

## **Professional Development at The Spires College**

### **CONTEXT**

At The Spires College we place huge value on the professional development of our staff and, as such, aim to ensure that our culture, practices and systems reflect this.

The Performance and Development Review (PDR) Policy was adopted in 2015 and sought to engage staff in a process of development and reflection, establishing high expectations and securing accountability. Since 2015, rapid improvements have meant that this policy no longer reflects the needs of the College and, therefore, the Senior Leadership Team feel it is now time to alter the ways in which we foster professional development.

To inform our planning of this new approach to professional development, we sought the views of Heads of Department; these members of staff are uniquely placed to provide feedback from the perspective of both the reviewer and the reviewee. We asked for their views on the strengths and weaknesses of the current model. A brief summary of their views has been provided below:

<b>Which aspects of current PDR policy/approach should be kept?</b>	<b>What's missing from our current PDR policy/approach?</b>	<b>Which aspects of current PDR policy/approach should be removed?</b>	<b>What things do you believe should <u>not</u> be introduced in any new approach to performance management?</b>
The opportunity to self-evaluate.	Opportunities to regularly discuss progress.	Paperwork that is cumbersome and time consuming to complete.	Formal lesson observations or folders of 'evidence'.
Conversations – time to discuss and collaborate on our practice.	A reviewee-led system where teachers proactively seek support.	Objectives. These narrow the focus of development.	
The personalised CPD plan.	Coaching. A student-focused approach.	Links to pay progression.	

This feedback has been integral to the planning process and has informed our thinking.

### **Our Vision for Professional Development**

Underpinning our approach to professional development are our core beliefs about its role within the College.

Fundamentally, and crucially, we aim to place professional development at the centre of all that we do. We firmly believe that access to collaborative and non-judgemental professional development is not only an entitlement of every member of staff, but is also key to improving teaching and learning, wellbeing and student outcomes. The Department for Education echo this belief: 'Effective professional development should be seen as a key driver not only of staff development, but also of recruitment, retention, wellbeing, and school improvement' (DfE, 2016).

For us, professional development should provide opportunities for honest reflection in a safe environment, and encourage staff to try new things and consciously engage in developing their own practice as well as that of others. We aim to maintain a culture of trust, where each individual is supported and provided with the resources to develop professionally; we understand that this can be crucial to career satisfaction and longevity. 'Put simply, teachers who work in supportive contexts stay in the classroom longer, and improve at faster rates, than their peers in less-supportive environments' (Papay and Kraft, 2017).

Our core beliefs about what makes for effective professional development are summarised below:

- ▲ Professional development should be driven by the 'reviewee';
- ▲ A culture of trust and collaboration is crucial for accurate and honest reflection;
- ▲ Professional development and pay progression should be entirely separate;
- ▲ Staff need time, space and the support of colleagues to reflect and make plans;
- ▲ The process should be dynamic and cyclical, not tied to the academic calendar;
- ▲ Emphasis should be placed on the developmental conversations and the actions resulting from these, not on paperwork or 'box-ticking';
- ▲ **Professional development is about supporting colleagues to build knowledge, confidence and skills for the benefit of themselves and our students.**

### **Professional Development – Basic Principles**

Our new model for professional development places the focus squarely on self-evaluation, coaching and self-led improvement. The model is simple and entirely self-driven, enabling each member of staff to determine the amount of support they require and the nature of their own professional development. The majority of paperwork has been removed from the process and what remains acts as a record of development only.

The middle leaders who responded to our survey emphasised a desire for coaching and felt that this would motivate individuals to engage with professional development. Research suggests that coaching leads to improved learning in the classroom by raising self-awareness, encouraging self-reflection and providing opportunities to collaborate and take risks. Consequently, we have decided to place coaching at the centre of our professional development model.

Research has shown that individuals flourish when they have a sense of autonomy and feel they are able to determine future outcomes for themselves. The 'coach' has no agenda of his or her own, solely than that of being fully present for the 'coachee' and enabling them to 'get from where they are now to where they want to be.' Through coaching, individuals are encouraged to reflect and ask, 'why' and 'what' questions of themselves: Why am I doing this? Why have I responded in this way? What does this mean to me? What are the implications for myself and my students? In searching for answers and sharing solutions, the 'coachee' becomes aware of the way in which their values shape their practice and how their behaviours reflect the degree to which they hold their values to be true.

Within our model for professional development the 'coachee' will be referred to as the Practitioner.

A crucial aspect of professional development is the quality of the coaching conversation between Practitioner and Coach. It is important that these are purposeful and meaningful, and that they occur within a culture of support and trust. At The Spires College, we feel it is important that the experience should be truly developmental, rather than a means by which staff are audited. Schools are places of intense activity and the professional conversations that accompany the activity largely determine whether these activities simply form part of an organisation's routines or become opportunities to learn and improve. Conversations are innate to our development, with our neural networks patterned in ways that lead to automaticity in what we attend to and how we respond (Gifford, 2016).

In order for our conversations to be meaningful, it is important to identify the qualities of those which are focused on using evidence that lead to deeper inquiry and better solutions to challenging problems, or to the development of important knowledge and skills. In addition,

these processes lead to those involved having greater confidence and willingness to engage in similar conversations for these purposes in the future. At their heart, these conversations involve transforming evidence into useable information.

Things to consider regarding developmental conversations:

- ▲ Contexts of support and high expectations;
- ▲ Relationships of trust, support and mutual respect;
- ▲ Resources: quality of evidence and expertise to transform evidence into information;
- ▲ Processes of inquiry;
- ▲ Development of knowledge and skills through the conversation;
- ▲ A problem-solving culture focused on making a difference.

In order for professional development conversations to be productive and progressive, they should be planned and sequenced. There are a number of approaches that can be taken when planning professional development conversations. The strengths-based approach is founded on the theory and practice of 'appreciative inquiry' (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987) and has roots in positive psychology (Seligman et al, 2005). Its premise is that people have an unhelpful tendency to be deficit oriented when looking for improvements, naturally honing in on perceived failures and weaknesses. Instead of trying to 'fix' our weaknesses, it is argued that we are more likely to improve if we attempt to build on our strengths, developing a better understanding of what we naturally do well and looking for opportunities to develop and replicate these successes. These values underpin the structure of the coaching conversations within our model for professional development.

## **KEY RESEARCH**

### **Self-Evaluation**

Prior to coaching, the Practitioner must engage in thoughtful, considered and rigorous self-evaluation of their own practice against the Principles of Teaching and, where appropriate, the Principles of Leadership. This informs a picture of 'where we are now'. Accurate and interrogative self-evaluation are vital skills for those driving their own professional development: "[Good teaching is] often characterised by a strong desire to achieve the best possible outcomes for the pupils and a willingness, on the part of the teacher, to improve the quality of teaching" (Matchett, 2005).

This self-evaluation should be used to inform the baseline from which the Practitioner strives for improvement: "It is of key importance that the outcomes of the evaluation are used to improve teaching strategies, to improve teaching and learning and, by so doing, to bring about improvement in the experiences of the pupils and the standards which they attain" (Matchett, 2005).

When coached on insights generated from self-evaluation, the Practitioner's perceptions of self can be challenged and further developed. Coaching encourages the Practitioner to reflect on their practice from a different perspective and consider the impact of features that are often implicit or habitual. Developing a firm grounding and appreciation of current strengths and areas for improvement is crucial to professional development.

## **Setting Goals**

Identifying appropriate next steps to achieve a goal outlines the Practitioner's intention to make progress in an area of their practice.

Goals can be defined as observational or measurable outcomes to be achieved within a specific time limit (Locke and Latham, 2002). Put simply, goal setting is the process of consciously identifying what you would like to accomplish and within what timeframe. In the context of professional development, each cycle's goal should be aligned to a Principle of Teaching or Leadership that the Practitioner wishes to develop and clearly describe the intended outcomes.

Goal-setting theory was jointly developed by Locke and Latham. According to this theory, goal-setting affects performance through four causal mechanisms:

- ▲ Goals have a directive function in guiding our attention and efforts towards goal-oriented behaviours and away from goal-irrelevant ones.
- ▲ Goals can energise, with ambitious goals leading to greater effort than goals which are easy to achieve.
- ▲ Goals increase persistence and, when individuals are able to determine the timeframe in which they achieve these goals, can lead to more prolonged effort.
- ▲ Goals lead to the acquisition and application of related knowledge and skills.

Determining the nature of goals is important and can affect the extent to which they are achieved as well as the significance and longevity of intended outcomes. The acronym SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) is often used. Some features of this model, particularly relevancy and timeliness, are key characteristics of most goal-setting models and help to make goal outcomes clear and provide perimeters within and against which they can evaluate themselves. However, other features, including specificity and measurability, are less generic than one might think, especially when applied to a profession as dynamic and varied as education.

In research, the complexity of a task or role is operationalised in different ways. Wood (1986) proposes that tasks can be described as complex for three reasons:

- ▲ The number of components involved – the number of actions that need to be completed or information cues that need to be considered;
- ▲ The degree of coordination required, which is a factor of how closely related the different components of the task are;
- ▲ How dynamic the task is – in other words, how task requirements change over time.

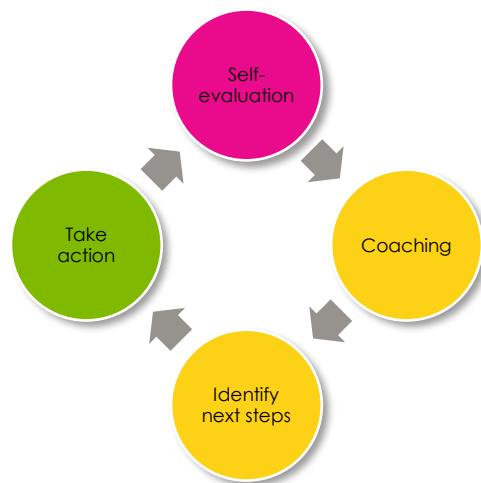
As we take on complex tasks (such as teaching), the demands on our behaviour and information-processing become more numerous and varied. We need greater ability and skill acquisition and typically work to more distant outcomes. Studies suggest that in complex job roles such as those within education, vaguer, more general 'do-your-best' outcome goals consistently lead to higher performance (Kanfer and Ackerman (1989), Mone and Shalley (1995) and Winters and Latham (1996)). Furthermore, it is important to distinguish outcome goals from behavioural and learning goals. In complex jobs, goals focused solely on outcomes tend to be less effective than those that consider how people behave and what they learn as they complete the work. Through professional development, we aim to identify goals that develop positive outcomes, behaviours and learning.

In addition, participative goal setting is often considered to be more effective at driving performance improvements than assigned goals (Patterson et al, 2010). The main explanation for this is that individuals are more likely to be motivated and committed to goals when they have contributed to their creation. Research also suggests that participative goal

setting also has benefits for wellbeing and motivation of job autonomy. It may be that staff feel empowered when they are able to determine their own goals but this may also be linked to perceived levels of control when they are responsible for deciding how they achieve these goals.

Research into coaching, self-evaluation and effective goal setting have been considered, alongside the views of our middle leaders, in the design of our model for professional development.

### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT – THE MODEL**



Our model for professional development is intentionally designed to be simple. The emphasis here is on the power of the coaching conversations and the progress Practitioners make as a result of these. Therefore, the paperwork has been significantly reduced, providing more time for Practitioners and Coaches to collaborate and discuss practice. Collaboration is now generally considered integral to effective professional development (Cordingley and Higgins et al, 2015) and we hope that these coaching conversations will enable staff to work together, contributing to improvements in practice, outcomes and knowledge or skills.

Our approach to professional development will no longer be constrained by the academic year. Each individual will determine their own goals and the timeframes in which they hope to achieve these. Consequently, the professional development cycle will be dynamic; Practitioners will drive the process and can request a coaching session with their Coach when they feel it would be helpful or when they feel they have made progress in their chosen area of practice. This may mean that some complete multiple cycles in a term whilst others continue to work on one area of their practice for more extended periods of time. Thus, the process relies upon Practitioners adopting a proactive approach to direct and drive their own professional development. Furthermore, Practitioners are able to determine how much support they feel would be useful, collaborate with colleagues and take risks in the knowledge that professional development is not linked to pay progression.

Below is a summary of the different stages of our professional development model. More information can be found in the Professional Development Policy.

## Prior to the Coaching Session

- ▲ The Practitioner engages in self-evaluation against the Principles of Teaching and, where appropriate, the Principles of Leadership.

The Spires College – Principles of Teaching		
<b>Principle of Better Practice</b>	<b>1. High behavioural expectations and routines</b>	<b>So that...</b>
a) Teachers create a warm, friendly, respectful and positive classroom culture b) Teachers demonstrate effective classroom management c) Teachers consistently apply principles and reward according to the behaviour policy d) Teachers ensure that students are able to participate and engage in their learning e) Teachers reinforce effort and provide recognition f) Teachers model and review the college attributes, discussing these with students	a) Students feel respected, safe and happy to participate in lessons b) Minimal lesson time is wasted dealing with disruption or disorderly transitions c) Students can think harder about their learning, free from distraction. Achievements are rewarded d) Students are more engaged in their learning and are more likely to learn e) Students understand the connections between effort and achievement f) Students play an active role in creating a positive, respectful culture and feel safe	
<b>2. Quality of instruction</b>	<b>3. Subject mastery</b>	
a) Teachers give highly effective explanations b) Teachers provide clear explanations of outcomes that are aspirational for all c) Teachers present new knowledge in small steps d) Teachers model excellence and how to achieve it e) Teachers encourage students to think deeply and deep thinking f) Teachers provide opportunities for students to explore beyond course specifications	a) Students quickly grasp key ideas b) Students are clear about what they are learning and what success looks like c) Each step can be mastered before students move on d) Students know what excellence looks like and well as how to achieve it e) All students are challenged to think hard and answer challenging questions f) Students are creative learners who demonstrate critical aspects of the curriculum	
<b>4. Making it stick</b>	<b>5. Adaptive teaching</b>	
a) Teachers promote and model reading widely and well b) Teachers demonstrate expertise in their subject, including exam specifications c) Teachers anticipate plan for and address misconceptions d) Teachers sequence and interleave content appropriately e) Teachers ask questions which make links to prior learning f) Teachers ask questions which are specific and encourage higher order thinking g) Teachers set meaningful homework that develops students' knowledge and skills	a) Students read widely and often, with fluency and comprehension b) Students can access a broad curriculum in each subject and are successful in examinations c) Skills and knowledge become automatic for students d) Students are encouraged to draw on prior knowledge e) Students know how to study effectively and do so, demonstrating independence	
<b>6. Responsive teaching</b>		
a) Teachers provide scaffolds for demanding tasks b) Teachers pitch high even for lower ability students c) Teachers give students opportunities to independently practise d) Teachers ask questions which make links with prior learning e) Teachers ask questions that are appropriately pitched and directed	a) Students are able to succeed in challenging tasks b) Students are challenged to reach aspirational goals c) All students make exceptional progress d) All students with SEND/EA/other learning needs make exceptional progress e) Students are challenged to answer appropriately demanding questions	

## During the Coaching Session

- ▲ The Practitioner shares their areas of strength with their Coach and together they explore these.

Performance and Development Review			
Academic Year:	2021-22	Date of Meeting:	22 March 2021
Practitioner:	Joe Bloggs	Professional Development Guide:	Mickey Mouse
Use the space below to record the strengths discussed during this meeting:			
Principle of Teaching/Leadership:	So that...		
1a I build positive relationships with my students	Students respond positively, engage in their learning and behaviour is good		
2a I provide clear explanations and instructions in all lessons	Students understand new concepts and what is expected of them		
4b I use a 'Me, We, I' approach when introducing new skills/content	Students' confidence and independence builds as they learn		

- ▲ Through discussion, the Coach encourages the Practitioner to examine the circumstances and behaviours that fostered this success (their 'code for success'). This allows the Practitioner to examine what they do that leads to success and how they do this.
- ▲ The Practitioner shares the areas of practice they feel could be developed with their Coach and together they explore these. The Practitioner is encouraged to explore how their 'code for success' could be applied here to replicate past successes.
- ▲ The Practitioner selects **one** area for development (from the Principles of Teaching or Leadership) that they feel is a priority and identify a personalised goal linked to this.

Use the space below to record the area for development discussed during this meeting:		
Principle of Teaching/Leadership:	So that...	
Teachers demonstrate effective classroom management	Minimal lesson time is wasted dealing with disruption or disorderly transitions	
In my classroom, this would mean:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ Students enter the room quickly, calmly and begin work immediately</li> <li>▲ Students understand and adhere to our expectations of behaviour and conduct</li> <li>▲ Fewer de-merits are awarded</li> <li>▲ The lesson flows: students transition between phases of the lesson seamlessly</li> <li>▲ Students feel happy and engaged by the work and are able to focus on their learning</li> </ul>	

- ▲ Together the Practitioner and Coach identify the next steps and learning opportunities that will lead to progress. This forms the basis of the development plan.

Development Plan		
I will...	So that...	By when?
▲ Observe Minnie Mouse teaching 8E4, focusing on routines	▲ I observe strategies for managing the beginning of lessons and transitions between lesson phases	23 April 2021
▲ Ask Minnie Mouse to observe the first 10 minutes of two of my lessons, focusing on how time is used effectively	▲ I can receive impartial feedback on the routines at the start of my lessons	7 May 2021
▲ Work with Minnie Mouse and Goofy to plan lessons, focusing on how to manage transitions between activities so that time is used effectively	▲ I can collaborate on strategies for minimising disruption and students' engagement and focus is maintained	14 May 2021
▲ Use the CPD library, reading chapters in XXX about XXX	▲ I reinforce my understanding of current research into behaviour management	23 April 2021
▲ Experiment with new strategies, reviewing their impact	▲ I develop a range of strategies to manage behaviour in transitory phases of my lessons and feel more confident	14 May 2021

<p><b>After the Coaching Session</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ The Practitioner undertakes the next steps identified, asking for additional support or coaching as and when necessary.</li> <li>▲ The Practitioner reflects on their progress, including the impact of the choices they made with regards to learning opportunities.</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 5px;"> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;"><b>Reflection</b></td><td style="padding: 2px;">Date:</td><td style="padding: 2px;">21 May 2021</td></tr> <tr> <td colspan="3" style="padding: 2px;">Having undertaken the steps outlined in my action plan, I feel that I have made real, tangible progress in my ability to manage my classroom, including those key transition points. The observation of Minnie Mouse was useful because... Following this [...]...</td></tr> <tr> <td colspan="3" style="padding: 2px;">In my classroom I have... and this has had a positive impact because...</td></tr> </table> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ When the Practitioner feels they have made progress in this area and achieved their goal, they convene another coaching session with their Coach to begin another cycle.</li> </ul>	<b>Reflection</b>	Date:	21 May 2021	Having undertaken the steps outlined in my action plan, I feel that I have made real, tangible progress in my ability to manage my classroom, including those key transition points. The observation of Minnie Mouse was useful because... Following this [...]...			In my classroom I have... and this has had a positive impact because...		
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In order to foster a culture in which staff feel safe to reflect with honesty, experiment and take risks, we are divorcing professional development from all aspects of consideration for pay progression. Pay progression will be managed through a review cycle.

Ultimately, our model of professional development allows teachers to evaluate their practice and engage in behaviours or actions that facilitate positive change. We hope staff will feel empowered and motivated by the control they have over their own progress and the freedom this provides for truly personalised professional development.

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