

How a multi academy trust supports their workforce development using the apprenticeship levy

Upskilling staff with apprenticeships

Zoe Batten, CEO, and Diana Taylor, Staff Development and Safeguarding Officer, use the apprenticeship levy across their schools to offer a continuous professional development strategy.

Zoe and Diana developed a professional development map, identifying the apprenticeship opportunities staff can access at different points in their career.

Diana saw an opportunity to upskill support staff using apprenticeships as they make up a large proportion of Plymouth CAST's staff.

During the early stages, they used the apprenticeship levy to support staff through the Teaching Assistant apprenticeship and the Early Years Educator apprenticeship.

They also upskilled business support staff through the Business Administration apprenticeship and Finance and School Business Professional apprenticeship.

Plymouth CAST then started to offer higher level apprenticeships for their staff.

Through this, staff have gained the equivalent of a diploma in education by completing the Level 5 Learning and Skills Teacher apprenticeship. This allows them to progress to train as teachers.

Plymouth CAST also offer staff with an honours degree the opportunity to gain qualified teacher status by completing the Level 6 Teacher apprenticeship.

Through their focus on support staff, Plymouth CAST have successfully supported two support staff to become qualified teachers.

Plymouth CAST have demonstrated that apprenticeships are not just for young people but can be used for ongoing professional development.

Getting funding for apprenticeships

As well as the apprenticeship levy, Plymouth CAST have used the Department for Education bursary funding to fund their continuous professional development plan.

Plymouth CAST have also organised a levy transfer with BD, one of the largest

global medical technology companies in the world.

BD will be transferring some of their levy to Plymouth CAST to fund peer coaching apprenticeship training for teachers across the trust.

The transfer enables BD to align to their Corporate Social Responsibility strategy, while allowing Plymouth CAST to upskill more staff.

Supporting schools to deliver apprenticeships

Zoe and Diana recognise that the selection process for a training provider is different for every school. Plymouth CAST choose a provider based on identified success criteria for each school.

Plymouth CAST encourage each school to look at their capacity, what opportunities they need and the training providers that offer them.

Zoe and Diana make sure that off-the-job training happens in a clear and robust way.

It can be hard to release teachers for one day per week, so staff have found creative ways to implement their 20% off-the-job training into their working week.

This includes staff meetings, professional conversations with a colleague, and any other activities not directly linked to their everyday work duties.

Benefits of apprenticeships

Many Plymouth CAST team members have worked in education for several years without much continuous professional development.

Zoe has found that, by offering apprenticeships, Plymouth CAST are developing leaders for the future, investing in people and supporting them throughout their career.

Zoe says, 'We now have a clear strategy with a sustainable legacy.'

Zoe has also found apprenticeships have made upskilling much easier to accommodate, as staff are able to complete training within the workplace.

Diana commented that, 'The benefit is that, not only are we equipping our teams with the skills, experience and learning to make them more effective, but we are also demonstrating that we value them.'

Advice for other schools

Diana recognises that schools often feel they have little access to funds for continuous professional development.

However, she has shown the key is to start with what you have. Diana believes the apprenticeship levy is a valuable resource that schools need to make full

use of.

She encourages schools to realise the benefit apprenticeships can bring to individuals as well as schools. This could be by investing in current staff or exploring how you can use the apprenticeship levy when taking on new members of staff.