



## Advice on Coaching and Mentoring

### Advice Note 2

*This advice has been prepared as part of our thinking about Professional Update and how it will operate.*

## 1 A Coaching / Mentoring Approach to Teachers' Professional Review

- 1.1 A mentoring and/or coaching approach has become the cornerstone of a range of new approaches to teaching and learning and to the way schools are led and managed.
- 1.2 In the specific context of teachers' professional review and development (PRD), it is widely recognised that a coaching approach is best suited to productive PRD meetings between line managers and their staff. *Teaching Scotland's Future* endorses the more general applicability of mentoring and coaching: "Mentoring and coaching skills enable much more effective dialogue and learning to take place within groups of teachers and with stakeholders and partners".<sup>1</sup> In the same report Graham Donaldson quotes from a pilot mentoring scheme for newly qualified teachers in England which was found to have significantly enhanced pupils' learning.

## 2 Coaching and Mentoring Defined

- 2.1 The terms coaching and mentoring describe a continuous two-way process through which the person in the role of coach, or mentor, uses questions, discussion and guided activity to help the person being coached, or mentored, to solve problems, address issues or do tasks to a higher standard than would otherwise be the case. The aim of the process is to improve performance in 'getting the job done' and, with no extra effort, making a direct contribution to the person's learning and development.
- 2.2 Coaching and mentoring are separate activities but the key principles are similar. Common elements, in an educational context, include:
  - a learning conversation;
  - reflection and sharing;
  - agreed outcomes;
  - focus on learning and teaching;
  - mutual benefit;
  - confidentiality.<sup>2</sup>
- 2.3 A mentor should have relevant and similar experience to the person being mentored, will act as a model and may offer advice. A coach need not share the knowledge base of the person being coached and will use questions to challenge thinking and promote reflection. Hook et al. (2006) put it this way: "mentors know lots of answers, while a coach knows most of the questions".<sup>3</sup>

## 3 Benefits of Coaching/Mentoring

3.1/...

<sup>1</sup> *Teaching Scotland's Future: Report of a review of teacher education in Scotland*, Graham Donaldson, The Scottish Government, 2010, p52

<sup>2</sup> National CPD Team, quoted in *Mentoring in Teacher Education*, HMIE, 2008

<sup>3</sup> *Coaching and Reflecting*, Peter Hook, Ian McPhail & Andy Vass, pub. Teachers' Pocketbooks, 2006

3.1 Hook et al. (2006)<sup>4</sup> describe the benefits for teachers as:

- thinking more clearly about things;
- feeling valued and listened to;
- recognising and appreciating their skills and resources;
- increasing their range of options;
- clarifying how they'd like things to be as they get even better;
- understanding what they need to do to get there;
- becoming more creative and optimistic;
- feeling more positive and confident about change.

3.2 If used effectively, there is abundant evidence that coaching empowers individuals, builds teams, enhances collegiality and improves morale across the team or establishment. As a result of feeling more in control individuals are more likely to accept responsibility both for their own learning and behaviour and for the aims of the organisation (in this context the school) as a whole.

#### **4 Climate for Effective Coaching**

An absolute prerequisite for effective coaching is a climate of trust. Schools where effective coaching takes place tend to be schools where morale is high, management / staff relationships are good, a climate of openness pervades and people at all levels feel valued.

Sheppard/Moscow (2007) state that a positive coaching climate requires you (the coach) to:

- believe in the client's potential;
- accept mistakes as long as the client is learning;
- be open to feedback;
- regard this as an opportunity to learn yourself;
- acknowledge the importance of feelings as well as facts in the workplace;
- give support and encouragement.<sup>5</sup>

The foundation for this process is the quality of the relationship between the coach and the person being coached. This is why it is not enough for a coach to possess the required skills and techniques. The person being coached needs to know from their behaviour, attitude and consistency that the coach is a person to be trusted.

#### **5 Coaching/Mentoring Capacity in Scottish Schools**

5.1 As a result of investment in this area, there is now considerable capacity in Scottish schools in terms of the numbers of teachers with training in the relevant skills. However, this development has been varied. The introduction of coaching has been promoted more enthusiastically in some areas than in others.

5.2 Further development of the relevant skills and dispositions would enhance the quality of PRD for all teachers and would support the cultural shift that will encourage and empower teachers to take responsibility for their own professional learning.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Coaching Skills*, Shepard/Moscow Ltd., Training pack for West Dunbartonshire and Argyll and Bute Councils, 2007