

Barley Lane School

Hard work, humility, kindness

Continuing Professional Development 2017-18

We have a duty to incrementally understand always do more and better in an enlightened way to engage and shape the children and young people as curious and creative and civil and kind people.

The team has reflected together in the Spring of 2016 on the matter of what best practice and best practitioners look like and that has been shared and is reproduced below embedded in what we say about learning and teaching.

School improvement in 2017-18 has identified a few core and key priorities that should impact all of us every day across our roles and disciplines:

- Throughout the team each individual across disciplines will relentlessly ask themselves how they are going to develop their understanding and practice to promote and embed positive behaviours and learning in the children and young people;
- Continuously seeking to understand the children better in all their diversity and complexity, spark and challenge and being a “present” and active listener and contributor to and sometimes leader of the shifting and dynamic conversation formal and informal about best-practice;
- The humility to recognise where their practice has frailties and standards are slipping and behaviour and learning are at risk and the humility too to speak up and seek help to improve;
- Consistently demonstrating the graft and energy to make real both emerging and the established best practice we have learned and shared and set out over time through bloody hard work and being alive and open to new ideas and ways of working.

The school has measurably progressed and improved in its journey from “special measures” to “good”; we then have improved as individuals and a team but how and how best to sustain that positive momentum in a context where the mercurial, complex and challenging nature of the children and young people and our own innate frailties mean what is “good” is always at risk.

There is another nuance to this the old school notion in public service of attending courses, diligently completing an evaluation form and cascading learning; a neat model but in my experience one of the least impactful.

How have we developed then and how can we develop further? The team reflected on this and themes have emerged that describe how and why folk are developing and learning all the time...

Theme one: a context and school culture for learning and development

- The team describes “belonging” as significant and feeling valued.
- Being exposed to greater responsibility but coached and critically with a no blame approach to mistakes and that we learn more in failure and from adversity than success.
- Linked to this is a strong sense in the team of the value of forgiveness and redemption and fresh starts for children but also grown-ups.
- These healthy approaches rooted in authentic trust between colleagues and support that is practical and emotional.
- New and newer staff describe a strong sense of inclusivity and belonging. Equality too emerges as a factor with good practice and insightful contributions encouraged and valued across the team regardless of rank.
- Intelligent risk taking and a “contribute to the solution stop describing the problem” mentality key elements in a wider culture of “can do”.
- Powerfully pertinent below also is staff in a majority embrace the notion of change us to change them; that by becoming more self-aware and discerning in our behaviours we can positively change ourselves and so the children and young people.
- As always the notion of “going the extra mile” and discretionary effort for and investment in both the students and our colleagues is present and like an athlete pushing herself harder we discover we can do more and critically learn more about the children and ourselves when we push and challenge our own limits.
- Although described as “thinking on one’s feet” a wider culture of “dynamic risk assessment “ and on the job problem solving another important contributor to a culture where learning and development can and do happen all the time...

Theme two: how we are as people impacts hugely on our ability to learn and develop?

- The team has described a developing sense of **taking personal responsibility** for one’s own development and being alive to opportunities to do so specifically:
- High expectations of self and children and peers.
- Naturally self-evaluative and healthily self-critical with a genuine desire to self-improve.
- Authentically embraces the wider school core value change us to change them...
- Curious about the child and engaged with the family and other professionals and wants to understand the child to then and critically modify and develop and improve practice.
- Speaks up seeks clarity actively wants and pursues input and insight.
- An active observer of and listener to others (including children and families and other professionals) in the pursuit of best practice.
- Discerning seeks out best practitioners not best friends...embraces challenge does not seek consolation for faulty views and behaviours in “ghetto sub groups”.
- Seeks a wide circle of professional friends beyond teaching and public service and therefore new and different and fresh ideas and insights.

- Sees opportunities to learn across their lives at home, on the football pitch; in the newspaper they are alive to what is analogous and applicable to their work however apparently out of left field.
- An active participant and contributor who shares freely insights and opinions and listens and absorbs and acts with equal rigour.
- Once best practice embeds models and spreads it; a teacher and a learner.
- Actively seeking and welcoming feedback an example teachers actively asking to be observed more often.
- Generosity of spirit and bringing positivity and affirmation to the daily challenges of school life makes us problem solvers.
- The ability to present as always positive and optimistic in the face of powerful pressures and stresses allows us keep problem solving and learning.
- Resilient has “bounce-back-ability” and can therefore sustain a positive problem solving approach to challenges...can overcome obstacles can persist and like a musician, athlete or skilled tradesperson relentlessly practice until a skill is mastered and secure.
- A willingness to just get on with stuff and a lack of preciousness a characteristic of staff that have measurably grown in status and influence; they are high value low maintenance.
- Accepting we may have to look at things quite differently and that we all have blind-spots.
- Developing incrementally greater self-awareness and self-control just as we seek in the children and young people so we can be self-improving.
- Developing a positive and healthy but individual and nuanced professional character and style and being self-aware about its strengths and frailties.
- Seeks exposure to challenges and responsibilities to be stretched and to learn; not scared of failure because they learn from it.

Theme three: if we get the culture about right and essentially healthy attitudes as an individual where are the best opportunities to learn and develop?

- There are the traditional routes of formal training that if entered into with thought and commitment and are in step with our core goals of educating the children with energy and creativity and keeping them safe and promoting happiness and kindness in them if you ask you get. Recent examples: counselling; mentoring; Thrive; CP level 3; safer recruitment.

The internet has brought another dimension for example many of us have accessed accredited “Prevent” training.

- What is key is that any formal external training both has direct pertinence and once tackled has a measurably positive impact on school improvement priorities that in turn must always privilege learning and teaching and behaviour, safety and wellbeing.
- Colleagues described the powerful value of the steady drip of briefings and meetings and best practice sessions where we have worked right from the start of the project to avoid inert information sharing and to be, creative and proactive and problem solving.