



Candidate information pack:

Headteacher of School 21

A Flavour of School 21

On a good day School 21 is an extraordinary place.

Walking around this 4 to 18 school that opened in East London in 2012, you will feel a spirit of creativity and the buzz of exciting learning. With oracy woven into our DNA, there is talk going on – talk in interactive assemblies, exploratory talk in the classrooms to deepen understanding, coaching conversations in which young people share dilemmas or wrestle with ethical issues, Harkness discussions or Socratic seminars teasing out scientific concepts or the causes of great historical events. You might see young children honing their story-telling skills, learning musical instruments, developing maths mastery or building a go-kart using a blend of physics, technology, maths and design skills inspired by our new Makerspace. In the Sixth form great A level teaching sits alongside students setting up a social enterprise to deal with homelessness in the local community.

It is that spirit of community that has kept us strong during Covid – staff, driven by strong values, have repeatedly gone above and beyond: from opening up a food bank in the school to providing a nuanced, lockdown experience of projects, creativity and academic learning for students. At all times – on site and online – valuing the diversity and the different voices of our community and supporting those most vulnerable and in need.

Behind all these activities is a thoughtfulness from staff – no fixed way of doing things, no micro-managing from the top, but a set of values shaped by the school community and a menu of teaching and learning strategies that provide a powerful guide. It is a place where teachers are empowered to get back in touch with what brought them into the profession – a spirit of enquiry, a sense of collaboration, a joy of working with young people, a belief in developing the whole child – knowledge, skills, qualities and values. It is a place where teachers enjoy sharing what they are reading, exploring big ideas, wrestling with the craft of the classroom.

In the last few weeks of each term something magical happens. The energy increases and students prepare themselves, often with painstaking focus, occasionally with a jolt, for: the Festival of Light (our 4 to 18 musical extravaganza); our Ignite speeches (similar to TED talks from children of all ages); our exhibition of beautiful work (showcasing the projects and products created by every class in the school that term); or our digital portfolio presentations (in which students narrate their story of learning in front of their coaches and external partners)

We call our approach, **an education of head, heart and hand**. It's aim: for young people to find their voice and change the world. And when this trio is in balance there is a kind of chemical reaction:

deep thinking + emotional intelligence + creativity = powerful learning

Not everyday is like this, of course. The staff body, to a person, is reflective and humble. There is a restless desire to improve, to get better at everything we do. In some areas we are just at the foothills of our understanding and the depth of practice we desire, in others we have growing expertise and the need to deepen the impact.

We know, for example, that we need to be more joined up – the four small schools within School 21 (primary, middle, secondary and Sixth) are distinct and have developed their own culture but the through line between them, the common threads could be stronger – particularly for the teachers who teach across more than one school and for the students on their journey with us.

We know too that the expectations on teachers to teach ‘head, heart and hand’ – are often daunting and hard to do well. The leadership challenge has always been to bring together experienced and new teachers, a range of creative ideas and programmes, and the strong opinions of passionate staff into a powerful sense of direction.

We know there are new avenues to explore – for example, students taking more control of their learning, having more choices, and opportunities to lead.

We resist compliance cultures with a passion because we know how they can suppress the imagination and curiosity of children. The task for us is how we continue to get the right balance between a precious freedom to express oneself and knowing when a consistent approach is best for everyone even if it means not getting your own way.



School 21 is, and always will be, a dance between innovation and rigour. Between fresh waves of new thinking and embedding and strengthening existing practice. That dance means not choosing between either strong academic results as a passport to future opportunities or developing the whole child. Nor choosing between old clichés of progressive and traditional: we are unashamedly traditional in our belief in the foundations of literacy and numeracy and our expectations for professionalism, kindness and generous conduct. Yet, progressive in helping every child to find their voice, to be confident in their identity, and to start to find a sense of purpose in their life.

So, the role of the new headteacher in this exciting environment is to be the conductor, the strategist, and the coach.

The conductor Nurturing, catalysing and bringing coherence to the school’s creativity and innovation and constantly looking outward to our rich partnerships to enhance everything that we do.

The strategist Open to new ideas, thinking ahead, courageous in taking the next steps towards a more expansive education and able to shape a vision for the school going forward and also a fresh role for School 21 within Big Education and the new schools we are opening soon in the area.

The coach Skilled at developing people, building strong teams; leadership that empowers.

This is a great opportunity to write the next chapter in School 21’s history. And we are looking for someone ready to pick up the pen.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Hyman'.

Peter Hyman
Co-Director, Big Education

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liz Robinson'.

Liz Robinson
Co-Director, Big Education

The Big Education Family

Big Education is a multi academy trust as well as a social enterprise. Our mission is for as many children as possible to be offered a Big Education - one in which children can flourish through the development of head, heart and hand. Our aim is to do this in three ways. To inspire through our thought leadership. To design schools, programmes and tools to support a big education. To grow and support communities of schools and practitioners who are striving towards a big education.

At Big Education we believe...

- In making a difference to the entire system not just our own schools
- In prizing distinctiveness and centres of excellence over uniformity
- In challenging not accepting the way education is done – in becoming the first place to go for rigorous innovation and new thinking
- Good exam results and a good Ofsted grade are a minimum necessity not goals of education
- The divide between progressives and traditionalists gets in the way of true innovation that has an impact: dogma of any kind is unhelpful
- Education is an intellectual as well as practical undertaking and needs a rich blend of both



The Big Education Family



School 360 is a new primary school down the road from School 21 that opens its doors to its first pupils this September. We have just appointed Co-headteachers to run the new school and they have set to work exploring fresh ways in which a curriculum of head, heart and hand can be developed.



Surrey Square, one of our MAT schools, has led the way in its work on values and well-being. It has developed a personal excellence curriculum and toolkit that provide every child with the skills and attributes to develop into successful learners and rounded human beings.



Voice 21 started out with teachers developing oracy practice at School 21. We then worked with Cambridge University to devise the four strands of oracy (cognitive, linguistic, social/emotional and physical). Five years ago we created the charity, Voice 21, which has grown and flourished, working with 1100 schools and 7000 teachers in all parts of the country. We believe that oracy should have the same status as reading and writing. We want every child to find their voice and be able to use it powerfully and skillfully in a range of settings.



Rethinking Assessment. Big Education is part of a growing coalition of state and independent schools, academics, businesses, parents, students and teachers who all want to see a better exam and assessment system that gives proper recognition to the range of strengths of every young person.



The Big Leadership Adventure is our flagship programme to nurture leaders who want to push the boundaries of what is possible in education. Based on our head, heart and hand leadership model, participants are taught a range of powerful tools and are involved in immersive experiences and workshops with a cohort of bold leaders.



Learning from Lockdown is a new website we have created to help make sense of the Covid experience in schools. A series of fascinating blogs from leaders, teachers and practitioners are aimed at building a better education system when we return from lockdown. We are turning some of the emerging themes from these blogs into playbooks and toolkits for schools to use.

Our community

School 21 is driven by values. We have spent a lot of time refining our values, delving into their meaning and making them the anchors for the actions of staff and students on their 4 to 18 journey.

Our values are:

- Excellence (above and beyond)
- Openness (reflect and grow)
- Responsibility (step up)
- Humanity (choose kind)
- Community (we build strong circles)



Community has become a value of increasing importance particularly during this extraordinary year of Covid. From the start of the school we have had dedicated staff who work on developing partnership in the community. Each of our small schools have developed positive and layered relationships with the parents and families..

- ❖ **Response to Covid.** Our response to Covid has deepened our support and connection with our families and community. We have provided financial support, a food bank, a range of vital supplies as well as support with home learning and digital equipment. We have developed both a layered on-line provision as well as personalised on-site provision. We have spent a lot of time developing our well-being support for both staff and pupils. The staff's belief in social justice and going above and beyond to support our families has been a striking feature of the school.
- ❖ **Anti- racist organisation.** We are proud of the work we are doing to become an anti-racist organisation. We have devoted time as a whole staff and in working groups to work through the often challenging issues involved in ensuring that we are making change in both a pro-active way and for the long term rather providing just quick or surface solutions.
- ❖ **Partnership with business and community organisations.** We are working with several hundred organisations to enrich the student experience. We have reinvented work experience with students working in the community once a week from year 10 on rich problem solving problems. We have forged great partnerships with some of the big creative organisations on the Olympic Park such as the London College of Fashion.

It is important to the School 21 staff that the new headteacher has a genuine belief in partnership and community building.

A Big Education Zone in East London

School 21 will be part of a group of four Big Education schools, all within a mile of each other.

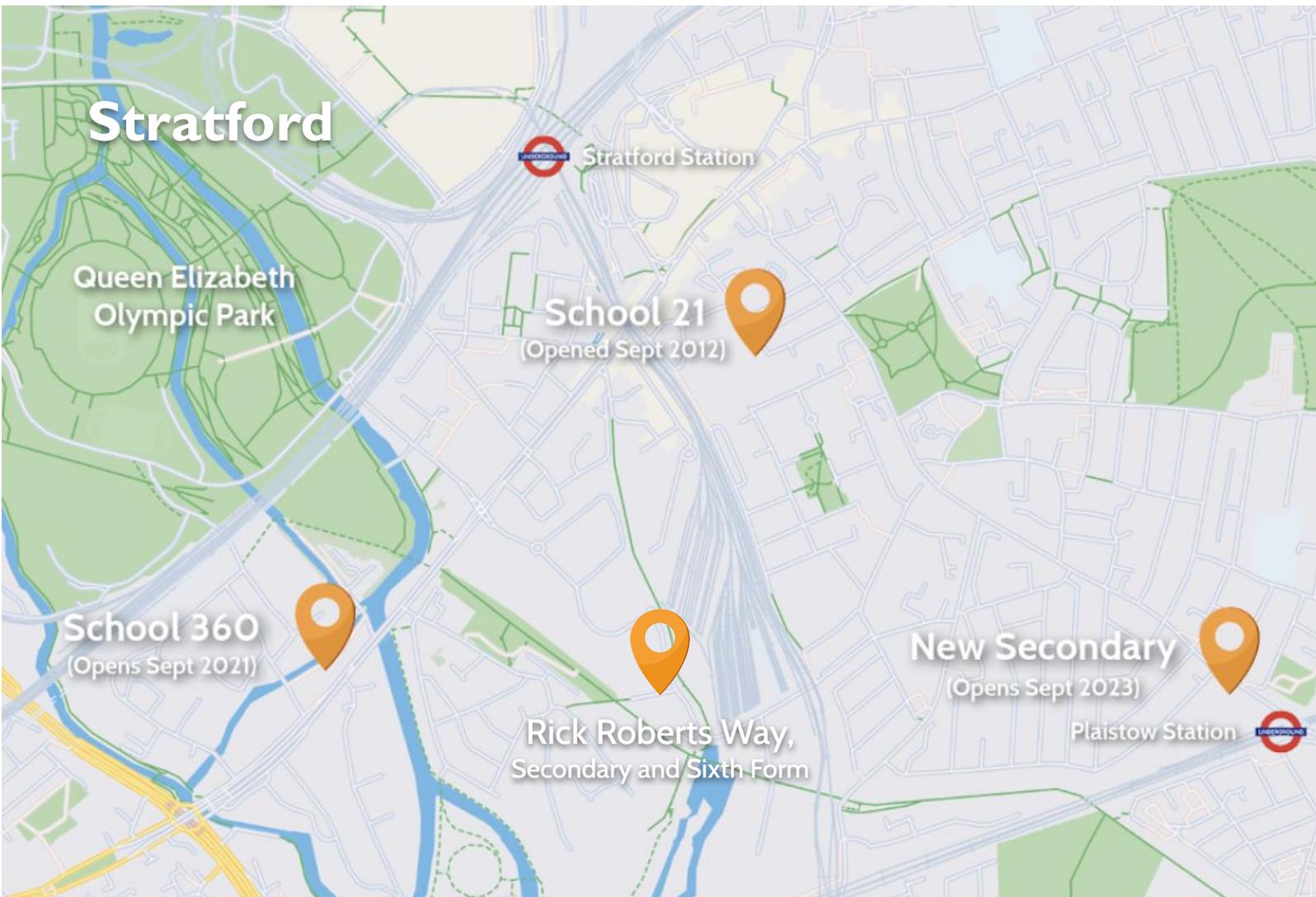
We are opening a new primary school - School 360 in September this year.

Then there will be two new secondary and sixth forms opening in September 2023.

In addition we have several hundred partnerships with organisations in the area - many of whom are already taking students for real world learning projects.

That means there is the exciting prospect of 300 staff and 3000 students plus our partnerships being able to collaborate in interesting ways.

We are developing plans to bring this all together in a big education zone offering incredible opportunities for our children and families in the community.



A curriculum of head, heart and hand

At the heart of School 21 is a vision for a more expansive education. Key to this is a 4 to 18 curriculum that balances head (academics) heart (emotional intelligence) and hand (creativity and problem solving).

Our school is broken down into four small schools each of them developing the head, heart and hand curriculum in their context.

Primary (Reception to year 4)

Middle (Years 5 to 8)

Secondary (Years 9 to 11)

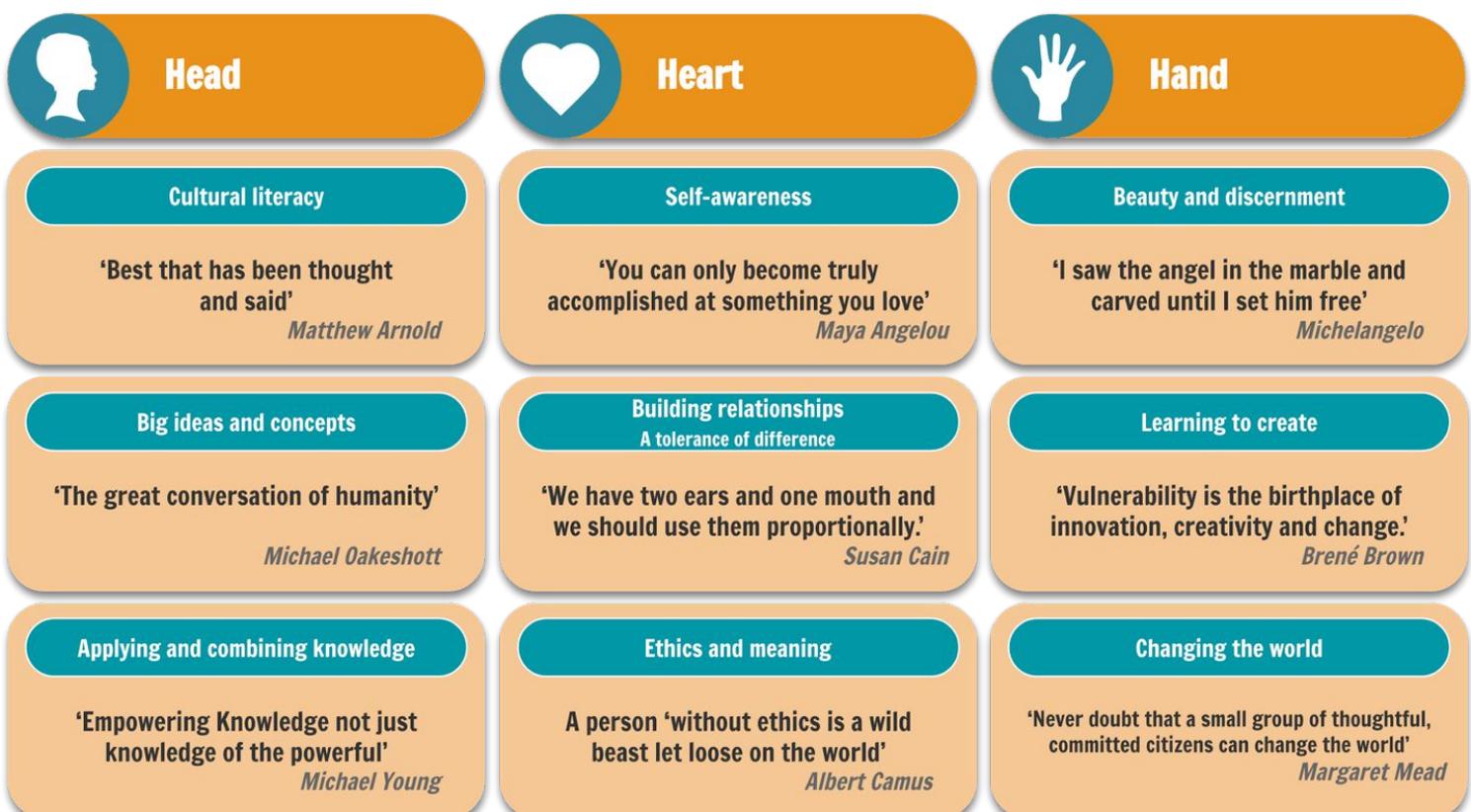
Six 21 (Sixth form - years 12 and 13)

For the head we are trying to foster deep and critical thinking. 4 to 18 well sequenced knowledge pathways that build out from big ideas and concepts, rich interdisciplinary learning and knowledge that is applied creatively to the world around us.

For the heart, we want every child to find their voice and develop confidence in who they are. We also want everyone to be able to work with others, make friends, and enjoy the different backgrounds and perspectives of our community. We also want young people to wrestle with big moral and ethical questions so they can navigate the complex world they are going into.

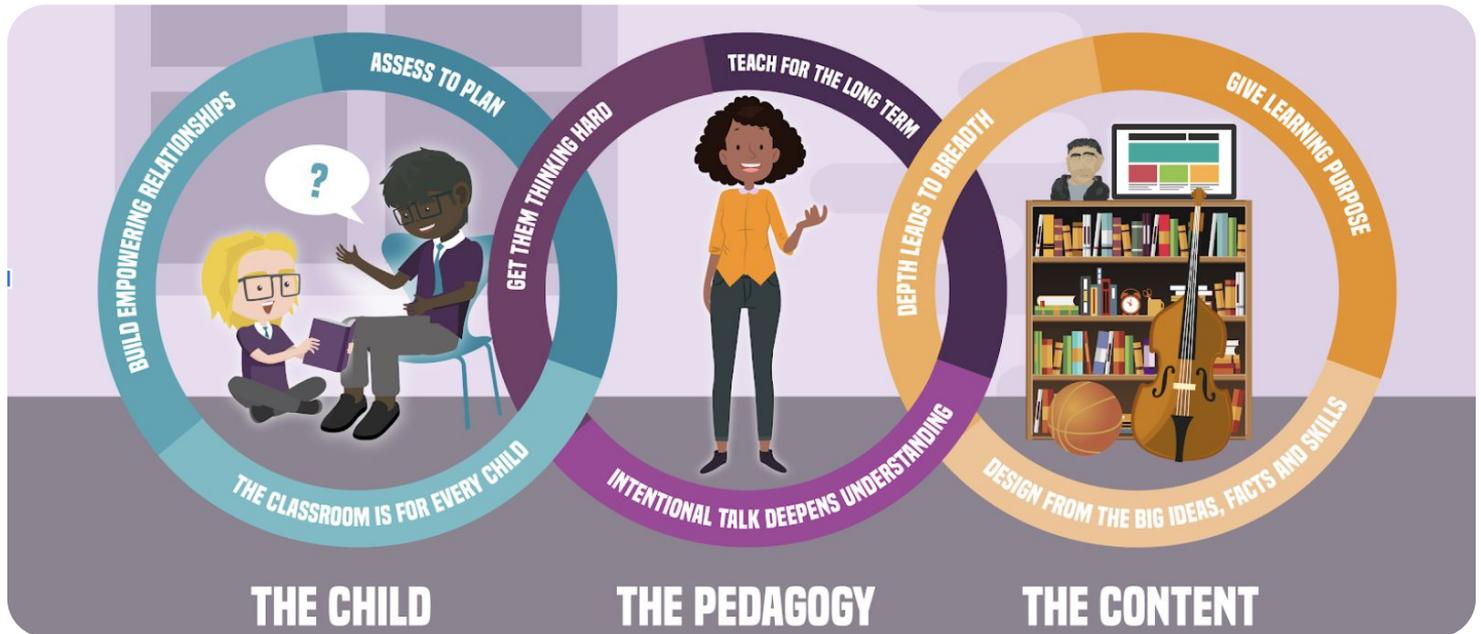
For the hand, we want the creative and performing arts to be centre stage. We have a Makerspace in the centre of our school so that students can solve problem, design products, create beautiful work, learn at the feet of experts.

There are two golden threads that weave head, heart and hand together. The first is oracy. The dialogic classroom and the dialogic staffroom is at the heart of the school. The second, is metacognition. We are a school where we are both intentional and deeply reflective about the processes of our learning so that we can become powerful learners and are constantly improving everything that we do.



Teaching and Learning at School 21

To bring alive a head, heart and hand curriculum requires a repertoire of teaching and learning strategies to suit the type of learning. School 21 carves out significant time for teachers to work on the craft of their teaching - understanding the child, the pedagogy and the content. Each of our four small schools has brought this alive for their context ensuring students achieve high academic standards as well as becoming powerful learners.



English Language is at the heart of everything we do, beginning in primary, where we teach phonics, reading, storytelling and writing with real passion. It's our mission to ensure every student is an avid reader, fluent writer and confident public speaker.

Oracy has been important to the school since we opened in 2012. We have developed a lot of rich thinking and strategies and oracy now is part of every aspect of the school from the way we do assemblies in the round, to the Ignite talks (like mini TED talks) that every child performs, to the classroom techniques that include storytelling, Harkness tables, socratic seminars, Philosophy for children and a range of other pedagogies. We have an oracy leader in each of our four small schools.

Problem solving and critical thinking is crucial to the way we think about learning and in maths where we begin with a maths mastery programme, in science and humanities as well as across the curriculum we create opportunities for children to think deeply and solve problems using a range of critical thinking strategies.

Wellbeing and growth through coaching. Throughout our four small schools we have a well-being curriculum that gives all our children the chance to get underneath complex social and emotional issues in a way that develops their personal qualities and dispositions. This involves dedicated coaching time, often in coaching groups of no more than 15, so that every child gets the chance to speak and be heard.

Music and the performing arts. From the Middle School Band Project where every child plays a musical instrument and performs together in a band, to high-quality musicals each year, to drama performances at all ages, to a community choir that has brought joy to staff pupils and parents, music and performance is woven into the fabric of the school.

Teaching and Learning at School 21



Beautiful Work and the Makerspace We believe our purpose as an organisation is to create beautiful work that makes a difference to the world. Our school is a place where children craft stunning work with quality end products, for real audiences as a result of deep teacher collaboration. In addition to teaching through discrete subject disciplines, our teachers collaborate to design and teach projects which tackle authentic issues and seek to create rich, beautiful outcomes of lasting value. Our new Makerspace at the heart of the school supports this work.

Real World Learning. We go to great lengths to connect the learning of our students to the world outside the school gates. This culminates in years 10 and 12 where our students spend an afternoon every week at their Real World Learning placement, working in small teams to solve a challenging and authentic problem faced by their host organisation.

Integration of new technology. Through sophisticated use of technology including 1:1 iPads, online resources, apps and blogs, and e-portfolios chronicling their work, students harness the creative power of technology to organise and add value to their learning experience. This has been taken to a new level during lockdown.

Exhibitions. At the end of every term we host an exhibition for parents, the community and our partners, where students can showcase the beautiful work they have produced and talk visitors through the story of their learning.



Support for your wellbeing and professional development

School 21 and Big Education believe in developing people, and supporting their growth and well-being. We have a lot of sophisticated practice to ensure this support is meaningful and truly developmental. This includes some of the following

Network of Support

Co-Directors You will be well supported by the co-directors of Big Education who have many years of headteacher experience between them. They will always be there to bounce ideas off, and to support with thorny strategic issues. They will also give you opportunities to get involved in the wider work of Big Education, including working with the new schools in the area.

Peers/Executive Team We have regular meetings as well as more informal support among the headteachers of our Big Education Schools. This executive team - comprising the headteachers of our schools and the co-directors of Big Education - is key to shaping the strategy of the Trust.

Personal Coach. We believe it is important that leaders have someone to talk to outside of the organisation and we have a number of skilled coaches who you will be able to work with.

Feedback. We believe in open and supportive feedback and there are regular opportunities to receive it from a range of stakeholders and staff members.

Coaching Tools. We have a set of coaching tools that all leaders and staff members are trained in that supports your own development and your ability to build high functioning teams.

Strong Trustee and Local Board

You will have the support and expertise of a strong Big Education Trustee body as well as a local board that is rooted in the community. We also use peer review processes which enable informed challenge and support from within the executive team.

Access to the most exciting education thinkers and networks

Big Education has a wide network both in education and beyond which can support you with strategic thinking, horizon scanning best practice across the world, as well designing approaches that are effective. We draw on the most interesting research, evidence and practice.

Job profile:

Innovation with Rigour

The new headteacher of School 21 needs to believe in educating the whole child. To do this they need to be able to integrate innovation with rigour, providing the conditions for creativity and innovation and the systems and processes to ensure rigour.

Innovation

We are looking for someone **to build** on nine years of strong innovation. This has included a body of practice in several distinct areas: (i) Oracy - including the creation of Voice 21 (ii) Real World Learning including inter-disciplinary projects and reinventing work experience (iii) and project based learning (iv) 4 to 18 curriculum maps in subject disciplines (v) Well-being and coaching practice (vi) Four small schools with their own leadership and cultures and part of one school with a common purpose (vii) Creating a developmental organisation based on coaching practices and sophisticated CPD (vii) Signature practices including - oracy assemblies, e-portfolios and portfolio presentation evenings, community exhibitions, Ignite Oracy speeches, Festival of Light music concerts

The new headteacher will work with staff to extend, deepen and enrich these practices so that they have even more impact across the school.

We are looking for someone who can **take innovation forward** in three main ways.

1. Work with staff to secure consistency in the current practices of the school and develop **innovation that takes the school to the next level**. This could include fresh thinking on student empowerment and agency, capturing the new learning on how technology can enhance teaching and learning, extending our work on becoming an anti-racist organisation, finding new ways in which we can work with parents, families and the community or developing radical assessment practices that recognise the head, heart and hand.
2. Develop a **culture of innovation** that uses research, evidence, prototyping and piloting practices more systematically so that everyone in the school feels their practice is contributing to a Big Education.
3. Playing a **key role in the creation of a Big Education Zone** - using the expertise at School 21 to support the three new schools (one primary, 2 secondaries) we are building within a mile of the school - as well as learning from the innovation in those schools and the wider community.

Rigour

We believe in excellence in everything we do. That innovation without rigour has little impact. We do not just innovate in terms of curriculum and content but in terms of processes and systems ensuring that they have maximum impact - meetings that are purposeful and use empowering protocols, feedback that helps every member of staff develop and clear systems that are not overburdensome but get the job done effectively. We are looking for someone to continue and deepen this work.

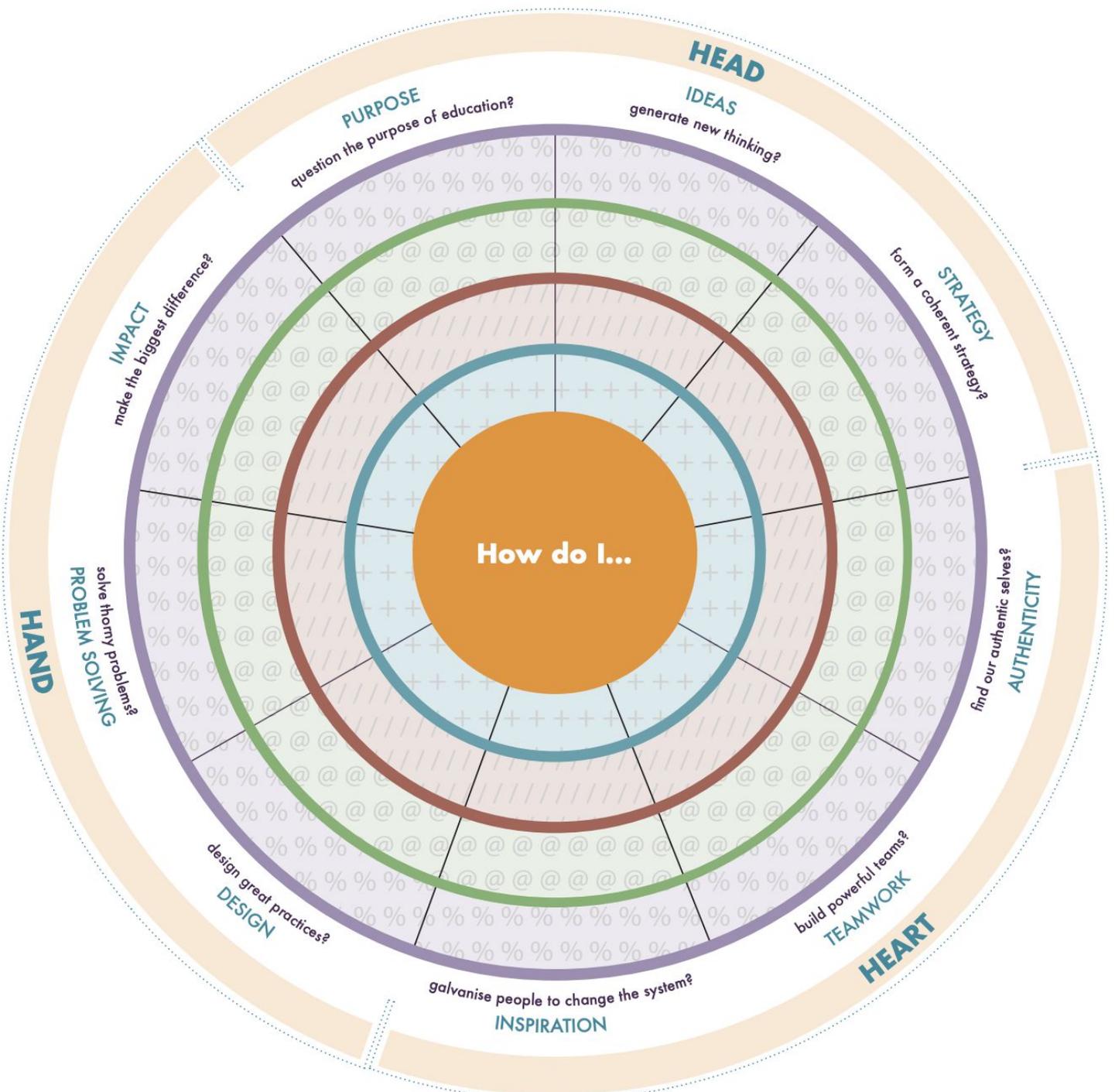
The areas ripe for this approach include:

- The impact of our CPD so that every member of staff feels they are getting the right balance of coaching on their craft as well as opportunities to develop new thinking in their practice
- Classroom craft - deepening the learning from lockdown, supporting expertise in key pedagogies
- Deepening the positive cultures in which staff and students thrive - ensuring the behaviour for learning strategies work consistently and effectively
- Assessment practices across head, heart and hand - deepening the way we evidence strengths across head, heart and hand
- The integration of the four small schools into a more coherent whole
- Academic progress in some key areas - ensuring all cohorts in all subjects are making the great progress we expect

Person specification: What we are looking for

This is a great opportunity for someone who embodies our philosophy of head, heart and hand. Just as we believe in a holistic education for children so we believe it is essential in our leaders. Our Leadership programme lays out what this looks like in more detail and this wheel helps conceptualise it.

We believe this wheel provides a framework for leading with both innovation and rigour. It emphasises the importance of thinking deeply about the purposes of education, being a great coach and designing great practices.



Person specification:

A conductor, a strategist and a coach

Head A strategist

- ❖ We are looking for someone who can think strategically - become, if you like, the **chief strategist** for the school - both in terms of Schools 21's development but also helping to shape the wider zone
- ❖ We are looking for someone who is **intellectually curious**, who is outward looking and enjoys horizon scanning for fresh thinking and, just as importantly, can nurture that culture for staff
- ❖ We are looking for someone who is open to new thinking, enjoys wrestling with the **big ideas of education**, questioning what education and school is for and having the courage to do what is right for the students, not just what we are forced to do because of the accountability regime

Heart A Coach

- ❖ Someone who is passionate about building a **community school** that is values driven and based on openness and trust. Someone that understands and is enriched by its context, that works closely with families and with community organisations, someone determined to build an anti-racist and inclusive organisation
- ❖ We want this person to eschew 'heroic leadership' for '**empowering leadership**' - galvanising people to achieve great things - building a genuinely developmental organisation, with a deep understanding of what high quality professional and personal development looks like
- ❖ Someone who is skilled at building **high functioning teams**, who is a collaborator by nature, creating great collaboration within the school - making the four small school works in harmony but also collaborating across the schools in our network and in the Big Education Zone

Hand A conductor

- ❖ We want someone who is a **skilled problem solver**
- ❖ Someone who uses a range of tools to **design great practices**
- ❖ Someone who knows how to **get things done with rigour** - who cares about implementation and not just the generation of ideas.
- ❖ Someone who can build **partnerships**, seek out new opportunities and ideas, and collaborate with key organisations in the community.

How to apply



Details of the Role

Title: Headteacher

Salary: Inner London (L24-L39 - Headteacher group 7)

Start date: September

Contract: Full time, permanent, subject to an enhanced DBS check

To apply for this role, please complete the online form for this role, which can be found in the careers area of the School 21 website.

In compliance with Safer Recruitment guidelines, CVs cannot be accepted.

If you wish to have an informal discussion about this role, please email Sarah Franklin at sarah.franklin@bigeducation.org

School 21 is an equal opportunities employer and particularly welcomes applications from BAME communities, especially those that reflect the make-up of the local community.

School 21 is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.