The philosophy

I developed my own beliefs about how you transform schools and then confirmed them with Lilac Sky Schools. I really think they matter!

I also think that our personal behaviour impacts on the Learning Environment I strongly believe in training staff to behave assertively at all times.

Choose Your Attitude

A school (and by implication the Head, Governors and Management team) must choose to change!! No one else is going to. So in truth, School Transformation is a "supreme act of faith" - be relentlessly optimistic!!

Through such optimism and self-belief, you raise the expectations of staff, students and, very importantly parents and the community. This is really step one!!

Set the Controls

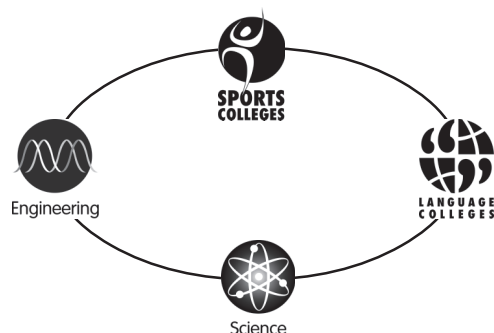
Be prepared to set out the list of what needs to be done - set the goals, targets, limits, bottom lines, exactly what you feel needs to happen. Don't be blown off course - no-one else will do it - so you have to!

Be Relentless

The single major factor that lets all institutions down is not seeing it through. Schools and teachers have to be consistent and determined. Failed schools are brim full of good ideas started but not seen through and rarely finished. If it is going to work you need to see it through each and every day. Then everyone will believe you mean business.

Believe in Something

Schools need someone to follow - and something. It often doesn't matter what you believe in as long as you make it something! It could be:



- Specialist schools
- Academies
- Technology
- Active Learning
- Equal Opportunities
- Strong Discipline - or
- Lilac Sky!!

Be There

It seems an obvious statement - but for teachers and schools to have an impact with students - being there consistently is the most important thing. Classes misbehave; staff lose interest - if the person leading an initiative is not there regularly to deliver on promises.

Love - Love - Love - Make someones day

The most important thing concerning improvement in school is that students love to be at school. Love their lessons! Love their teachers!! Remember how safe and special your infant or primary school felt?? The best lessons are those where teachers have made the children feel special. Special as dramatists, economists, scientists - or whichever subject it is. It is true for the whole school.

Lie a Little - Talk it up!

A good Head lies a bit. Not completely - but white lies like:

- You are the best ever students.
- You are fantastic teachers.
- We are a brilliant school.
- These are the best ever results.

This may be called "spin" - but it is about making everyone believe in the impossible - then it comes true.

Be Assertive

You have the right to teach and your students have the right to learn in a classroom free from disruptive behaviour - a classroom that both reflects your own behavioural expectations and creates an atmosphere in which student self-esteem can flourish.

To create this learning environment, remember that:

- You have the right and the responsibility to establish rules and directions that clearly define the limits of acceptable and unacceptable student behaviour.
- You have the right and the responsibility to teach students to consistently follow these rules and directions throughout the school day and school year.
- You have the right and the responsibility to ask for assistance from parents and administrators when support is needed in handling the behaviour of students.

And why are these rights and responsibilities so important?

If you are like many teachers today, you are having increasing difficulty establishing the classroom environment you need in which to teach and the classroom environment your students need in which to learn. Why?

Discipline remains a key problem in education today.

All too often, teachers are confronted with students, who talk when asked to be quiet; who dawdle when asked to work; who argue and talk back when asked to follow directions. The result: invaluable teaching time is lost student achievement and self-esteem drop, and teacher frustration increases.

Why are so many teachers having so much difficulty with students?
Why do so many teachers feel powerless to influence students to behave appropriately?

Whats happened?

To find the answers we need to look outside the classroom and beyond the school.

Respect

The vast majority of children came to school with built-in respect for teachers and education. They came prepared to behave. They came prepared to learn. Behaviour management, or discipline, usually consisted of nothing more than a teachers stern look or a few well-chosen words. The simple promise of, "I will call your parents if you do that again" was sufficient to motivate most students, including the most disruptive ones, to behave.

What does this mean to you?

The discipline approaches of the past do not work with todays students.

Emotional and Family Problems

Students bring with them the confusion and uncertainties of broken homes, poverty, emotional and physical neglect and abuse, and the fact of life that too many of their parents are unwilling or unable to motivate them to succeed in school.

Children are not innately motivated to behave in school.

Motivation from parents and family, a stable home environment, and a positive outlook towards society's possibilities are all necessary to help children develop the self-esteem and self-control needed to choose responsible behaviour.

Classroom Management Training

Ironically, even though teachers are called upon to work with more and more students with more and more problems, as professionals they still receive minimal, if any, comprehensive training in classroom management.

As a result of being minimally exposed to many different philosophies, teachers are often left questioning their disciplinary approaches:

"Have I been too hard on Mark?"

"Should I counsel him before I call his parents?"

"Should I be so strict with Stephanie? After all, she has emotional problems."

In the past, be it right or wrong, most teachers had the same basic disciplinary expectations of all students. They expected students to sit in their seats, work without talking, raise their hands and wait to be called upon to speak, and do assigned work when they were told to do it.

Different expectations among teachers result in fewer clear-cut, across-the-board standards of acceptable behaviour. Students may complain, "My other teacher didn't make me do that. It's not fair!"

The Myth of the Good Teacher

The assumption is, if you are competent, you never need to go to your Headteacher or the child's parents for assistance.

This myth is nonsense. No teacher, no matter how skilled he is or how much experience or training she has, is capable of working successfully with each and every student without support.



Lesson planning and Learning Objectives

Many teachers have been taught that if their lesson planning is first rate, they will have minimal classroom problems. We agree that the better your curriculum and the more motivating, exciting and academically appropriate it is, the fewer behaviour problems you will have. In fact, one of the best preventative tools is skilled lesson planning and academic teaching.

The problem, however, is that before your lessons ever begin, before you have the opportunity to pique your students interest with motivating academic material, you must first have their attention. Your students must be seated. They must be quiet. And they must be listening to you.

*Good curriculum will help students stay on task. But first they must know how to **be** on task.*

The reality is that you are going to have students who exhibit difficulties even with the best of curriculums.

Looking at what weve covered so far, we see that:

- Teachers today do not receive the respect from parents and from society that teachers used to receive.
- More students come to school with emotional problems than ever before.
- Teachers are not sufficiently trained to deal with todays classroom challenges.
- The myth of the good teacher keeps teachers from asking for the assistance they need.
- Good lesson planning is not always enough to motivate students to behave.

What does todays student need?

- ~ **Students need to know your expectations.**
- ~ **Students need limits.**
- ~ **Students need positive recognition and support.**
- ~ **Students need to be taught how to choose responsible behaviour.**



If students are to be successful in the real world they must be capable of making independent, responsible choices.

We find that students have these rights in the classroom:

- Students have the right to a teacher who will set firm and consistent limits.
- Students have the right to a teacher who will provide them with consistent positive encouragement to motivate them to behave.
- Students have the right to know what behaviours they need to engage in that will enable them to succeed in the classroom.
- Students have the right to a teacher who will take the time to teach them how to manage their own behaviour.

Obviously students cannot establish these rights for themselves.

How can you increase your influence in spite of all the problems that stand in your way? *By becoming a more assertive teacher.*

Lets take a look at what that means.

Assertive

An assertive teacher is "one who clearly and firmly communicates her expectations to her students, and is prepared to reinforce her words with appropriate actions. She responds to students in a manner that maximizes her potential to get her own needs to teach met, but in no way violates the best interest of the students."

Assertive teachers communicate their influence by sending a very clear message to their students:

"I am committed to being the leader in this classroom, a leader who will establish an environment where I can teach and my students can learn. To reach this goal, I am committed to teaching and empowering my students to choose the responsible behaviour that will allow them to succeed in school, and to succeed later in life".

"I care too much about my responsibility as a teacher to allow disruptive behaviour to stop me from teaching. I care too much about my students to allow them to behave in a manner that is not in their best interests".

Relationship Management Styles

It is your response style that sets the tone of your classroom. It is your response style that impacts students self-esteem and their success in school.

The Pleading Style

A teacher who is basically non-assertive will be wishy-washy with students and very inconsistent in how he responds to behaviour. One day he may allow students to disrupt without responding to them at all. The next day he may react firmly, demanding angrily that the students stop the same misbehaviour.

Non-assertive responses leave students confused because they rarely know what to expect. The teacher appears powerless, "Please try and be good."

Aggressive Sarcastic and Hostile Style

Hostile teachers sometimes describe the classroom as a battleground - them against the students. They often use discipline to get back at students rather than help them learn to behave more appropriately. Such teachers also have negative expectations of their ability to deal with students. They blame the students, the parents, and the administration for their problems.

The Assertive Style

An assertive response style is one in which the teacher clearly, confidently and consistently states his expectations to students, and is prepared to back up these words with actions. When a teacher responds assertively, he tells students exactly what behaviour is acceptable and what is unacceptable, what will happen when the student chooses to behave and what will happen when the student chooses not to behave. No questions. No room for confusion.

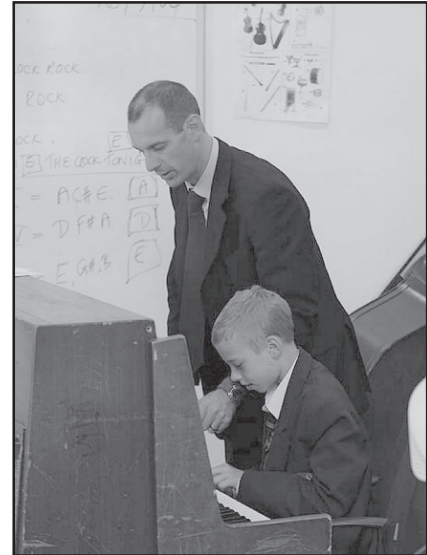
An assertive teacher has positive expectations of her ability to motivate students and a positive attitude is reflected in her words and actions. She is aware of her students' needs for limits and is prepared to set those limits. At the same time, she is cognizant of each student's need for warmth and encouragement and does not allow any student's appropriate behaviour to go unrecognised.

Recognising the realities of teaching in the present day, the assertive teacher puts in the time and effort to systematically teach students how to behave.

Note: No teacher responds non-assertively, in a hostile manner or assertively all the time, in all situations.

Non-Assertive

A non-assertive teacher will feel frustrated and inadequate due to his inability to get his needs met in the classroom. The stress he experiences will eventually result in his becoming "burned out" and fed up both with students and his profession.



The non-assertive teacher may also feel a good deal of inner hostility towards the students he feels he cannot handle. This hostility may not be openly expressed to the student, or it may suddenly burst forth in a hostile response by the teacher. This pent-up hostility is a serious block to the development of a positive student-teacher relationship.

The students of a non-assertive teacher often feel frustrated, manipulated and angry.

Many students do what is asked of them in a hostile teachers classroom, but they behave out of anxiety or fear.



The assertive teacher takes the responsibility for getting her needs met in the classroom. By fulfilling her needs, she is more capable of meeting the needs of students and thus reaping the internal and external benefits one gets from performing well professionally.

The assertive teacher usually feels accomplished and good about herself at the end of the day.

Summary of Being More Assertive

- The manner in which you respond to student behaviour impacts students self-esteem and students success in school.
- We have identified three basic response styles: non-assertive, hostile and assertive.
- A non-assertive response style is one in which the teacher is passive and inconsistent in responding to student behaviour. This teacher often simply reacts to disruptive behaviour as it appears, rather than proactively plan for it.
- The students of a non-assertive teacher often feel frustrated, manipulated and angry. They do not receive the clear limits they need to function successfully in the classroom.
- A hostile response style is one in which the teacher responds to students in a hostile, rigid, authoritarian manner, often at the expense of students feelings and self-esteem.
- The hostile teacher is perceived as unfair, and students behave out of anxiety and fear rather than through making responsible behaviour choices.
- An assertive response style is one in which the teacher clearly, confidently and consistently states expectations to students and is prepared to back up these words with actions.

Students learn to trust and respect an assertive teacher because they clearly know the parameters that have been set for acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

Key Notes & Ideas:

Rules

Have rules that everyone operates by, its surprising when schools dont. Increasing numbers of students are coming to school from homes where expectations are undefined and rules are either unstated or unenforced. Young people need the structure and guidance that appropriate classroom expectations and rules provide. Our view is that some rules are fundamental. Today more than ever, behavioural expectations carry with them an importance beyond the classroom. They help teach what the student may not be getting anywhere else - responsible behaviour. When students learn responsible relationships, their self-esteem rises and their motivation to achieve increases.

- **Do as you are told, when you are told**

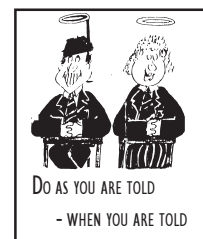
This is perhaps the most important rule you will establish. You can't teach and students won't learn if the many directions you give throughout the day aren't followed.

- **Keep hands, feet and objects to yourself**

For students to have a safe and orderly classroom, they need to know that they are protected from being hit, kicked, or their property being taken or destroyed.

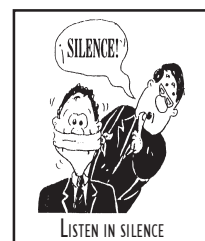
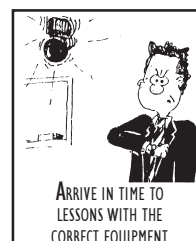
- **No swearing or teasing**

All children have the right to be in a classroom where they will not be verbally or psychologically humiliated.



These basic rules are common to most successful teachers classrooms. Other appropriate general expectations that teachers have established include:

- No eating
- Be in your seat when the bell rings
- Walk in the classroom
- Do not leave the classroom without permission
- No yelling or screaming



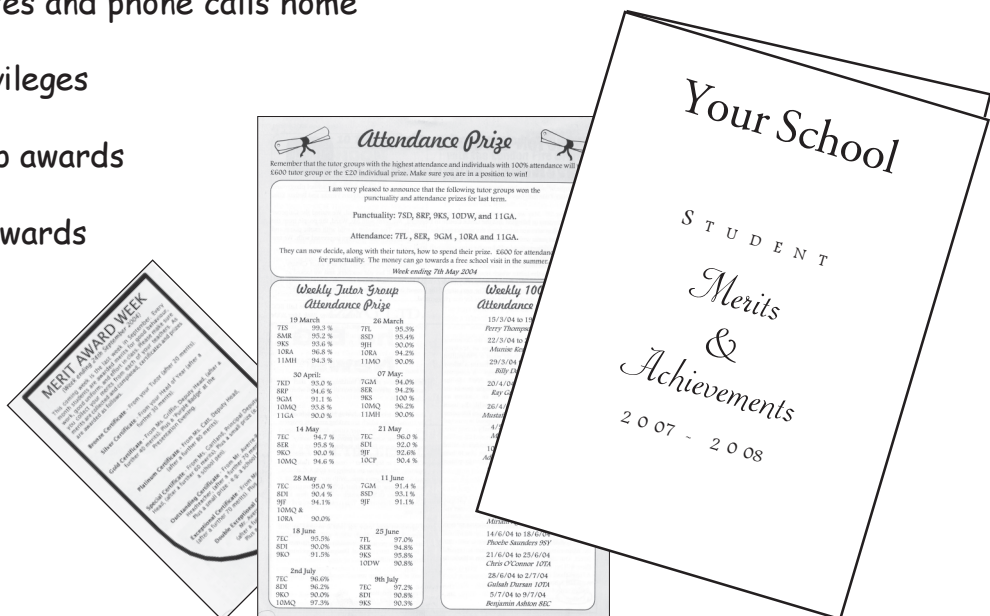
What do all of these basic rules have in common? What makes them appropriate general classroom rules?

Individual Positive Rewards

Plan to be positive. Your classroom discipline plan is a dynamic system that gives you a natural foundation for being positive every day in class.

Individual positive re-enforcers include:

- ☆ Praise
- ☆ Positive notes and phone calls home
- ☆ Special privileges
- ☆ Relationship awards
- ☆ Tangible rewards

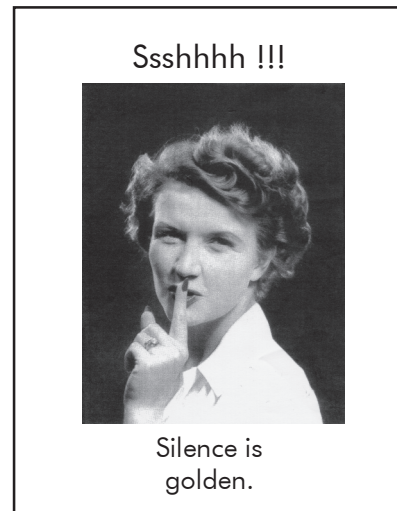
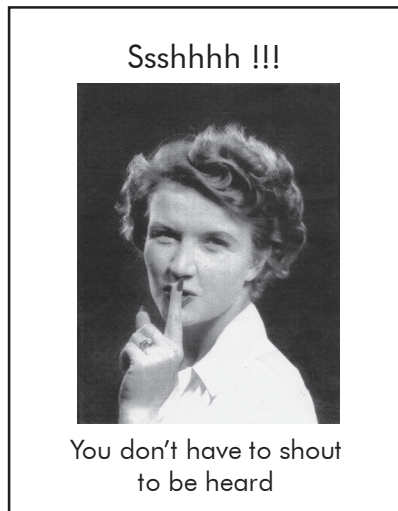


Lee Cantor the American Educational Psychologist says that "Recognition changes behaviour - sanctions contain it."

Sanctions or Pastoral Support?

- When disruption occurs, you must be prepared to deal with it calmly and quickly.
- You must be prepared by having consequences that students receive should they choose to disregard the rules of the classroom.
- Consequences and sanctions:
 - ~ Are a choice.
 - ~ Do not work in isolation. They must be balanced with positive support.
 - ~ Do not have to be severe to be effective.
 - ~ Must be appropriate for your students, and you must be comfortable using them.
 - ~ Must be ones that students do not like, but they must never be physically or psychologically harmful.
 - ~ Should be organised into a hierarchy that clearly spells out what will happen from the first time a student breaks a rule to the fifth time the same student breaks a rule the same day.
- The first consequence should be a warning.
- Parent and Headteacher contact should appear near the end of the hierarchy.

The hierarchy should include a Severe Clause for dealing immediately with severe disruption.



But the problem usually is that schools follow the sanctions and forget "Positive recognition or support."

Universal Entitlement

Lilac Sky Schools are quite clear and I am personally committed to the principal that all students have the right to be in school. This translates in the schools we work in to "zero exclusions."

Case Study - Salisbury School North London

At Salisbury 100 students were routinely excluded each term. We excluded none! I strongly believe that exclusion is not a sanction for many children it is a holiday and a chance to become more lawless, for us this translates into:

- An exclusion room, to exit persistent offenders to.
- An exit strategy between teachers.
- Non-teaching behaviour support staff to deal with students and parents, not distracting learning in the classroom.
- Pro-actively a Learning Zone for repeat offenders, also for referrals and for students with real special needs or emotional needs.

Taught in 3 separate groups for between 5 days and 2 terms (dependent on need); freeing up the rest of the school to get on, but meeting these young peoples needs and preventing the need for exclusion. All of this overseen by a weekly meeting of the Student & Pastoral Support Team. This team has pastoral staff, senior staff, educational welfare officers, social workers, police officers etc.

Lilac Sky Thinking - in summary

- School Transformation is not easy.
- Its better when you have a tried and tested design.
- Its better intense and short (2-3years).
- Its better if you can "flood the school" with a team of people (Lilac Skys preferably).
- Focus on Learning and Assessment.
- At the same time get the organisation right.
- Tell everyone about it!
- Share your values.
- Pastoral Support for Students & Families.
- Believe in Universal Entitlement.

Believe in it enough, be relentless enough and your school will improve.
The Lilac Sky is the Limit!!!

Good Luck.

Trevor Averre-Beeson - Director of Education - Lilac Sky School

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Trevor Averre-Beeson

Director of Education - Lilac Sky Schools

In 1996 Trevor Averre Beeson became the youngest secondary Head Teacher in the UK at the age of 35, taking charge of Mayfield School in Redbridge, London.

He moved to Islington Green School in 2002. Islington Green had a troubled past – having been rejected by the Blairs for their son Euan and having its students feature in Pink Floyds 'The Wall' singing "We don't need no education" - to great controversy at the time.

In 2001 the school failed its inspection and was deemed by OFSTED to be in need of Special Measures. Nine months after Averre-Beeson joined the school it passed its inspection and the Registered Inspector described Averre-Beeson as "Visionary and Transformational" – communicating his effective vision to parents, teachers and students alike.

In 2004 Blair's former speech writer Peter Hyman joined the school and wrote his book '1 out of 10' comparing Averre-Beeson's leadership style favourably with the then prime minister. Hyman and Averre-Beeson worked together to start the process of Islington Green becoming an Academy in 2008.

In 2007 Averre-Beeson and his team won the contract to lead and manage Salisbury School in North London, to affect his brand of transformation on the second poorest school in London. Soon they had reduced 200 exclusions to zero, doubled the key exam indicator and set the ground work to successfully pass its OFSTED inspection 5 terms after joining the school. Meanwhile the school had been refurbished in his trademark lilac and changed its name to Turin Grove.

In January 2009 Averre-Beeson founded Lilac Sky Schools with two educational partners and became its Director of Education – broadening his chance to influence schools throughout the UK. In 2007 Averre-Beeson was named as one of the top 100 up and coming most influential people in London in the Evening Standard's Poll and became a Fellow at the Royal Society of Arts.