

Remodelling focus: support staff deployment

Remodelling the staff structure has helped the school meet its statutory obligations.



School in focus:
Hexthorpe Primary School is a large primary in Doncaster, South Yorkshire.



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Summary

Previous situation:

- Learning support assistants (LSAs) were not always deployed effectively, which meant their time and expertise were not fully utilised.
- The challenge was to redeploy LSAs so they helped to support the pupils' learning.

Steps taken:

- An inclusive change team (representing the entire workforce) was established to tackle workload issues and lead remodelling.
- Remodelling became a priority agenda item for training days and existing meetings (the senior leadership team, support staff, etc).
- The outcomes of these meetings were reported back to the senior leadership team and governors.
- Remodelling consultations with staff resulted in the appointment of a number of staff to take on administrative tasks and provide planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time.

Outcomes:

- Teachers' contractual entitlements are securely in place enabling them to focus on teaching and learning and without having to carry out tasks that do not require their qualifications and skills (including classroom display, photocopying, etc).
- Pupils have a more enriched learning experience and benefit from working with a wider variety of experts.
- The school's standard assessment test (SAT) results have continued to improve and the standard of pupils' attainment and achievement is high.
- The school was recently judged to be "outstanding" by Ofsted, which was impressed by the quality of the support staff, referring to them as "highly trained, highly skilled and having a positive impact on children's learning".

Previous situation

The school's twenty-two Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) were not always deployed effectively, spending a disproportionate amount of their time on tasks such as photocopying and displays. This did not make best use of their time and expertise because they were employed primarily to work with pupils and have a positive effect on their learning. The challenge was to redeploy all LSAs more efficiently so they could maximise their skills fully to support pupils in the classroom. Any strategies also needed to be financially viable and sustainable from a budgetary point of view.

Steps taken

The school tackled remodelling as a whole school team, placing remodelling at the top of the agenda at training days and staff meetings. The outcomes of all the meetings were reported back to the senior leadership team and governors.

The following actions were implemented in response to the needs of the school (identified by staff during the remodelling consultation discussions):

- A reprographics assistant was employed to photocopy for three mornings a week to enable the LSAs to focus on working with pupils in the classrooms.
- Six lunchtime supervisors started work at 11am instead of noon. During this extra hour, they prepared displays for each class or dealt with other practical issues. Staff requiring more expertise were paired with others who had a particular flair.
- Two learning mentors were appointed to work with pupils in nurture groups.
- Four members of the support staff were trained to plan, organise and take pupils on swimming trips where they were taught by a swimming instructor, thereby assisting teachers to deliver PE. This released the teachers and provided additional PPA time opportunities.
- One senior higher level teaching assistant delivered ICT lessons as part of PPA provision.
- External specialists (coaches in basketball, football, dance and drama) were employed to provide enrichment activities during PPA time.

The school is highly committed to the professional development of its staff. All staff can access professional development opportunities and are encouraged to extend themselves and attend any relevant training courses within their contracted hours.

As valued members of the whole school team, support staff participate in regular meetings. At half-termly meetings for support staff, they are able to raise issues and discuss staff performance, policies, procedures and training opportunities. Support staff have their own professional portfolios and detailed records of their training are maintained.

Personalised targets and goals are given a high priority as part of the school's Assessment for Learning policy. There is an understanding among staff that continual communication between teachers and support staff is crucial to ensure everyone knows the school's vision and objectives.

Outcomes

- The pupils have an enriched learning experience and benefit from working with a wide variety of experts.
- SAT results have continued to improve and standards of attainment and achievement are high.
- The school is continually building capacity by developing all staff and helping them to achieve their potential.
- The school was judged "outstanding" by Ofsted (2007), which was impressed by the quality of support staff, referring to them as "highly trained, highly skilled and having a positive impact on children's learning". The Ofsted inspectors were able to observe lessons and planning involving support staff. They scrutinised documentation relating to how the support staff were monitored. They were extremely impressed by the impact the support staff had on pupils' learning.

Quotes

"Looking at our whole school practice in order to make it more effective' is our mantra at Hexthorpe Primary School. Investing in the professional learning of all staff in school builds enormous capacity to drive forward pupil progress and the 'Every Child Matters' agenda. Moving the school forward collectively is a powerful force and is fundamental to the personalisation learning agenda. Through a structured programme of professional development, support staff are highly skilled, highly motivated and an integrated part of the school workforce."

Elizabeth Ellison, Headteacher, Hexthorpe Primary School

"This is an amazing place to work. Support staff are given every training opportunity possible for the benefit of children. The same quality standards and expectations are applied to support staff and teachers alike. It's really important – it makes us all feel part of a team and valued, it improves confidence and gives children access to a better-quality learning experience."

Helen Sanderson, Support Staff Line Manager, Hexthorpe Primary School

School information

School name and location:

Hexthorpe Primary School, Doncaster

School phase: Primary

Local authority: Doncaster

Number of pupils: 418

Number of teachers: 18

Number of support staff: 39

English as an additional language (EAL): 28 per cent

Free school meals: 25 per cent

Special educational needs (including full statements):
20 per cent

National agreement (NA) implementation:

All contractual changes of the NA have been implemented.

Remodelling principles: The school has remodelled its staff structure through a team that represents a cross-section of the workforce.

Support staff deployment: The school deploys its support staff effectively so as to deliver the benefits of the National Agreement contractual entitlements to teachers.

Governor engagement: The governors take an active role in the school's remodelling activities.

Contact details

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