

CASESTUDY: HOW SCHOOLS CAN ENGAGE WITH MULTIPLE PROVIDERS

Biddenham International School and Sports College



SCHOOLBACKGROUND

Biddenham International School and Sports College is a mixed secondary school and sixth form located in Biddenham, in the English county of Bedfordshire.

The school serves nearly 1,300 students from KS3 through to KS5 and has worked for many years with a range of teacher training providers to support double figures of trainees annually.



CHALLENGES

- › Significant variance in programme structures i.e. distribution of placements
- › Creates workload to find the right mentors, manage the programmes, and work with multiple providers
- › Employing high volumes of trainees requires mentor capacity
- › Trainee teacher prior experience and ability will vary
- › Having sufficient expertise to ensure trainees get a fair deal



SOLUTION

- › Work with people at the provider to develop strong relationships to ensure you always have a contact to hand should you need it
- › Be strategic and start planning early. Look at UPS staff a year ahead. Think about the ECT requirements
- › Prime your mentors well in advance
- › Recognise that teacher training takes many forms and schools have a responsibility to develop practitioners of the future. The benefits far outweigh the costs
- › Pair mentors based upon skillsets rather than capacity



BENEFITS

- › Cross provider sharing of best practice
- › Recruitment of ECTs that have been 'Biddenhamised' already
- › Knowledge pool of route into teaching
- › Supports the whole school culture of a growth mindset

CHALLENGES



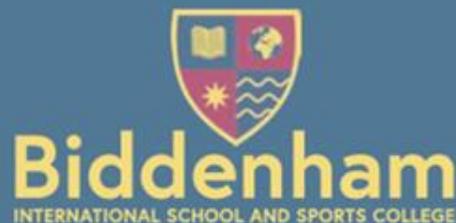
Biddenham International School, like many other schools, recognises the teacher recruitment and retention crisis could have significant impact on their continued success. The school is very committed to developing and bringing on the next generation of teachers, not purely to self-serve but also for the greater good of the education system. The school works with many providers and is receptive to new partners if they are in alignment with the culture and ethos of the school. For many years now the school has provided and support trainee placements which has allowed them to 'grow their own'. They are now seeing the fruits of their efforts as many of these former trainees now occupy middle leadership positions in the school.

An ever-present challenge when working with a range of providers is the variance that exists from one provider to another. These may be simple and manageable differences such as when the central training day is. But they could also be more significant, such as the dates of placements, how many weeks the trainee is present, and the specific requirements of the school. These challenges should be fully recognised as they can create tensions internally when considering a trainee timetable.

Teachers are typically time poor and finding time in a busy week to effectively nurture and mentor a trainee teacher is often not easy. The school lead for teacher training may wear many hats and they may well have limited additional capacity. There may be additional challenges for a school to find suitable mentors for ECTs after initially recruiting the trainee teachers. This requires consideration for a pairing of skillsets between mentors and trainees, as well as finding capacity within the pool of experts.

The school recognises that trainees are individuals, and as such they will have differing strengths, experience, abilities, and backgrounds. Different providers will have their own profiles of trainees as they all have organisation specific recruitment processes, support systems and curriculums. Trainees aren't the finished product and do require sustained input and support to develop successfully.

Biddenham International School embraces and celebrates the challenges that training teachers brings, as there are significant and wide-ranging benefits to overcoming these challenges.



SOLUTION



Biddenham International School understands that providers will do things differently. Their approach to overcome this is to build strong relationships with named colleagues at the providers. They will become your support network, and a quick phone call often goes a long way to gain clarity, support and just ask those 'silly questions' that will frequently arise. These relationships will also create a feedback loop where you will input to the training providers development to help drive improvement. You should not feel you have to work with every provider, rather work with those who align to your culture and ethos.

Be strategic with your mentor selection and start this early. Ideally the school should aim to have all mentors in place for the next academic year by the end of the first term of the school year. Naturally there is potential for staff movement, but organising early helps to mitigate potential disruption. Consider your staff who are already on UPS or going through threshold. These are your highly skilled practitioners who are most likely to be your high performing mentors. All mentors are able to participate in NPQ programmes to support their professional development and consider mentoring as a career pathway.

Share with your staff the reasoning behind training teachers. Be clear about the benefits to both students and schools, and make it part of the culture of the school. Bring your mentors along on the journey and prime them with this understanding early on to help create buy in.

When you are identifying your mentors try to avoid basing decisions on capacity. This won't provide the trainee teachers with best possible experience. While they may get a little more time than required, the mentor might not be the best fit. Consider skills and personalities first, capacity after. You can create capacity more easily than existing skills and personalities.

Re-use your mentors. As your mentors complete their second years with ECTs could they go back to the start of the teacher development cycle? Just as some schools do with pastoral leaders progressing with year groups; your mentors could work with your trainee teachers and move up with them through their ECT programme.



Benefits



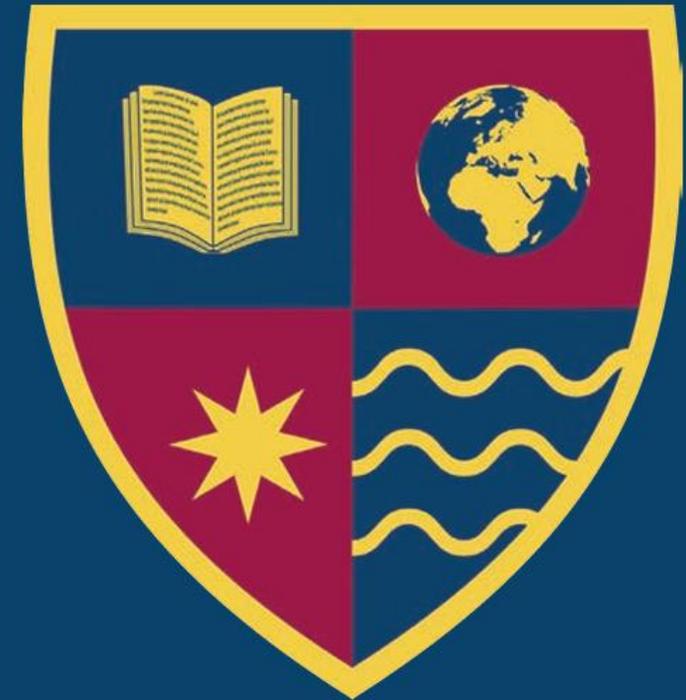
Biddenham International School benefits from working with multiple providers as they are able to take all of the best practice across the system to enhance the experience not just of their trainees, but also the wider staffing body.

The school sees that training teachers does of course have benefits in respect of supporting their own staffing needs. The opportunity to 'grow your own' and 'Biddenhamise' colleagues so that they share a collective vision and values is significant. Training teachers gives you a much better understanding of the teacher and school fit, rather than making that judgement on a single day. Equally being there for that transition from trainee to qualified teacher helps you identify ongoing development needs.

Working with multiple providers has enabled the school to have a live 'prospectus' of the routes into teaching for potential trainees. The school actively encourages members of their school community, including parents and non-teaching staff, to engage with their trainee teachers to help develop a wider understanding of the variety of different routes into teaching. This creates a continual pipeline of talent for the school.

Trainee teachers bring out the best in experienced teachers, and refresh current thinking and research within the school. Developing new teachers helps embed a culture of growth mindsets and propagates an environment of continual learning for all staff.

Biddenham International School now maps career progression for the teachers they train that stay at the school. Powerfully this means school leaders can review these successes as a model that can be replicated for a successful workforce.



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