

What does good CPD look like?



Continuing
professional
development



developing people, improving young lives

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This document can be used by:

- individual staff members who are deciding what CPD would best meet their development needs
- a person planning or leading a CPD activity
- school leaders reflecting on the quality of the CPD in their school.

There is a widespread consensus, backed up by research¹, about what is effective CPD. The key features of good CPD are set out below.

- **Each activity is part of a coherent long-term plan that gives the participants opportunities to apply what they have learned, evaluate the effect on their practice, and develop their practice.**
Research shows that CPD is most effective when it is sustained, as part of a deliberately planned process.
- **It is planned with a clear vision of the effective or improved practice being sought. This vision is shared by those undertaking the development and by the people leading or supporting it.**
The plan needs to show precisely what expertise, understanding or technique the CPD is intended to deliver. Sharply defined outcomes are also the starting point for evaluating the impact of the CPD.
- **It enables the participants to develop skills, knowledge and understanding which will be practical, relevant and applicable to their current role or career aspiration – for example, in curriculum or subject content, teaching and learning strategies and the uses of technology.**
CPD is only effective when it is directly relevant to each participant. Where CPD is provided for large groups, or for the whole staff, it may be useful to separate the participants into smaller groups so the CPD can be customised to suit each type of participant.
- **It is provided by people with the necessary experience, expertise and skills.**
These providers may sometimes be colleagues and peers. At other times they may be specialists from inside or outside the school.
- **It is based on the best available evidence about teaching and learning.**
The evidence needs to include current research and inspection evidence. Research shows that pupils learn best when staff are motivated, developed and updated. Research also indicates positive links between pupils' learning and sustained CPD.

¹ *What do teacher impact data tell us about collaborative CPD?* EPPI (the Centre for Evidence-Informed Policy and Practice in Education at the London University Institute of Education: <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/>)
How do specialist inputs in CPD affect teachers, their learning and their pupils' learning? Cordingley, P et al, EPPI
How do collaborative and sustained CPD and sustained but not collaborative CPD affect teaching and learning? EPPI
How does collaborative CPD for teachers of the 5-16 age range affect teaching and learning? EPPI
Working laterally: how innovation networks make an education epidemic, Hargreaves D, 2003
The logical chain: CPD in effective schools, Ofsted, 2006
Creating conditions for teaching and learning, Hopkins D, Harris A, Singleton C and Watts R, 2001

- **It takes account of the participant's previous knowledge and experience.**
Professional learning needs to be tailored to the individual so that it provides experience and insights which build on their existing level of expertise. Professional learning journals and various forms of accreditation can be useful in ensuring a person's existing expertise is properly taken into account.
- **It is supported by coaching or mentoring from experienced colleagues, either from within the school or from outside.**
Coaching is most effective when a staff member with a clearly identified need is paired with a colleague who has acknowledged expertise in that area.
- **It uses lesson observation as a basis for discussion about the focus of CPD and its impact.**
Conducted in a collaborative and supportive manner, observations of teaching can be particularly useful for identifying areas for development.
- **It models effective learning and teaching strategies, eg. active learning.**
To be effective, CPD needs to go beyond theory and exposition. Ideally, it demonstrates techniques and strategies and gives the participant opportunities to try them out in a supportive setting.
- **It promotes continuous enquiry and problem-solving embedded in the daily life of schools.**
A hallmark of effective CPD is an ethos in the school of lifelong learning and development. If the staff exemplify learning as an instinctive and continual activity, they will also act as role models for the pupils.
- **Its impact on teaching and learning is evaluated, and this evaluation guides subsequent professional development activities.**
The ultimate purpose of all CPD in a school is to maintain the highest possible standards of education and care for children and young people. CPD needs to be vigorously evaluated to ensure it is making the maximum contribution to this objective. The most effective evaluations are planned from the outset as an integral part of the CPD.

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