

# **Embedding change in teacher professional development**

Primary mixed methods data collection (Strand 3)

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Mixed methods	Quantitative: survey in-school CPD Leads (46 respondents)  Qualitative: interviews – head teachers; in-school CPD Leads; school governors; focus groups – classroom teachers, 3-5 per group
Case studies	11 case study schools visited  Selected from survey responses, existing contacts/networks  Mix of phase, type, geographical location
Research questions	Reflect overall study questions

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## School CPD leads' survey

- Most schools responding to the survey have a CPD plan
- Role of CPD Lead – is generally part of wider leadership responsibilities
- Professional development is ‘almost always’ prioritised
- Approximately two-thirds of schools maintain records of CPD – evaluation less so
- Effective professional development activity – characterised as taking place over two to three terms or longer
- Approximately two-thirds of delivery of the effective CPD is in person and school-based
- Focus on response to school improvement plans but with individualised options
- Staff are able to collaborate

## Contextualising findings: learning leadership

- Professional development is ‘leader-initiated and teacher-driven’ (Barton & Dexter 2020): teachers deciding what they need with the support of senior leaders
- Leaders brokering professional development and support
- Collegial learning and dissemination
- Creating a collaborative learning environment
- School as a learning community
- Belief that teacher learning is not an individual responsibility i.e. the leadership’s/peers’ responsibility too

## **Contextualising findings: engaged leadership**

- Shared leadership, vision, responsibility and decision-making in schools – a two-way street
- Taking a distributed/shared approach to change, e.g. leaders and teachers working together as peers
- Leaders modelling the moves towards change, e.g. engaging in the language, behaviours, professional development, mindset

## Contextualising findings: trust leadership

- Leadership have best interests of the school, teachers and students at heart
- Learning around what a collaborative culture looks like
- Encouraging vulnerability and being vulnerable
- Admitting to shortcomings and areas for improvement/learning
- Risks/experimentation are encouraged
- Learning from mistakes

School leaders invest in professional development to provide a necessary condition for professional development to take place, demonstrating symbolically and explicitly that the school leaders value professional learning. This can lead not only to changed practice, but also supports teacher engagement (knowing they are valued), development, and potentially retention. This ultimately provides for a better student learning experience.

# Learning leadership: actions

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Demonstrating positive attitudes towards professional development

If you come and work here you should be learning as well, and we are willing to support you in learning as well (C, Headteacher)

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Negotiating budgets

Hmm, it's a constant juggling act (S, CPD Lead)

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Communicating purpose

I think for teachers it was like, 'yes that's why we do what we do'. But certainly, the vibe that I had afterwards, was that, 'yeah, no I agree, thanks for bringing this to my attention' (R, CPD Lead).

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Establishing structures for professional development

Having the new CPD structure the staff know the expectations now. So, we've given them time and we have considered their workload in terms of what we expect from it. We want you to embed it into your practice but we are going to give you a term to just focus on three strategies (U, CPD Lead).

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## School leaders

- encourage positive attitudes towards professional development
- negotiate budgetary issues to invest in relevant professional development
- communicate the purpose, context and structure of professional development
- establish structures for professional development

Some school leaders choose to prioritise professional development through budgets, time, structures, leadership, communications; other school leaders prioritise different areas of school life. How can we raise the collective importance of professional development across the system to maintain its priority in even when other challenges arise?

## Engaged leadership: conditions

School leaders build a sense of collective efficacy, via a shared vision for the school, by engaging staff in conversation, which involves a shared commitment to high quality teaching and requires a focus on quality professional development. This is reinforced by senior leaders visibly engaging in their own professional learning with and alongside teachers.

# Engaged leadership: actions

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## Building a shared vision

It's that shared vision of where we're going, particularly on the curriculum journey that's important. I think if you talk to any member of teaching staff here about the curriculum, they know the messages that they need to (C, CPD Lead).

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## Working towards collective efficacy

We are trying to work towards a collective efficacy and taking some of the studies about collective efficacy that work where, as a group, as a body of staff we are all working in a similar pattern and working that forwards (B, HT).

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## Modelling learning behaviours

There are some headteachers who are just managers and just manage people and our head, she does that but she is also an academic and has a complete desire to learn and progress all the time and that is contagious... she also drives us to learn because she does, and I think that that keeps the staff quite fresh (H, teacher).

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## School leaders

- build a sense of collective efficacy and shared vision
- engender 'togetherness' which encourages teacher confidence to engage in professional development
- establish and maintain a culture of professional development through modelling behaviours

Modelling by participating in professional learning requires school leaders to allocate time to participate alongside teachers, to share aspects of their practice as teachers and to potentially admit vulnerabilities in identifying their own learning needs. How do school leaders learn these role-modelling behaviours in relation to professional development? Is (enough) attention paid to them in headteacher development programmes?

## Trust leadership: conditions

School leaders develop a collaborative sense of teacher professional learning with features that instil collegial learning, including risk-taking and curiosity about practice, thus leading to improved teaching and learning.

## Trust leadership: actions

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Supporting, not blaming

So, it is very much part of the culture here that I've never felt there is any sense of blame here that you can say 'Oh, okay, that just went horribly wrong', what do I do now, and it has always been, I think, a really supportive environment to be able to say and do stuff (C, Teacher).

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Enabling collaboration and sharing

Every week we have a 'bring and brag' time, teachers come and say I've seen this, I've tried it and it's worked really, really well. And then we will just spend five or ten minutes talking about it and then that teacher might say I will come to your classroom tomorrow and we will set it up and you can have a go, that is a really nice way to get the staff working as a team (S, CPD Lead).

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Building a culture where teachers support each other

We have those conversations around the fact that I've not seen that before, that's amazing, will you come and show me how to do that in my classroom?...that climate is all about a collaborative approach. You're stood shoulder to shoulder with your peers or the senior leadership team and they come and they will walk side by side with you and support you in that process (S, teacher).

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## School leaders

- establish supportive environments to engage in professional development and embed changes in practice
- encourage risk-taking from professional learning in non-judgmental and supportive ways
- promote team cultures and collaborative approaches to professional development

In our high stakes accountability system, encouraging risk-taking through professional learning might in itself be risky. Meanwhile, school leaders need to ensure there are opportunities for individualised teacher professional learning in parallel with meeting whole-school development needs. These are tricky balancing acts; are there ways in which school leaders could be better supported to manage these challenges?

# Embedding change through leadership of professional development

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## Learning leadership

Demonstrating positive attitudes towards professional development

Negotiating budgets

Communicating purpose

Establishing structures for professional development

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## Engaged leadership

Building a shared vision

Working towards collective efficacy

Modelling learning behaviours

## Trust leadership

Supporting, not blaming

Enabling collaboration and sharing

Building a culture where teachers support each other

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# Intervention examples

- **Walk Throughs and Staff Share** – collaborative action  
  
staff involved in peer observations and reflections.
- **Collaborative Carousel** – contextualising identified CPD theme  
  
Initial session led by CPD Lead focusing on Quality First Teaching, then department-based groups discussing ideas of implementation in their context with final plan agreed.
- **Theory-driven curriculum mapping** – use of evidence  
  
CPD Leads and head teacher developed curriculum maps for each department including lesson structures. Departments then modified the maps and structures and fed-back to whole school.  
Each department finalised curriculum maps for subjects.

## Questions, reflections

- How can we support a move towards all schools having a named CPD lead, with appropriate resourcing and professional development of their own?
- What support could enable other school leaders to lead professional development in the ways described here?
- In what ways does the NPQ Leading Teacher Development align with our findings?
- To what extent do our findings about leadership of professional development reflect evidence about effective (school) leadership in general?