



# Coach and keep:

Improve retention with a coaching culture





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# Introduction

There have been **plenty of headlines** reporting on the growing teacher recruitment and retention crisis. With teacher shortages leading to schools spending **more money on supply staff**, there is no doubt that teacher recruitment and retention, along with the cost implications of it, is one of the biggest issues currently facing our schools. Combined with this, the Institute for Fiscal Studies forecast schools will see an overall **cut of 8% per pupil in real terms** over the next five years. The ongoing challenges schools have faced in finding the money to recruit new staff, as well as ways to retain good teachers, look set to only get harder.

## Subject shortages

An ongoing decline in the number of qualified teachers, especially in certain subjects, has been a huge issue for secondary schools and has a knock-on effect on the primary sector. Staff shortages are most apparent in specialist subjects like maths, RE, modern languages and science, but not exclusively.

Those secondary schools struggling to recruit staff across the country spent an estimated **£56m on advertising for vacant posts last year**, according to Labour.

Labour based the findings on information provided by a sample of 123 secondary schools, and say the figures highlight a 61% increase in the amount spent on advertising vacancies since 2010. The costs associated with losing a staff member including advertising, possible re-advertising, interviewing and training a new employee, all mount up to a very expensive recruitment process for schools.

It is not uncommon for headteachers to receive very few applications for vacancies, or no applications at all. Indeed almost 10% of the £56 million was spent on re-advertising for positions that were not filled following the first round of recruitment, a figure which has more than doubled over the past five years.

The decline in teachers and growing cost of replacing them, is coupled with the number of pupils in schools increasing and more going through the system than ever before. Inevitably, this culminates in insufficient capacity, with a severe lack of teachers responsible for bigger classes of pupils.



## Teacher exodus

The shortages surrounding teacher recruitment cannot be thought of without considering the issues around retention.

Earlier this year it was reported that **nearly half of England's teachers plan to leave** the profession in the next five years. In the survey carried out by The Guardian, 79% of schools say they are struggling to recruit or retain teachers.

With so many leaving our schools each year, there simply aren't enough NQTs to keep up and haven't been for some time. If existing teaching professionals have seemingly had enough and are continuing to leave at an alarming rate, why would anyone be attracted to joining the profession?

Experienced teachers have a wealth of knowledge and skills to offer schools. But with **increasing workloads**, more and more accountability, the pressure of Ofsted and constantly changing targets and legislation, is it any wonder that teachers are left exhausted, stressed and either leaving or planning to leave.

It's not just teaching staff either, the issue also concerns headteachers. School leaders are extremely visible. When things are going well your successes can go unnoticed, however if things go badly the impact can be very public. Heads have huge pressure on them and if members of their own staff see them struggling to cope with mounting workloads, additional accountabilities and a regularly changing curriculum for example, aspiring to senior leadership may not be so attractive.

## Retain and train

So how can we keep the skills, knowledge and experience we have in our schools? Schools who want to retain their talent and maintain productivity need to focus their attention on engagement, loyalty, and job satisfaction. Engaged employees and those who are recognised for their improved performance or progress are more likely to stay with the company.

Perhaps the most crucial area in retaining teachers in the current climate is providing them with opportunities, and the time and space, for development. There has to be effective support and meaningful training processes in place from the start, whether for those new to the profession or simply new to the school. Schools need to actively identify, promote and nurture talented staff as a means of retaining them.

Creating future school leaders through effective CPD routes aids both retention of staff and succession plans for the years ahead. This must go hand in hand with ensuring employees have the time to take advantage of these development opportunities by making CPD a top priority in school.



There are some **key areas to consider in retaining staff**. The first is knowing them and knowing what they are looking for. Sometimes, however, we're not sure what we want, or what we need, to be able to get to the next stage, somewhere different or somewhere new. This is where the benefits of coaching can be utilised to keep your best teachers.

## Coaching and CPD

Coaching is a form of development targeting high performance and improvement. It is different to mentoring in that, through coaching, the recipient learns to find solutions and answers themselves. It involves a coach working with a coachee and can be used to develop individuals in a number of ways, such as transitioning into a new role and facing challenges greater than they thought, or wanting to improve a particular skill such as presenting to large groups.

Coaching is for anyone and everyone. If someone has the benefit of a coach they become more aware of their strengths and how to adapt to different situations. They also become more aware of the areas they need to develop, making them more thoughtful about the direction of their professional development. **Coaching helps inspire and motivate employees** to improve knowledge, increase skills, and change behaviours to drive greater performance.

Coaching helps you think in a new way and be more creative about your choices of development, as well as more courageous and committed to it as a whole. For coaching to flourish, time and investment is needed from both the coach and coachee. Effective coaching will only be viable if a school has, and believes in, a coaching culture which is built into their ethos and values.

## A coaching culture

A school which values coaching creates a culture from the top down, embodying a commitment from the governors and the SLT to implement coaching to give staff more confidence in themselves, a drive to self-improve and, in turn, impact on whole-school improvement.

**If a school has a coaching culture**, it changes the purpose and value of everyday conversations. In coaching-style conversations, greater attention is paid to developing coachees. People are supported on an individual basis to identify strengths and areas for development, enabling them to feel both a greater personal connection to, and alignment with, the vision of the school. They know there is something bigger than their individual day-to-day role that they can contribute to.



Staff take stronger ownership of what they're doing and therefore feel more accountable. Great teachers motivate and inspire pupils. They whole heartedly invest in their learning and need schools to invest in them as teachers, as leaders, to be the best they can be. Coaching is that investment; it promotes a reflective and collaborative culture and increases positive attitude and energy. Staff feel valued and happier which results in greater job satisfaction and, in turn, greater staff retention.

## Coach and keep

Getting more good teachers into the system and keeping them there is without doubt a priority for our schools. Graduates are opting for jobs elsewhere and in an attempt to combat this, and soften the amount of debt that NQTs are saddled with, there are some financial incentives in place for secondary subject shortages. A £30,000 tax free bursary for graduates with a first class degree to teach physics and increased bursaries of up to £25,000 in other EBacc subjects (including maths, biology, chemistry, computing, languages and geography) are [recent examples](#).

The more the teacher recruitment crisis deepens, the greater the workload of remaining teachers will become, as they have to cover classes outside of their expertise. This in turn adds to additional paperwork, longer hours, higher stress levels and likely even more teachers leaving.

School leaders need more support to combat this and retain experienced teachers five years into the sector and beyond. It is not a quick fix. Coaching staff as a means to retain and develop them, within a coaching culture, requires commitment, dedication and a shared belief from both coach and coachee. Schools with a coaching culture are solution-focused and believe in putting the time and effort into sustaining that culture of self and whole-school improvement.

To create an effective coaching culture there are guiding beliefs to follow.

- People already have the potential.
- People are always doing their best based on what they know.
- Every person is unique.
- People are seen in terms of their potential, not past performance.

Such a culture will create a positive environment of engagement for staff and it is those staff, who feel they are making progress, who are more likely to stay with their organisations.

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*With thanks to Asma Mansuri, Tony Swainston and Jackie Beere for contributions.*



# Retention for the self-improving school

## The self-improving school requires driven and dedicated staff. Read these tips on how to create, develop and retain good teams

**Don't compromise.** If you need quality staff you may have to think of new ways of attracting and keeping them. The people are there, they simply need to know that your organisation is one in which they will enjoy working and be valued.

**Grow future leaders** by ensuring your school has a range of career paths that can take staff from where they are to where they want to be. If this is difficult in your school, look at other organisations and schools to see how they might work with you to develop and share staff and skills in ways that are beneficial to you both.

**Deploy staff effectively** and make the best use of skills and abilities. Many staff have skills beyond those asked for in the role they carry out. This is particularly true of support staff and those coming to the profession as a second career.

**Ensure appraisal systems** are robust, clear and tied to career development and school improvement planning, with constant review, feedback and encouragement to improve performance.

**Talent-spot** by ensuring that you work closely with ITT providers, Teach First, other organisations and training schools where regular discussions about staffing needs past and present are a feature of collaborative meetings. Look to your own staff to identify where there might be talent that is untapped and potential that can be developed. Make sure line managers regularly talk with their teams and the professional development coordinator about present and future career aspirations.

**Ensure professional development and training are clearly aligned to the school improvement plan (SIP)** and focused on bridging any gaps in skills.

**Appoint someone to the role of professional development coordinator**, ensuring they possess the appropriate leadership training to understand the link between staff and school development.



**Create a culture of openness** where all staff know what the SIP identifies as the future and current direction of travel for the school, and where they are motivated to do well through clarity around their job descriptions and their performance review.

**Reshape and redesign roles** to ensure there is flexibility to manage the role now while having the flexibility to respond to future challenges. If you don't need a head of department and want to move away from such narrow boundaries, what do you want, and how will the role be shaped to prepare you and your organisation to address present and future challenges?

**Make sure you are future-thinking and orientated.** Don't be afraid to make temporary appointments that can allow you freedom to manage curriculum provision and embrace the evolving examination landscape.

**Safeguard the wellbeing of staff** by giving consideration to issues such as home-life balance, job-sharing and shared appointments between your organisation and another. And don't be afraid to use flexi-time as an inducement to bring staff in or to keep them on.

**Work with teaching schools** to source new staff and develop in-house management programmes that keep staff engaged while providing new challenges and extending skills repertoires in readiness for new and emerging challenges.

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# GROW coaching model: a bookmark of effective questions

## What questions should you ask to get the most out of coaching or other professional conversations? Chris Moyse provides examples of GROW questions to create change

At Bridgwater College Academy (BCA) we are trying to create a learning culture through solutions focused coaching.

We have not graded lessons for six years at BCA as judgements generate an emotional response and emotion is a barrier to reflection. The purpose of lesson observation at our academy is, therefore, not to judge the quality of teaching but to:

- stimulate professional reflection and dialogue
- inform the coaching process and future developments both as an individual and at whole academy level
- help us deepen our understanding of learning and how we can, and do, make an impact upon it
- make us even better teachers.

Sometimes you get real insight from someone who sees what you don't or can't see, who questions what you take for granted and who makes you think differently.

One of the aspects of coaching that makes it different from mentoring is the use of a structured conversation. At BCA we use the GROW model, designed by Sir John Whitmore, as our basis for giving structure and purpose to our professional conversations.

At BCA a lesson observation is a way to collate evidence of a predetermined focus and the GROW conversation that follows a way to reflect and plan next steps.

Our professional development is about sustained practice of an evidence-based, challenging and negotiated focus with support and challenge from all levels. This focus is supplemented with opportunities for reflection with a commitment to next steps and a gradual increase in the level of challenge. We are trying to develop a culture of continuous improvement in which staff always strive to improve and develop their classroom skill.

In order to guide our staff we produce some example questions which are used not just for post lesson observation conversations but in any professional dialogue.



## GROW model: Goals/Reality/Options/What next?

### 1 GOAL

- What would you like to discuss? What would it be useful for you to discuss in this session?
- What did you want to achieve in that lesson? What would you like to achieve in this session?
- What would you like to be different when you leave this session?
- What would indicate to you that this has been time well spent?
- What do you want instead of the problem?

### 2 REALITY

- Where are you right now? What are the facts?
- Let's look at the evidence from the lesson. What does it tell you?
- What really pleased you about that lesson?
- Describe to me the issue from your perspective.
- On a scale of 0-10 where are things right now?
- What tells you that you are at 6? How did you get there? What do you need to do to keep your 6?
- Have you taught that lesson before or since? What happened then?
- What were you doing or thinking differently when it worked better?
- Tell me about the last time this issue was more manageable. How did you do it?
- What's something similar that you've achieved in the past?
- Does the goal really bring you the benefits you want?
- How achievable is it?
- What have you tried so far? Was it helpful?
- Would you like some feedback?

### 3 OPTIONS

- What are your options for action to achieve your goal? What options have you thought of so far?
- What are the different ways you could achieve the goal? How could you do it differently?
- Have you any ideas/thoughts?
- What are the pros and cons of each?
- Who might be able to help us? Would you like suggestions from me?
- Which option would you most like to act on?
- Who or what will be useful to you in this process?
- If you are 5 on your scale now, what does 6 involve? What would it take to move 1 point higher?
- What are the possibilities?



## 4 WHAT NEXT

- Which option will you take? What are the next steps?
- How will you do that?
- On a scale of 1-10, how committed are you to this course of action?
- When will you achieve it by?
- How will you recognise you've reached your goal? Who would notice that things had changed? How will you know when this has got better?
- What would be the first signs that things were moving in the right direction? What is your ideal/vision? When will you do it?
- What might get in the way?
- What support might you need?
- How and when can you get that support?

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*Chris Moyse is head of staff development at Bridgwater College Academy and an education consultant with over 25 years of experience in education.*

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# Coaching questions: the STRIDE model

Having a clear structure is crucial for a successful coaching conversation. Jackie Beere looks at the STRIDE model and offers example questions to ask

**STRIDE: Strengths - Target - Reality check - Ideas - Decision - Evaluation**

## 1 STRENGTHS

- What have you tried recently that worked?
- What has made you feel successful this week?
- What has been your best achievement of the year?
- What went well this week?
- Tell me about your most sparkling moment as a teacher?
- What are you most proud of as a teacher?
- When do you perform at your best?

## 2 TARGET

- What would you like to achieve?
- What would need to happen for you to walk away feeling this is time well spent?
- What exactly will make you feel successful in this?
- What are you building towards?
- What don't you want?
- How do you know this goal is worth achieving?
- How will you know when you have achieved it?
- What will achieving this goal do for you?
- How would other people benefit if you reached your goal?
- What is important to you about achieving this goal?
- How much personal control do you have over your goal?
- What can you do yourself to achieve this goal?
- By when do you want to achieve it?
- How will you measure it?
- What's your dream outcome?



### 3 REALITY

- What point are you starting from?
- What have you done so far about this goal? How effective have your efforts been?
- What's stopped you doing more?
- What have you learned from what you've done?
- What might you have done differently?
- What will happen if you do nothing?
- What other choices do you have?
- What do you have that you are not using?
- What is holding you back?
- What could stop you achieving your goal?
- What are you afraid of?
- What is not achieving your goal costing you?

### 4 IDEAS AND OPTIONS

- What could you do?
- What could you do differently from now?
- What must change for you to achieve your goal?
- What approaches have you seen used in similar circumstances?
- Who might be able to help you?
- Who could you learn from?
- What would you do if you had more time/less time/power/money/a magic wand?
- What is the simplest solution?
- What is the right thing to do?
- What is the most courageous step to take?
- If the constraints were removed, what would you do?
- What else could you do...and what else could you do... and what else could you do?
- What options would you like to act on?
- What could you do that would make the biggest difference?



## 5 DECISION

- What's the first logical step? What are the next steps? Precisely when will you do this?
- What will it cost you if you don't take action?
- What will you gain if you do take action?
- What might get in the way?
- Who needs to know about this?
- What support do you need and from whom?
- How will you get that support?
- Rate on a 1-10 scale your motivation to take the agreed actions?
- What prevents you from being at a 10?
- What do you need to do to get your commitment up to at least 8?

## 6 EVALUATION

- What did you do that was different?
- On a scale of 1-10, how hard did you try?
- What was the hardest thing?
- What was the impact – qualitative and quantitative?
- How did it make you feel?
- What has happened since?
- How have you changed?
- What will you do next?



# Coaching: the effective way to lead teaching and learning

**An annual conversation will not instil a sense of continuous improvement, but coaching helps staff take ownership of change and proceed to action. Jackie Beere explains how to do it**

Those of us who have led training within schools can immediately tell which staff will embrace the newest strategies with flair, enthusiasm and confidence. They are our trailblazers and often go on to be leaders. Not all teachers can do this. However, we must challenge and support all our teachers, whatever their characters and capabilities, to be the very best they can be.

As John Hattie outlines in his book *Visible Learning*, successful teaching depends on every teacher's mindset. Great progress depends on your teachers believing they are 'change agents'. Effective teachers are eager to know their impact, have high expectations and are flexible and responsive to the needs of their classes. So how can we help all teachers develop these habits?

Sadly, all too many appraisal systems are simply a paper exercise, neither accountable nor effective, sometimes arbitrarily imposing school priorities on teachers through personal targets.

As more teachers leave the profession, or plan to, now is the time to consider how you can build professional development schemes to help your staff become the best teachers they can be, enhance job satisfaction with staff feeling that they're making progress, and in turn increase retention.

## Coaching as personalised teacher improvement

Coaching is a support process and a way of securing changes and development in behaviour. Coaching needs to underpin all aspects of support and leadership of teaching and learning. In the very best schools it can also begin to underpin pedagogy. As teachers become experts at supporting each other to make progress in their careers, they discover that coaching questions work brilliantly for pupils, helping them also make great progress in their skills and understanding.

A conversation once a year setting vague targets will not instil a sense of continuous improvement. However, coaching helps staff own the changes needed in their practice and take the required steps to action. Coaching helps all staff take on board suggested changes in practice and gives them the tools to make them happen in the classroom, through experimentation and implementation.



The three elements of a successful coaching session are:

- a clear structure
- open questioning that helps coachees make their own decisions
- commitment to action with a date for review/evaluation.

Having a clear structure is the most important aspect to achieving a lot in a short time. There are a variety of models but all have an essentially similar structure. For example:

- The STRIDE model: Strengths / Target / Reality Check / Ideas / Decision / Evaluation
- The GROW model: Goals / Reality / Options / What next?
- The CIGAR model: Current situation / Ideal situation / Gap between the two / Action required / Review

All clarify the vital process of moving thinking into action for improvement. During a coaching session it is best to include a coaching contract in the process so that when an action is decided the coachee signs up to a specific plan (see below). For example, a teacher who needs to develop his or her practice may have been given targeted Inset activity. No matter how inspiring it was, the teacher will need a follow-up coaching session to devise ways to embed best practice from the Inset, working through specific elements of their teaching that will make the sustained improvements required.



**Date:** 11 January  
**Name:** Jackie Beere      **Coach:** Terri Broughton

**Focus for improvement**

*Using lesson objectives more effectively with Year 10 GCSE English to clarify their understanding of what they are being taught.*

**Action planned**

- Focus on specific objectives in all lesson planning using a variety of techniques from recent Inset.
- Coaching observation on 30 January.
- Obtain feedback from Year 10 students on 12 February on engagement with objectives and progress over time.

**Date for review observation:** 12 March

**Signed** .....

## Follow-up

Follow-up could include a coaching observation which gives direct feedback during the lesson. Observation feedback is too often delivered so long after the event that it is ineffective. A live observation encourages teachers to be flexible and responsive by explaining how children are reacting to their delivery immediately and giving permission for them to adapt their lesson in real time to meet children’s needs. For example, if, as the coach, you spot a child who hasn’t really engaged with the objective, feeding that back immediately to the teacher during the lesson is highly effective.

Teachers who are stuck need to know instantly what works and what doesn’t – and have the confidence to try different techniques.



## Coaching is all about asking the right questions

The most important skill in coaching is the ability to ask the questions that will lead people from where they are to where they need to be. ‘Coaching’-type questions are open, tentative and empathetic. The very best teachers are highly skilled at asking coaching questions to help students move their thinking forward, so creating a school culture where coaching is the norm will help all teachers improve their questioning skills. Over time those teachers will encourage pupils to use coaching questions in peer-to-peer assessment to support each other’s progress.



# Conclusion

What does coaching look like in your school? Coaching is often something that schools decide to try; someone in the school may have learned something about coaching from a course they were on and come back to school with enthusiasm about it.

But then they are back into reality, dealing with the heavy workloads and day to day tasks that face them. Coaching doesn't seem like a priority anymore and goes on the back-burner.

If there is no clear thought about how to set up a system in the school that allows coaching to operate, let alone flourish, staff will not see the benefits. If you want coaching to work, a significant amount of thought needs to go into how you will initiate, run and develop coaching in your school.

## Implementing a coaching culture

To bring a coaching culture requires consideration about the following.

- **Definition:** what does a coaching culture mean to your school?
- **Vision:** what is the long term vision for coaching in the school?
- **Objectives:** what are your objectives for creating a coaching culture?
- **Goals:** what are the long and short term goals that might be addressed with coaching?
- **Values:** what are the coaching values and ground rules that you will have?
- **Evaluation:** how will you measure the impact of the development of a coaching culture? These may include staff retention, engagement surveys, skills assessments, feedback and observation.
- **Continuous support:** what is the system of training and support for internal coaches and new employees?
- **Confidentiality:** coaching works best when it is confidential. However, if you want to gather information from people that can support growth in the school what kind of information will this include?
- **Creation:** what actions need to be taken to bring about a coaching culture and how will these affect the wider school organisation?

Key skills for coaching are effective listening, asking good questions and reviewing and reflecting. In a coaching session, discussion is led by the coach asking questions that allow the coachee to reflect on their practice and set their own goals for improvement.



A first coaching session will identify areas for development and build rapport. The coachee may have a very specific goal, something they want to work on in order to change or improve, or they may have taken on a new role and feel they would like some extra support.

## **Saving time and money**

Cuts to school budgets have meant finances are increasingly tight. A deputy head with CPD responsibility told us that budget constraints at his school mean that coaching is only used on staff felt to be underperforming. ‘Coaching should be available to any member of staff and only using on those who are underperforming creates a negative atmosphere and the wrong culture.’ Coaching is for everyone; it is not the same as performance management and does not deal with the same issues.

Think about your school. How much of a role does coaching play in your long-term strategy to harness staff development? Coaching as a means of retaining staff can have a huge cost-saving impact. The money saved on not having to pay a recruitment agency, advertise for replacing a role, perhaps re-advertising, hiring and training can be substantial. As can the time saved: a new employee needs to be trained up and likely won’t be fully settled and comfortable before six months into the role.

## **Coaching for staff development and retention**

On an individual basis, coaching enables the recipient to take ownership of their own CPD and increases personal well-being and confidence. In an organisation, coaching promotes a reflective and collaborative culture, increasing positive attitude and energy. Where staff are happy and fulfilled in their role, making progress and heading in their chosen direction of development, they are more likely to stay and so an organisation reaps the benefits.



## Sustainability

To operate and sustain a coaching culture, you'll need to think about the following steps.

- Train all your staff about what coaching is and why it is effective.
- Create a group of highly skilled coaches to work with staff.
- Establish a protocol for actions that outline exactly what the programme for support to improve will be.
- Establish various levels of coaching for specific staff needs.
- Run an Inset programme bespoke to the school's needs and differentiated for staff requirements with a compulsory element that links to performance management.
- Keep a clear record of the varying levels of performance of every member of staff and their progress, especially the impact of any action taken to support them (including lesson observations and paperwork to show decisions about performance pay).
- Encourage all staff to keep a record of their professional development.
- Ensure you have a 'coach evaluation' process where your coaches are judged on how they make an impact on others' performance.
- Include staff development as part of your self-evaluation processes.


Decide the system that you want, plan it thoroughly before you begin, be flexible with it as it develops and stay positive.

Along with a coaching culture, a growth culture providing the right climate for staff to develop in is key. Without an environment in which to use the skills of coaching, enhancing staff and school development through coaching is impossible. As one school told us: 'If clarity is present across the school regarding the value of coaching, then the commitment is there too, which makes it easier to find the time to do it.'

Having a whole-school coaching strategy means all staff understand the benefits of coaching and feel confident in seeking it out to set goals for improvement to aid their professional development. If the passion, desire and commitment are there, you will rapidly begin to see the real benefits of a coaching culture that can deal with change, retain staff and maintain their development.

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*With thanks to Tony Swainston*



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