

Leadership and Professional Learning

Leadership

Strong and visible leadership at all levels lies at the heart of schools delivering literacy across learning most successfully. The 3-18 Literacy and English Review (April 2015) noted that successful school wide literacy strategies are driven by a clear shared vision of literacy across learning:

In recent years, literacy has featured on many schools' improvement plans and has been a main focus of development. When there is a clear strategy at whole-school level and literacy is given a high priority by all staff, we have seen significant improvements. Across all sectors, many schools now have designated literacy leaders or coordinators who are helping to drive forward literacy strategies. This includes taking on responsibility for developing aspects of the curriculum, learning and teaching methodologies or leading literacy at whole-school level. This is leading to a clearer understanding of every practitioner's responsibility for developing children and young people's literacy skills across all areas of the curriculum.

Strong strategic leadership ensures that staff have a shared understanding of why literacy is the responsibility of all and how it will lead to higher standards of literacy and improved attainment across all subject areas. It uses robust data to analyse how well children and young people are progressing and achieving in literacy and identifies areas for improvement and actions required.

Every school should have a clear and shared strategy for raising attainment in literacy and numeracy. Staff should have a clear understanding of the expected standards in literacy and numeracy at all stages. (Inspection Advice Note 2015-16)

The school's policy on literacy across learning should form part of this strategy. Effective strategic planning includes building the capacity and capabilities of staff to develop literacy skills across all aspects of the curriculum.

Reflective questions

Do all staff understand the role they play in raising standards in literacy for all?

Does the school have a clear, agreed set of learning and teaching approaches that are being used to raise attainment in literacy?

Have all staff had appropriate professional learning to enable them to effectively support learners to develop their literacy skills?

Does the school have a clear picture of the progress made by children and young people (including different groups of learners e.g. those with ASN, LACC, most deprived) as they move through the school?

Professional learning

A culture of professional learning is key to providing opportunities for staff to gain an understanding of how literacy skills can be developed within their own curricular area.

Case Study

At Hazelhead Academy, the headteacher identified improvement in literacy as the key to raising attainment across the whole school. This has resulted in a school-wide drive to improve literacy, from which an effective model of professional learning has emerged. Practitioners from across curricular areas support each other to embed literacy strategies in their classrooms. They continuously evaluate the impact of their teaching through regular professional dialogue and use of feedback from peers.

Watch the video and discuss the reflective questions below:

<http://www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk/videos/HazleheadAcademyfilm2Page.asp>

See appendix 1 – Hazlehead Academy Case Study

Reflective Questions

How do you ensure staff across the school have a shared understanding of literacy skills and how they are applied from subject to subject?

What types of professional learning activities have had the most impact in improving attainment and achievement in literacy in your establishment?

What opportunities do departments get to work with other subject areas to share practice and support one another to improve literacy?

What opportunities do staff across subject areas have to participate in moderation activities that build a shared understanding of literacy standards?

How do staff use evidence of 'what works' to plan learning that extends young people's literacy skills?

For more information on professional learning and professional update please access the GTCS at

- <http://www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-development/professional-learning.aspx>

Appendix 1

Hazlehead Academy, Aberdeen City

Case Study Focus: Supporting staff to develop their practice in developing literacy across learning

Hazlehead Academy in Aberdeen City has introduced literacy lunches to build on initial professional learning at whole staff meetings and ensure that all staff are supported in their responsibility for literacy across the curriculum. The lunches are scheduled in the whole school calendar and are hosted by the faculty head of English and Literacy. Staff can opt in to all or some of the lunches, time and workloads permitting. The meetings, held during the lunch break on a normal school day, explore strategies to enhance practice and address professional learning needs of staff in order to support the development of literacy skills in their curricular area. From this, shared priorities have been identified and staff have worked together to develop consistent approaches. Focuses have included the development of a reading skills toolkit which consists of a variety of activities to improve reading for understanding and note-making skills. Members of the group trialled strategies in their classes and shared evaluations at the lunches. They then selected the most effective strategies which were rolled out to the whole school. Staff who have attended have commented on how successful some of these strategies have already been and can see the direct impact on learners in their own subject. This consistent approach has enabled young people to transfer their skills across their learning. The current focus at the lunches is the development of a consistent approach to writing. The group have looked at a range of resources and methodologies such the concept of PAL (Purpose, Audience, Language and Layout) and literacy mats. They will trial and develop approaches to enhance extended writing with the aim to share the most effective ones with the whole school. The literacy lunches have been highly successful in providing support for staff and a forum for professional enquiry leading to improved practice. Literacy coordinators and head teachers from cluster schools also attend the literacy lunches to promote partnership working and shared development work.