



CASE STUDY

Putting CPD at the heart of school success at **Healing School**

Healing School in Grimsby is redesigning its professional development programme, using Optimus resources to help all teachers continually improve



Healing School - A Science Academy

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Healing School in numbers

64%

In 2015, 64% of disadvantaged pupils at Healing achieved 5 or more A* to C including maths and English. The national average for all pupils was 57% and the local average was 52%

72%

Across all pupils at Healing 72% achieved 5 or more A*-C including maths and English, with 87% A*-C in English and 79% A*-C in Maths

900

900 pupils at the school in total

1/6

Healing School is 1 of only 6 secondary schools in Yorkshire and Humber to win a local Pupil Premium Award from the Department for Education



Almost every teacher in the world wants to improve. But the demands of the job, time pressure and mental fatigue means that reflection time often gets put at the bottom of the to-do list – and drops off it.



The staff at Healing School, a science academy on the edge of Grimsby, have put CPD at the heart of what they do – which has helped them retain outstanding for many years. So how do they do it?

School context

Healing School has been an academy for the last six years, and rated outstanding all of that time. It's an 11-16 fully comprehensive school with around 900 pupils on roll. In 2011 it became one of the first 100 teaching schools in the country, and in 2014 it converted into a multi-academy trust.

'We work hard as a team and expect our pupils to work hard too,' says the Assistant Principal, Richard Burrows. Amidst change it's this ethos that has guided them.

In many schools the problem with CPD is time – not enough of it. At Healing they have invested in staff to make cover for lessons unnecessary, protecting PPA time: this time is used for personal reflection and development as well as planning and marking.

Their CPD programme has been very successful so far, but they'll soon be making some major changes to sharpen their focus and put a priority on teachers learning from each other.



Making CPD central in school life

‘I need to know everything the staff do has an impact,’ says Richard. For CPD to work successfully, tracking, structuring and evaluating it has to be at the heart of school life.

When Healing School joined Optimus Education a year ago, they applied the same approach to testing and evaluating before beginning a whole-school initiative – now they’re looking to roll out Optimus’s CPD resources to all teaching staff.

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But what does the CPD programme look like currently?

All teachers belong to one of four professional learning groups.

1. An NQT group, based around ‘securing good’. This group is supported by lots of in-house training and constant guidance.
2. A ‘consistently good’ group for recently qualified teachers or new staff. The emphasis is on developmental lesson observations, peer observations and mentoring, as well as identifying potential areas of need so appropriate support can be put in place.
3. A group of ‘lead practitioners’ who have demonstrated their effectiveness in the classroom. These teachers have their lessons open so anyone who wants to observe can.
4. A group of ‘teacher learning champions’ who are responsible, along with SLT, for making whole-school teaching and learning as good as it can be. Their lessons are always open and they take on a leading role delivering CPD in the school.

Any teacher new to their job has an appropriate training package designed for them: the idea is to make the support as individualised as it needs to be. Four week support packages are in place to support staff improvement too, with lesson observations at the beginning and end of the programmes to see how practice has changed.

By having groups focusing on the key issues of classroom teaching, the CPD structure keeps the main business clearly in sight – prioritising continual improvement in teaching and learning.



What's missing? Embedding a culture of personalised CPD

While this CPD programme has worked well so far, the next step is to allow even more opportunities for teachers to learn from each other, and to embed a culture of personal ownership of learning and research. It's all very well sharing ideas or signposting resources, but if practice doesn't improve over time then the main point of CPD has been lost.

Healing School's solution to this was to roll out research enquiry using Optimus resources: teachers doing research with a mentor guiding, supporting and checking up on them.

In the NQT group, for instance, every teacher will be expected to undertake some form of research on Optimus Education's Knowledge Centre: they might look, for instance, into best practice on marking and formative assessment, mastery teaching or statutory safeguarding responsibilities.

'If practice doesn't improve over time then the main point of CPD has been lost.'

Recently qualified teachers will pick three units to cover from Optimus's teacher development programme, on top of the school's own training, ensuring they are clear about good practice in some of the core issues of classroom teaching. New entrants to the school will receive a tailored training plan, but again a level of research using the Knowledge Centre will be expected – it's about drumming in the idea that teachers are also learners, throughout their career.

Richard is clear, though, that just asking teachers to research a topic without support or structure is likely to fail. 'A structure needs to be in place to make research have an impact and help share what's been learned'. So both lead practitioners and teacher learning champions will be expected to act as authorities on Optimus resources and other sources of good practice – they will signpost teachers to the most relevant resources.

Teacher learning champions will be expected to keep a weekly log to track and reflect on what they're doing: another way of making regular review of the effectiveness of CPD an intrinsic part of school life. This large internal community of teaching and learning focused practitioners means that much of the professional development is created, led and evaluated from the middle leadership.



Translating theory into practice

How to make sure that all this learning has a meaningful impact? Healing School has come up with a few innovative ways to make professional learning impact on classroom practice.



1. WATCH, IMPRESS, SHARE. The teacher selects anything from the teachers' standards that they are really good at. This enables a teacher learning champion (TLC) to visit and become 'impressed'. The TLC can then share this idea with other teachers.



2. REFLECTION LESSONS. A TLC can visit a lesson of the teacher's choice, normally dropping in for a 20 minute segment of the lesson. The teacher then reflects on the lesson with the TLC and keeps the documentation as evidence.



3. PLAN TOGETHER, TEACH TOGETHER. Recently qualified teachers plan a lesson with either their peers or the TLC, and then teach this lesson with the TLC and possibly one other teacher watching. Only positive feedback is allowed.

A story of continual improvement

By combining guided research with ways to connect what happens in CPD to what happens in the classroom, Healing School is working to make its professional development programme as powerful as it can be.

Richard has now spent two years in his post leading on CPD, but it's the coming year that should see the biggest transformation to work even better – using Optimus resources and the school's developmental approach to help all staff along their learning journeys.

Want to find out how Optimus Education can help your school?

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