

What did you plan to do and why?

To evaluate what helped build confidence in lesson delivery during the pandemic and to measure the success of collaborative working during this period.

As a department and a school, we have changed the way we work this year significantly and are sharing resources and buddying up on courses like we never have before, so I implemented some research to see what strategies everyone has found successful.

Some considerations I expected to find from the outset were:

- collaborative teaching
- year-led responsibilities
- doubling of senior texts
- split classes and workload
- the use of MS teams
- regular engagement letters and feedback
- junior and senior phase course content
- workload issues

Confidence in delivery grew 24% between the two lockdowns

Main Barriers to confidence discovered through research

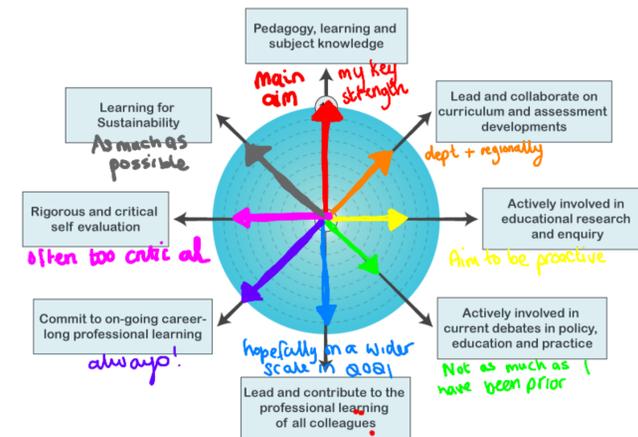
- A vast quantity of approaches to learning across centres led to insecurity
- Lack of knowledge about features of Teams and other software before lockdown
- Work/life balance was not achievable, leading to lack of belief in "doing things right"
- No training and no time to train or consult made the situation almost impossible.
- Sharing work created additional pressures
- Staff found the need to be online every lesson and create new work for every lesson which took vast amounts of time.
- There was a lot of focus on admin (forms, spreadsheets, letters) to maintain normality in a year which wasn't normal.
- Lack of time to properly communicate with others around the school to discuss what we were doing. It made teaching more isolating.
- Pupils lack of engagement was an issue and disheartening.
- Admin - continues to be a significant, and in many cases unnecessary, burden.

Staff, on average only felt 54% confidence this past year

All statistics gathered through voluntary survey of Secondary staff employed at St John's Academy

How has this impacted on your leadership learning?

My understanding of leadership of learning has not necessarily changed as a result of this programme but I would say that it has widened. I think that as long as you are taking ownership of your own interests and trying to progress for the best then you can be considered a leader of learning.



I think in future I will be more confident with the progress and process over finding a neat solution to questions. Perhaps this negates against the idea of setting goals and SMART targets as I ask my young people to do – things should definitely be more malleable.



FOCUS: Sharing good practise in the age of social distancing and online learning

QUESTION: In what ways can teachers share good practise to build confidence in delivering socially distanced and online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic?



How did the impact of Covid-19 affect your plan?

It was affected in almost every way possible. Due to the fact I wanted to research something staff-based, lockdown made that incredibly difficult due to not communicating with members of staff for months at a time. Now because of the alternative certification model, all of my time in work is spent organising evidence. I feel that I very much lost myself this year.

I scaled my enquiry right down to make it more manageable, took notes and stock of staff confidence and surveyed my department based on us and this year alone. We also do an annual SIP evaluation as a department and it was very interesting to see how things had changed from last session. This added lots of detail to my enquiry.

I have found the lack of coherence in my own plans and movement in my research focus to be frustrating throughout the year, which is why the journal article from Tina Cook called The Importance of Mess in Action Research really spoke to me like no other reading we have done this year. It has made me feel like even if I have no conclusion to draw after this, just having an increased awareness of the way in which we work as a department and how it effects our stress levels and wellbeing is perhaps worthwhile in itself.

Successes That Could be Shared

- Making Further use of Class Notebook
- The Use of Assignments in Teams
- Giving pupils more choice and discussion in their learning to rebuild positive relationships
- The Use of Teams as a communication tool

Proposed Next Steps

I lead a teacher leader group on sharing good practise. I intend to:

- Set up drop-in sessions based on talking about teaching strategies
- Propose a form of informal learning rounds
- Establish a small network of colleagues staff can go to for advice on different challenges teachers may face i.e reinforcing positive behaviour, ICT, Teams specifically, creative learning ideas etc
- As staff suggested, create an online space to share good practice

References

- Teacher Toolkit. 2019. Coaching Manual for Schools. [ONLINE] Available at: https://www.teachertoolkit.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/woocommerce_uploads/2019/01/1.-Coaching-Manual-for-Schools-by-TeacherToolkit.pdf. [Accessed 21 March 2021].
- Cook, T., 2006. The Importance of Mess in Action Research. Educational Action Research, [Online]. 6/1, 93-109. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09650799800200047> [Accessed 28 April 2021].

Suggestions to build confidence

Perhaps more surprising for me was the following finding:

Almost 100% of staff surveyed gave the same response to: "how often do you get the opportunity to share practise with other professionals" both in the 'lockdown' year and in a 'normal' school year. Both figures came out as a shockingly low score of 5/10.

Sharing good practise may be a vital step. Staff suggestions for this include:

- Training programmes to ensure all staff members are upskilled with ICT and relevant software. i.e specific twilights on aspects of teams such as "break out rooms".
- Meetings of small cross-curricular groups around the school
- A more unified way for staff to share things they have tried and encouragement to do so.
- Dedicated school Teams channel for uploading resources/ ideas

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