



Report on the 2015 Autumn Residential for teachers of Art, English, Mathematics, Music and Science

Held at St Johns Hotel, Solihull

14th-16th November 2015



Executive summary

This course was attended by over 70 subject leaders, who raised issues across 5 areas, which were then responded to by a panel of educationalists. Here is a summary of their conclusions:

1. The value of attending out-of-school CPD

There was agreement that stepping away from the pressures of school allows teachers to reflect on and improve their teaching practice, to appreciate the value of the job and to reconnect with themselves as learners and practitioners of their subject.

2. Invest in teachers' professional development to aid recruitment and retention of inspiring subject teachers

It was felt that public perceptions of teaching can be barriers to recruitment, and more efforts should be made to broaden the recruitment pool. Ensuring proper investment in teachers' professional development, increasing the range of career pathways and providing more support for new teachers are crucial to retaining teachers.

3. Perverse incentives and lack of information are hindering which subjects students take-up

Delegates and panellists agreed that students lack full information for making subject choices and that there are perverse incentives in the system. On the one hand, the EBacc has devalued the Arts, which are a vital part of pupils' education and development. This has a direct impact on pupils with strong personal aspirations in the Arts. On the other hand, better careers guidance is needed to increase the numbers going into STEM careers, and this extra responsibility often now falls on the shoulders of teachers.

4. We must 'assess what we value, not value what we assess'

Delegates perceived that there is a danger that lesson content has become driven by exam boards, but felt that students must be allowed to take creative risks in the classroom. Tiered assessment is valuable in some subjects, such as English, but not in Art. It is essential that subject specialists mark exam papers, and that there is dialogue between schools and exam boards.

5. Secondary schools should collaborate with primary schools to improve subject teaching

It was felt that collaboration with primary schools should be for pupils of all abilities, and should help to build primary teachers' own expertise. However, cross-phase collaboration is a two-way process, and secondary schools can learn from some of the creative teaching happening in the primary sector.

This report concludes with a selection of delegate quotes from the Residential.

Course report

This report details issues that arose from discussions during three elements of the residential: the pupil panel that began the course, reports made by subject leaders and panel sessions that concluded the course:

- **The pupil panel.** The programme began with a panel of pupils who had particular passions in Art, English, Mathematics, Music or Science and were studying for their GCSEs or A Levels in this subject. They spoke about their subjects, their teachers and their lessons. The students were drawn from comprehensive schools in the surrounding area.
- **Reports by subject leaders.** Throughout the course, participating heads of department discussed their subjects, the importance of teaching them and the issues they felt were currently affecting them professionally. On the final day, teachers got the chance to hear from one another.
- **Concluding panels** The course concluded with panels of educationalists from exam boards and subject associations, who responded to the issues raised by teachers. The panel members were:
 - Brian Cartwright HMI** – National Adviser for Science, Ofsted
 - Stephen Diston** – OCR Science
 - Marie Jones** – OCR Music
 - Michelle North** – OCR English
 - Susan Pope** – Association for Teachers of Mathematics
 - Shaun Reason** – Association for Science Education
 - Paul Tomlinson** – Cambridge International Examinations
 - Henry Vann** – Incorporated Society of Musicians
 - Eddie Wilde** – OCR Mathematics

The report is presented according to the following themes that emerged during the residential:

1. The value of attending out-of-school CPD
2. Recruitment and retention of inspiring subject teachers
3. Student take-up of subjects
4. Examination and assessment
5. Issues in primary teaching

1. The value of attending out-of-school CPD

Delegates spoke of the impact that this course had had on them, their perspectives on teaching and their teaching practice itself. Valuable components of the course were:

- Hearing from students and reflecting on what constitutes great teaching – that which encourages, inspires, develops independence and supports students in taking creative risks.
- The opportunity for teachers to step away from the pressures of school and be learners and practitioners again; to explore and reconnect with their own subject specialism.
- The insight into how what they teach applies in the real world, in sometimes unexpected ways, like the use of origami by engineers.
- The time to work collaboratively with other subject leaders and share ideas that empower them to go back to school and make changes for the better.
- Reaffirmation that teaching is a rewarding career, and that each student should be valued as an individual, with natural curiosity that needs to be nurtured.

2. Recruitment and retention of inspiring subject teachers:

Pupils' views:

A good teacher...

- Teaches beyond the specification and brings in their own knowledge and experience.
- Ensures that the key skills are mastered before progressing.
- Knows each student as an individual and treats each piece of work individually.
- Gives students a degree of independence to develop their problem-solving skills.
- Demonstrates a variety of methods for solving a problem.
- Never holds students back creatively: *“teachers are there to enhance learning, not restrict it”*.

Teachers' views:

Recruitment:

- Improving the profile and public image of the profession would help with recruitment.
- Negative perceptions of maths in the media and in society lead to reluctance by many to become Maths teachers.
- Huge efforts are made to attract Mathematics graduates into teaching, but broadening the pool from which trainees are pulled could attract a wider range of applicants with solid knowledge of the subject and passion to deliver.
- Science teachers should be actively recruited from within industry.

Retention:

- More flexible career pathways that recognise excellent classroom teaching could increase both teacher integrity and public respect for the profession. A College of Teaching might help to achieve this.
- More formal support structures should be put in place that extend beyond the NQT year, including more rigorous mentoring, subject and pedagogical CPD and better incentives to stay in the profession.
- Music is a specialist subject which requires highly skilled, knowledgeable teachers. To keep them engaged in the profession, there is a need for subject-specific CPD, more opportunities for networking and specialist training in areas such as music technology.

- The significant decrease in timetable time for the Arts has left teachers working into the evenings and weekends to maintain the rigour of their courses; delegates report a significant deterioration of work/life balance.

Panel responses:

- To improve teacher recruitment and retention, resources need to be directed into teacher training and continuing professional development.
- Evidence suggests that those who spend longer training to teach are more likely to stay in the profession. HE institutions are beginning to explore longer, three-year courses as routes into teaching.
- Teachers need an entitlement to CPD as other professions have – both financially and in terms of time out of school. There is huge disparity in provision.
- The subject departments who successfully retain teachers are those that integrate subject-specific professional development.
- The job is extremely demanding, in terms of workload and pressure to be ‘Outstanding’ from the beginning.
- Many staff are on temporary contracts, and the lack of investment in their professional development offers little incentive for them to remain in the profession; there are many qualified teachers who are not teaching.

3. Student take-up of subjects:

Pupils’ perspectives:

Why did you choose to study your subject?

- A personal, familial or emotional connection to the subject. A means of self-expression or gaining new perspectives on the world.
- Strong personal ambitions, for example to produce art work of a high standard or follow a particular career path.
- The spirit of cooperation in Music that does not exist in other, competitive subjects.
- Exploring the connections between the subject and the real world

How could others be encouraged to continue to study?

- More careers support and work experience. STEM careers advice with knowledge of specific career paths, not just lists of websites.
- Inclusive extracurricular activities that involve students of all ages and abilities, and that provide opportunities for students to use the subject as part of their lives, for example through performance.
- Increased challenge, managed well by the teacher, can lead to higher motivation among students. Students are happy when they feel it is within their grasp to succeed.
- Recognition that it is the pupil who is important, not the subject.

Teachers’ views:

Issues raised by teachers mainly centred on the devaluing of the Arts in the EBacc:

- Delegates call for the Ebacc to follow the lead of the International Baccalaureate and put an equal value on the Arts.
- The Arts form a vital part of students’ learning and cultural education, ensuring a rich and balanced curriculum and the social, moral and spiritual care of students.

- The Ebacc's knock-on effects in terms of lost courses and withering funding for the Arts is detrimental to students who have strong personal aspirations in the Arts. It is not the subject, but the pupil, who should be of central concern.
- Teachers need to be empowered to articulate the value of their subject to students, parents and the community. There was a 26% growth in arts industries in the last year with a £76bn contribution to the economy, yet in the past 5 years there has been a 17% drop in A Level Music applicants.
- Delegates see a role for Ofsted in monitoring the curriculum so that no school can be judged as Outstanding if it does not provide the full range of Arts subjects.

However, there is also a shortage of people entering STEM careers, but with careers advice in school disappearing, it now falls on teachers to raise pupils' awareness of STEM careers and how to prepare for them.

Panel responses:

- Ebacc as a headline measure is effectively compulsory
- Music has been sidelined to the extracurricular – attitudes must change among parents, schools and employers.
- There's almost unanimous agreement that the choice of subjects for Ebacc is not right, and each sector must be vocal about this.
- The separate three-stream approach to teaching the Sciences is no longer reflected in university courses. This restricts the flow through to STEM careers as it narrows pupils' perspectives on STEM.
- Companies are desperate to employ technicians, but the new course 'Science for Technicians' suffers from negative perceptions of the term.
- 'Creative industries' applies across all subjects – creativity is necessary across the curriculum. The distinction between 'core' and 'creative' is erroneous; any subject can be very academic or very creative.

4. Examination and assessment:

Pupils' perspectives:

- Success comes through having a good grounding in the core concepts and having teachers who are able to make connections across lessons, topics and key stages.
- Often exam preparation involves playing the game, learning techniques and memorising information rather than aiming for real understanding.
- Some students' learning is restricted by exams, and they do not want to learn anything that goes beyond them. Others remain curious, despite exam pressures.
- Constant curriculum changes lead to uncertainty and increased pressure, especially without the chance to re-sit modules.
- Teachers have different understandings of how much support to give in controlled assessments.

Teachers' views on assessment:

- We need to '*assess what we value, not value what we assess*' – intrinsic motivation needs to be nurtured in order to develop independent learners. The introduction of performance-related pay could encourage 'coaching' that centres around passing exams at the expense of enrichment.

- Students must be allowed to take creative risks in the Arts; the abolition of levels provides an opportunity to provide individual support, but assessment must be in a language that teachers and pupils both understand.
- Art delegates emphasised the value of the “Framework for Progression” developed in consultation with the NSEAD, as well as adapting Key Stage 4 criteria for more coherent transition between key stages.
- Noting that the grade boundaries were raised for endorsed photography exams, concern was expressed about the perception amongst examining bodies that some art media, are less technically rigorous than others, without recognition that it is the quality of aesthetic sensitivity that is the greater, but less easily measurable, concern.
- Controlled assessment is inappropriately applied to the Visual Arts, setting less value on the students’ experience of art outside the school walls. Students increasingly confine their studies to online searches rather than ‘the real’.

Panel responses:

- Teaching should be about teaching the subject you love; the problem is that exam boards are driving what happens in classrooms.
- The arts are now answerable to criteria rather than aesthetics or ability. Pre-U courses differ from A Levels in this regard.
- Great Maths teaching is about understanding, not regurgitation, and this is emphasised in the new GCSE.
- If the right approach is taken by schools, changes to the KS5 Science curriculum will be of great benefit in terms of more practical work and more experimental approaches.
- Without levels, there is an attitudinal shift towards thinking that all children can master the curriculum. It just takes time, and better teaching.
- In-house assessment is often not formative enough to test for understanding and mastery – we fail to ask children what they understand, we only test what they can remember.

Teachers’ views on exam format and tiered assessment:

- Science delegates felt that there is now an opportunity to introduce a Science GCSE that is accessible for lower ability students to support training the technicians of the future.
- English delegates felt that the abandonment of the two-tier examination system in favour of a ‘one size fits all’ approach is a mistake. Thoughtful tiering is invaluable, as it allows for the framing of both challenging and exploratory questioning for the more able and questions incorporating appropriate guidance for the less able.
- Art delegates on the other hand felt that ‘Gifted and Talented’ programmes were unnecessarily exclusive and out of step with a forward-looking curriculum.
- Progress 8 presents a huge problem for the Arts, where grades are predicted based on KS2 statistics in English and Mathematics.

Panel responses:

- It is a real challenge in English for exam boards to find appropriate unseen material for single tier exams, that can ensure the chance for students of all abilities to achieve success
- The GCSE was established on the principle that if you score the marks you get the grade. There’s a real concern that we seem to be moving away from that principle.

Teachers' views on external marking:

- English delegates felt that a useful tool could be Comparative Marking, where examiners use a broad portfolio of pre-graded essays as grade benchmarks, thus dispensing with the need for highly detailed assessment criteria which are often neither valid, as they tend to reward coached responses and punish original ones, nor reliable, as the criteria themselves require subjective interpretation.
- Marking by non-specialists leads to inadequate marking. This is extremely demoralising for teachers.

Panel responses

- Pressure on teachers is growing, and in such an environment it is difficult to recruit them as external markers.
- It would be beneficial to have local networks of moderation before external marking
- In Pre-U there are always two moderators who work together and talk to school departments – this system works, last year they had only a single appeal
- Teachers need to understand how markers are applying the criteria, especially for hard-to-assess areas like Composition which will now be externally assessed. Dialogue between schools and exam boards is essential, and can be achieved when a teacher in a school becomes an assessor.

5. Issues in primary schools:

Teachers' views:

- Outreach to primary schools could be developed through school networks, with secondary teachers not just delivering “masterclasses” or “enrichment” but helping primary school teachers develop their own skills base allowing them to teach stimulating and enriching lessons.
- Secondary schools and subject hubs should support the teaching of all abilities in the primary sector, not just gifted and talented pupils.

Panel responses:

- Cross-phase cooperation is a two-way process. Some of the best creative teaching is happening in primary schools, which often engages and enthuses pupils in subjects. We must ensure that we do not dampen this enthusiasm when they enter secondary school, but instead continue to excite and challenge them.
- Changes to the primary Maths curriculum are not grounded in research and many aspects are not age-appropriate.
- Students' views of Maths are formed when they are at primary school, so we need wonderful teachers in those primaries to ensure that students don't enter secondary school switched off from Maths completely.

Selection of delegate quotes

“The most important thing I learned was that we need to think more about where pupils might be heading and make sure they are fully aware of all opportunities available for careers in science; not just medicine, dentistry and veterinary sciences!”

“Teaching English is increasingly pressured and alongside pedagogy, data and other admin tasks, curriculum and subject knowledge training has become less important. [The] PTI has allowed me to appreciate my subject again, which I feel I had lost due to all the other pressures in teaching.”

“This course has encouraged me to engage with the meaning and importance of music education, not only in itself but as a wider contributor to pupils' diverse education.”

“[The course] made me realise how important reading around my subject is, and getting more information is, to allow me to gain ideas and methods for teaching topics so that students are more engaged.”

“I have enjoyed the social aspect as it has reminded me that I am not an island.”

Networking with fellow subject professionals is invigorating. I came away from the PTI course feeling encouraged, more focussed, and with loads of new resources to share with my department and students.”

“The informal discussions with my colleagues, which followed the various excellent key notes and workshops; I've not had this much time to think and talk about my own teaching practice for years.”