

Ask the Expert: CPD

The Teacher Development Trust's **David Weston** tackles two queries from TS readers with career development issues...

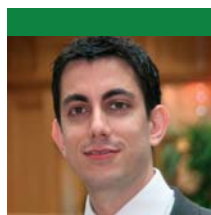
Q

I qualified two years ago, and am currently working as a music teacher in a school with a great atmosphere, good colleagues, and students who are, on the whole, a pleasure to be around. In pretty much all respects, then, I'm happy with where my career is at the moment. However, I am

starting to get concerned about the apparent lack of interest from the SLT in how I might be able to progress in the future. INSET days are uninspiring and, it seems, increasingly focused on raising standards in the 'EBacc' subjects. How can I get the powers that be to take my work – and career – as seriously as that being done by the English, maths and science teachers?

A It's always great to work in a school with supportive peers, but you'll need to feel there are opportunities for growth and challenge in order to feel really happy and it sounds like SLT aren't current providing these. My first suggestion is that you set up a meeting with a senior leader to ask to be considered for further development opportunities and bring along some ideas. If the school is currently focused on EBacc then you might suggest some sort of joint extra-curricular work that combines music with literacy and numeracy to help motivate hard-to-reach pupils. Another option is to look at pastoral roles – could you apply for a head or deputy head of year position? A third idea would be to consider some sort of Masters to demonstrate to senior leaders that you are serious about improving your practice and clearly ambitious.

Q I am an English teacher in my mid-fifties, and one of my passions is researching different theories and methods of self-improvement (such as meditation, NLP, visualisation etc). I see this as part of my personal CPD and occasionally bring things that I have learnt into the classroom in order to help my pupils develop as individuals as well as enhance their learning. Recently, however, a new head of department has been appointed, who has made it clear that she disapproves



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of anything even vaguely 'alternative', and has now asked me to drop certain practices, like the three-minute meditations I hold at the start of lessons, and the breathing exercises I often use. Should I resist, or comply?

A

All teachers are magpies and everyone loves to bring interesting and inspiring ideas in to the classroom to try out. However, while your head of department is wrong to rule out trying anything new she's absolutely right to demand that there should be a strong evidence

base to any ideas you use as it is true that lots of ideas that are enthusiastically tried out have little effect or can be actively harmful. I'd suggest you do further research, especially focusing on the work of John Hattie (his Visible Learning book is fantastic) and also the Education Endowment Foundation's Teaching and Learning Toolkit. Use these resources to pick the idea of yours that has the strongest research base and then offer to conduct a rigorous evaluation using the ideas in the Education Endowment Foundation's DIY Evaluation Guide (you can Google for all of these resources quite easily). With some strong documentary evidence that approaches raised attainment and a scientific approach behind your evaluation then I would hope that your head of department will be more keen to investigate alongside you.

GET IN TOUCH

> Do you have a CPD-related question you'd like us to put to David on your behalf? Email editor@teachsecondary.com, and we'll see if he can address it in a future issue.