



CASE STUDY

Professional development for pastoral excellence at Queen's College

Academic results are crucial to a child's success in life, but so too is their personal development. Queen's College in Taunton have put this at the heart of their CPD programme.



To help a child succeed at school, excellent pastoral care is key. Andrew Free of Queen's College, Taunton, explains how they put the whole child at the heart of their professional development processes.

School context

Founded in 1843 with the motto 'non scholae sed vitae discimus', 'we educate not just for school but for life' is still a statement that very much applies to Queen's College.

With a strong emphasis on child-centred processes and pastoral provision that encourages pupils' confidence and understanding of others, this focus is reflected in the school's curriculum. As well as the core academic subjects, visual and performing arts are highly valued, with work displayed around the school, and physical education is also important to the school's culture.

All-round development is also a feature of extra-curricular activities, with lots of opportunities to participate in activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh award, the UK Mathematics Challenge and the National Youth Orchestra and Choir.

While academic results are clearly important at Queen's College, the influence of the school's Methodist principles means that personal development is very strongly prioritised – pupils take part in community service locally, nationally and even internationally in The Gambia.



A well-rounded CPD programme

As Andrew Free, Assistant Head, outlines, the school's focus on the development of the whole child is mirrored in their training programme.

For each year staff pull together a skeleton plan of what training will look like. This involves an Inset day at the start of each term, managed by SLT but with deliberate space for input from other teams.

This year topics have included:

- mental health training: identifying and responding to warning signs
- metacognition: helping pupils learn how to learn
- first aid and health and safety: to ensure a safe and consistent approach across the school.

This forms the fundamentals in terms of whole-school briefings, but staff are also encouraged to identify particular training needs which the school can support them with: in recent years this has involved training such as exam-board led courses focusing on the details of particular specifications.

‘By using data from the appraisal process to feed into CPD planning, we can ensure we’re targeting individual needs’

The appraisal system is also used to identify needs: where do teachers feel like they can be even better at their job? Using this data is one of the ways the staff at Queen's College can ensure that CPD is targeted towards individual needs.

As Queen's College most recent ISI inspection report made clear, whole-school development planning is rooted in self-evaluation of the school's work and involves all members of staff. An important part of this has been creating opportunities for best practice to be shared within and across departments.

Importantly, CPD is not just seen as a formal occurrence that happens in Inset days or twilights: sharing practice is something that can happen informally, whether in meetings, lunchtime conversations or other activities.



How do they use Optimus?

'We've found Optimus resources especially useful for the child protection and pastoral aspects of our training', explains Andrew. A major part of Andrew's role is looking after safeguarding and pastoral provision, so materials on child protection have proved very useful in supporting his role and saving time.

Queen's College are Unlimited members of Optimus, which means they can access all events and digital resources for one cost and build them into their CPD planning.



The Child Protection in Education conference and other pastoral events are a useful source of updates throughout the year. As Unlimited members, Queen's College can access resources and presentations from all events – even ones they didn't attend.



Webinars on special educational needs provision and DBS checks have been an easy way to get bitesize training without leaving school.



The ready made **In-House Training** library provides templates for training courses that can be easily adapted and personalised for different staff.



Model policy templates cover all of the school's legal and compliance duties, so can be used as a basis for school policies, bringing back valuable hours.



Training to fit the school's needs

The key is that Queen's College have planned to make maximum use of relevant resources, and thought carefully about how to build Optimus into their professional development offering.

To continue a tradition of high performance and well-rounded education, it's important that training is consistent with the school's ethos. By making sure that support for pastoral teams is given a similar level of priority to that for academic teams, the school is deliberately emphasising how high personal development is on their agenda.

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

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