



TLIF Case Study

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Zara Blakemore,
Vice Principal



Hatfield Academy Sheffield

About Hatfield Academy

Hatfield Academy is a large primary school with approximately 388 pupils based in the centre of Sheffield. Since early 2018, it has been one of 40 partner schools across England taking part in the Teacher Development Trust’s CPD Excellence Hub Programme, which is funded by the DfE’s Teaching and Leadership Innovation Fund (TLIF). Vice Principal and CPD Lead, Zara Blakemore shares her experience on how the programme has transformed CPD across the school.

Before becoming a Partner School

“Prior to joining the Excellence Hub programme, the academy was going through a lot of change which had an impact on staff morale and wellbeing and resulted in high staff turnover. School life was turbulent, uncertain and a difficult environment to be in.

Although we offered a number of CPD opportunities, it lacked planning and evaluation which would have enabled us to deliver impactful and sustainable CPD to all school staff. There was no strategic approach to CPD as they weren’t linked to the school’s development priorities and staffs’ individual CPD needs.

We believed joining the programme would enable the academy to take more of a strategic approach to implementing CPD in a wider context.”

What does the programme offer?

1. Coaching Conversations

“At the start of the programme we were introduced to our CPD Expert Adviser, Alex Beauchamp, who would be supporting us through our journey. We set-up fortnightly coaching conversations which provided reassurance and direction on how best to implement this new approach.”

2. CPD Quality Audit

“As part of the programme offer, we undertook the TDT Quality Audit that is designed to review our culture and quality of the academy’s current CPD practice. We used the online Audit Tool and asked all staff members to complete an online survey which examined their attitudes and experiences. The survey results highlighted that there were conflicting views on CPD from different members of staff.”

The second element of the audit process involved Alex visiting the academy and undertaking a series of interviews with a range of staff- teaching and non-teaching, with varied experience levels and roles. The interviews strongly highlighted that the majority of staff felt confused about the impact of the CPD they were receiving. In particular, it flagged that support staff did not feel they received as much CPD in comparison to teachers.”

3. Ongoing Support to Improve CPD

“Following on from the interviews, Alex developed an in-depth report that offered bespoke guidance on how to improve the effectiveness of our in-house approach, building on existing strengths and potential areas for development. We identified two priorities that the academy would focus on over the course of the academic year. The first priority was developing more personalised CPD plans for staff which they could consistently build upon, instead of being one-offs. The second priority was to improve the way we evaluate the impact of CPD across the academy and making sure it all tied together.”

4. Networking Opportunities

“A key benefit of the programme is the opportunity to collaborate with other Partner schools through the Excellence Hub Forum which takes place every half term. We felt that this was a fantastic opportunity to come together and share best practice, reflect on what we had achieved as well as sharing experiences of similar issues and challenges we faced. I’m excited for our next forum meeting where we will hear about how each school has evaluated their school’s CPD.”

What has been the impact?

“Being involved in this programme has been reassuring, supportive and has provided our school with direction and clarity on the academy’s CPD priorities. I have a better understanding that CPD needs to be succinct, with a clear purpose on how to deliver effective professional development.

We have seen staff becoming more positive towards their professional development. We’ve recognised that CPD is more than just reading and talking, it’s about pulling together as a team and having collective involvement. In each staff meeting, everyone completes their evaluations form which provides feedback on what went well and what can be done better. The feedback is used to implement actions and ensure we continually improve upon each meeting.

We have developed a weekly (regular) Teaching & Learning Bulletin which shares information on all things CPD and we encourage staff to regularly add to it. Each member of staff has a CPD meeting to develop their personalised plans and establish their aspirations now and in 3 years’ time. I believe this approach will provide staff with the opportunity to be accountable for their own CPD and follow it through which will ensure they are engaged with their own professional development.”

Based on your experience so far, would you recommend the programme to other schools?

“I would highly recommend schools that are looking to improve their CPD provision to be involved with the Teacher Development Trust. Working closely with experts in this area can make a significant difference in improving the way we deliver and access professional development.”

What are your future CPD plans?

“The plan is to begin to hand ownership back to the wider team and for each staff member to lead on their area of interest. We will start to implement the personal CPD plans and look into Lesson Study as a way for our teachers to work more closely together to target an identified area for development in our students’ learning.”

The CPD Excellence Hubs project funded by the Teaching and Leadership Innovation Fund will continue to provide support in five regions across England (Sheffield, Luton, Stoke-on-Trent, Northumberland and Blackpool) until March 2020. The Teacher Development Trust has since launched additional regional hubs designed to facilitate meaningful collaboration between schools and build local capacity for CPD leadership, including in Ipswich and Dover. To find out more about getting involved, contact us using the details below.

Contact Us

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“At Hatfield Academy, pupil focused professional learning is at the centre of its improvement plan. The school has worked tirelessly, in a very short period of time, to streamline their CPD provision in line with school priorities and foster a culture where collaboration, challenge and self-improvement can flourish. Hatfield staff know that quality professional learning underpins great teaching and leads to improved outcomes for their children.”

Alex Beauchamp,
TDT Expert Adviser