



Ask the Expert: CPD

Training and development of staff is absolutely key to school improvement – **Liz Worthen** answers two queries regarding in-school CPD...

Q

I have just been promoted to head of the science department at a large academy. It has been made clear to me (and I agree) that improving both the quality and quantity of in-house CPD within the dept. is a key focus of the role, but I am struggling to engage my colleagues

with the concept in any meaningful way. Suggestions for events are received with suspicion or outright hostility; anything that seems to involve an increase of workload is understandably resented; and there is a general sense that things aren't broken, so don't need fixing. How can I get everyone buying into the need for a thriving CPD programme?

A Start with your departmental improvement plan. What CPD is needed to meet those objectives and outcomes? What about the performance management targets of individual team members? The advent of performance-related-pay could work in your favour when it comes to encouraging people to engage with CPD.

Rather than planning a discrete CPD programme, tie it into daily business. What are you already doing which presents opportunities for development? For example, joint planning of lessons or schemes of work is a great way for colleagues with differing strengths to learn from each other – and there's a tangible outcome. Encourage colleagues to observe each other delivering the lessons they planned and decide on areas for further improvement. Peer observation is powerful and gives participants that vital sense of ownership.

What can you do in departmental meetings to avoid 'extra' activities? Try spending 15 minutes on an 'ideas exchange' where two or three colleagues share something they've done which has worked well. What was it? What was the impact? Why was it successful? Keep it brief. Focus on things which will benefit others, such as sharing ways of making marking and feedback more effective (and saving time).

According to the TDA, effective CPD is 'relevant, planned, personalised, sustained, flexible and collaborative'. Keep that in mind – along with a clear sense of why you're doing the CPD and how it's helping meet your team's objectives.



ABOUT THE EXPERT

LIZ WORTHEN
IS HEAD OF TRAINING AT OPTIMUS EDUCATION, WHICH PROVIDES ESSENTIAL INFORMATION, GUIDANCE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SCHOOL LEADERS AND MANAGERS THROUGH ONLINE SERVICES, CONFERENCES, TRAINING PACKS AND BOOKS. TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT ITS CPD PROVISION GO ONLINE AT OPTIMUS-EDUCATION.COM/TRAINING OR CONTACT LIZ AT LIZ.WORTHEN@OPTIMUS-EDUCATION.COM

Q I've been head teacher at a reasonably successful LA secondary school for nearly ten years. Our most recent inspection rated us as 'good' across the board, and one of the points raised during the visit was that in order to be 'outstanding', more focus on professional development would be required, and particularly, that we do not currently evaluate ongoing training effectively enough. Apart from encouraging feedback from individual teachers, which we already do, what kind of steps should we be taking to improve our approach?

A

Make sure that before you embark on any CPD activity, you work out what you're evaluating and how you're going to evaluate it. Draw up a list of key questions to ask at the outset, such as:

- + Why are we undertaking this professional development activity?
- + How does it link to school improvement plans?
- + What's the change we want to see?
- + How will we know when it's happened?
- + What will it look like?
- + Where will we see the evidence?

That last question is crucial. You don't want to create volumes of extra work, so build evidence-gathering into existing monitoring and review systems. If your goal is to improve planning for differentiation, include this as a focus for lesson observations or learning walks. If your focus is on better behaviour, you might look for a reduction in exclusions or incident reports.

It helps to be specific about the needs of your staff. For example, rather than a generic 'we need to get better at lesson planning', is it planning good objectives that's the problem, or devising challenging activities, or assessing progress? Conducting an audit or needs analysis will help establish this and you can plan appropriate CPD for different staff groups. Avoid one-off events: a sustained programme over a term or a year, involving a range of CPD strategies, is likely to yield much better results.