

Consultant

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Summary report

The Prince's Teaching Institute

Schools Programme

An evaluation of its impact on students

What evidence is there that the Schools Programme's focus on developing passion and confidence within subjects contributes to students' enthusiasm, motivation and success?

Background

The Prince's Teaching Institute (PTI) operates on the belief that teachers can be re-energised by providing opportunities to develop their subject knowledge through contact with leading academic experts. Key to the ethos of the PTI is the principle of peer learning. Teachers share resources and experiences in a way that encourages them 'to bring the latest thinking into their classrooms' and supports them 'to make lasting improvements in what and how they teach'.

PTI activities are designed to develop enthusiastic teachers who can 'raise the aspirations of their pupils'. The engagement with subjects is therefore a means to the end of enhancing the experiences and achievements of school-aged students.

As one teacher wrote, the distinctive feature of the PTI is the 'ethos of building a love of the subject by all students both within the classroom and beyond the classroom'. It is indeed the ethos of belief in subject knowledge and the professionalism of teachers that drives all the activities of the PTI.

The work of the PTI has expanded steadily over 10 years so that over 2000 teachers now attend events with another 3000 working alongside them in schools. Whilst the PTI can claim to have reached over half a million learners, it ambitiously aims to double this number by 2020.



"Reading logs have proven hugely successful; large numbers of pupils, especially reticent readers, have read in excess of thirty books this year."

The PTI provides a unique form of continuing professional development (CPD). In an educational landscape characterised by constant change, intrusive monitoring of performance, intense competition and political and ideological controversy, the PTI appears as a neutral space which provides opportunities for teachers to step out of their daily struggles and put them in perspective. As one respondent to the PTI's annual evaluation put it: 'Being [able] to network with other professionals, facing similar challenges, is invaluable during a period of such substantial change'. Or, from another teacher, there is a: 'focus on aspiration and inspiration and enjoyment of the subject instead of an obsession with data'.

The reconfiguration of the governance of schools has left a gap in the provision of CPD that was previously offered by local education authorities. Whereas there are offers from private providers, these tend to be focused on responding to examination and testing regimes. Whilst subject associations may also provide conferences and some CPD opportunities, they are unable to provide the personalised support that is fundamental to the ethos and the operation of the PTI. In the words of one respondent: 'the PTI recognises and appreciates teachers and respects them as professionals'.

Teacher perceptions of the impact of membership of the PTI on their students

Over two thirds of respondents consider that there is a direct effect of membership since they agree or agree strongly that:

- The students in my school enjoy my department's subject more since we joined the Schools Programme
- The scheme has helped my students become more well-rounded people and helped them to develop character traits that will help them succeed in later life e.g. curiosity, confidence, optimism, resilience and ambition.

There was an extremely high level of support (over 80% of respondents) for statements about membership of PTI such as:

- It has increased the coherence and quality of challenge within my department's curriculum
- It has provided my school's students with a richer subject experience
- It has helped my department raise the aspirations and expectations of my school's students.

The Schools Programme gives encouragement and challenge to develop opportunities for young people to improve their aspirations due to teachers having higher expectations.

Findings

My desk-based analysis of the available data convinces me that across the country students are benefitting from the stimulus provided to their teachers from participating in the PTI Schools Programme.

Whilst examination issues drive much of the agenda of heads of department, the annual reports include considerable evidence that PTI membership provides the support required to engage in activities that provide perspective on the processes of achieving exam successes and allow space for curriculum development.

The Schools Programme is uniquely placed to offer, without motives of profit and on the basis of a humane and inclusive vision, exchanges of experience between schools. Many departments have found ways of motivating minority and less academic students.

Crucially, the Programme provides a personalised and supportive framework. The teacher leaders, who have graduated from the programme and who act as peer mentors, have a role perhaps analogous to a personal trainer. They encourage the teachers to set themselves and their departments challenging but achievable targets that in turn lead to a variety of exciting and innovative approaches to developing subject study.

Strategies used by departments to challenge and stretch their students include competitions, external collaborations, cross-curricular projects, and examinations. The report¹ provides evidence of some outstanding achievements by students across all the subjects and all year groups.



“This year we have focused particularly on Stretch and Challenge within the classroom. ...The impact of this is that students are increasingly less fazed by lots of language that they don't know and are being equipped with the confidence and the skills to tackle tasks that they may have been put off before.”

¹“The Prince's Teaching Institute Schools Programme: An evaluation of its impact on students”, UCL IoE Press December 2016

External partnerships

The encouragement to form partnerships is a core element of the PTI agenda. One Art Department sent their year 12 and 13 students to life drawing sessions run by the local university. There is also an instrumental dimension to this kind of partnership since it provides opportunities that enable students to gain confidence that serves them in their university applications.

Cross-curricular projects

Several departments have specifically developed interdisciplinary projects as their strategy for stretching their students and encouraging a broader outlook. A Geography department reviewed its programme for year 7s in the light of the agreed objectives with the PTI. The intention was to challenge the students by setting a task that was only just within their capabilities. This required a perspective related to the role that the UK has had on the world and other countries, which is also highly relevant to their study of History.

Competitions

What is significant about the examples of the use of competitions in the PTI context is not the development of competitiveness but rather the instrumental use of the incentive that a competition provides. Moreover the winning products are then used as examples of what can be achieved and as inspiration for other students.

Examinations

A number of schools reported that PTI involvement had led them to think more creatively about how to use the requirements of examinations to ensure greater benefit for the students. One PTI History Associate Department moved from A level to the International Baccalaureate which gives year 12 students on the Global Politics course the opportunity to undertake cross-curricular research that requires them to demonstrate engagement with external agencies.

The Schools Programme

PTI member departments are required annually to draft their own objectives and then to report on progress. Support in the drafting process and in evaluating progress against the objectives is provided by peer mentors, known as Teacher Leaders, who are experienced PTI subject specialists and who offer written evaluative comments and a twenty minute one to one conversation. The objectives drafted by subject departments should refer to the four Schools Programme aims, which are:

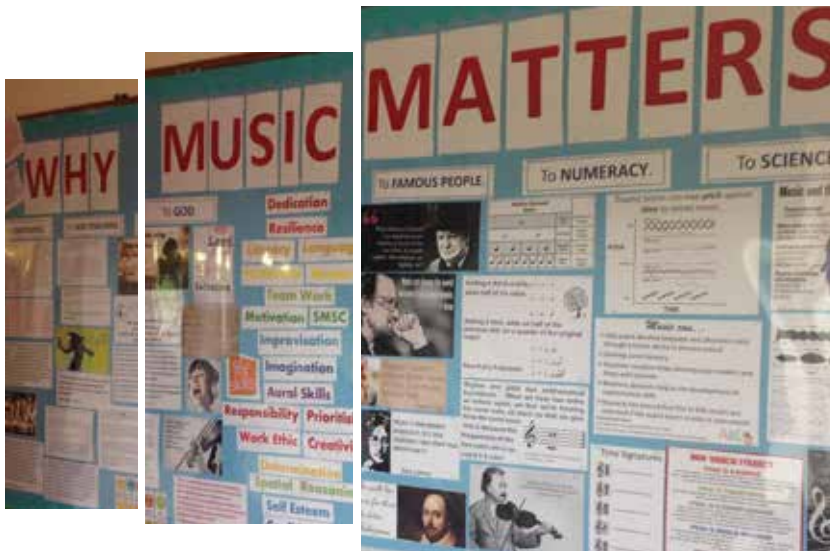
1. **Coherence and quality of challenge within the curriculum**
2. **Extending and enthusing pupils through subject-based activities that are beyond the curriculum**
3. **Encouraging teachers to explore, develop and share their own specialist subject knowledge**
4. **Raising the profile of your subject within education**

At the Schools Programme Day departments that have successfully reported against these criteria are awarded the PTI Mark for the year.

In 2016 around two thirds of participating Schools Programme departments were awarded the PTI Mark. This is against a background of members reporting that their departmental development plans were more or much more challenging than in previous years and therefore harder to achieve.



"The PTI schools programme made us think more creatively about the homework that we are setting. This greatly increased the number of homeworks that were handed in on time, and they enjoyed being able to link to real life places in their neighbourhood. This links to the importance of putting things in real life context which again was influenced by the PTI sessions."



“These visits [to the Royal Opera House and Wigmore Hall] have had a profound impact on pupils’ perceptions of music as an academic subject and on the role of music in the lives of a diverse range of people. Uptake for A-level music has increased and two pupils have stated that these visits played a direct role in their decision to pursue music at KS5 level.”

Sources of evidence

The evaluation is based on a desk review of the following sources of documentary evidence.

- Public documents available on the PTI website, such as Annual Review, Yearbooks, leadership reports, reports of residential programmes.
- The Schools Programme evaluation of outcomes in 2016 based on 279 completed questionnaires circulated at the Schools Programme Days.
- A sample of schools’ annual objective setting reports for 2015/16. The consultant was given access to the online Staffroom and hence to schools’ annual reports for the sole purpose of the evaluation and under conditions of confidentiality.
- A sample of student work submitted by volunteer teachers as illustrating benefits of PTI membership. Teachers were invited to complete a short questionnaire with the heading Celebrating Stretch and Challenge to accompany the examples of student work.

The consultant also attended one of the Schools Programme Days, namely the Music and History day held at Merchant Taylors Hall, London, 4 July 2016.

“Many of our sixth form students have organised and led science clubs in a number of local primary schools. The students were responsible for planning delivering sessions on a weekly basis. The feedback from primary schools was extremely positive and it was commented that the science club had a noticeable effect on the popularity of science.”



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Schools Programme
An evaluation of its impact on students

This document is a summary of

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