



CAMBRIDGE

Leading professional development: Making future-ready teachers

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Cambridge Schools Conference, July 2026
Future-ready: preparing learners to thrive

Housekeeping

- Health and safety
- Fire safety
- Washrooms



Agenda

- Future-ready learners need future-ready teachers
- Diagnosing professional development needs
- Designing professional development

Future-ready learners need future-ready teachers

Future-ready learners

Key findings from the report that directly relate to teachers' pedagogy:

- Signposting of skills students are developing.
- Role of subject knowledge as an enabler for the development of skills.
- Development of self-management skills.



**Preparing learners to thrive
in a changing world**

The view from International Education

What is the best professional development you have experienced?

- What made it impactful?
- What did it change?



Future-ready teachers need professional development

- Professional development is a lever for school improvement, not a compliance task.
- It should be:
 - Purposeful
 - Personalised
 - Sustainable.

Purposeful

- What requirements is the PD fulfilling?
- How do you know?
- The EEF outlines effective PD should:
 - build knowledge
 - motivate staff
 - develop teaching techniques
 - embed practice.

1

When designing and selecting professional development, focus on the mechanisms.



- High quality teaching improves pupil outcomes, and effective professional development offers a crucial tool to develop teaching quality and enhance children's outcomes in the classroom.
- To improve pupil outcomes, careful attention should be paid to how PD is designed. In particular, those who design and select PD should focus on mechanisms.
- Mechanisms are the core building blocks of professional development. They are observable, can be replicated, and could not be removed without making PD less effective. Crucially, they are supported by evidence from research on human behaviour—they have been found, in contexts beyond teaching, to change practice.
- Examples of mechanisms include revisiting prior learning, goal setting, providing feedback, and action planning.
- Those who select PD should look for mechanisms in prospective programmes; those who design PD should include mechanisms in their design.
- Careful consideration is also required to ensure that PD is evidence-based, and that content is drawn from trusted sources.

2

Ensure that professional development effectively builds knowledge, motivates staff, develops teaching techniques, and embeds practice.



- The mechanisms that make up effective PD can be split into 4 groups, each of which fulfils a different role.
- PD may aspire to include a mechanism from each of these groups:
 - A. Build knowledge**
 - Managing cognitive load
 - Revisiting prior learning
 - B. Motivate staff**
 - Setting and agreeing on goals
 - Presenting information from a credible source
 - Providing affirmation and reinforcement after progress
 - C. Develop teaching techniques**
 - Instruction
 - Social support
 - Modelling
 - Monitoring and feedback
 - Rehearsal
 - D. Embed practice**
 - Providing prompts and cues
 - Prompting action planning
 - Encouraging monitoring
 - Prompting context specific repetition

3

Implement professional development programmes with care, taking into consideration the context and needs of the school.



- Provide guidance on how participants can adapt professional development. Programme developers should signal to those selecting and delivering PD programmes where adaptations can be made, ensuring that the mechanisms are protected and prioritised.
- Ensure that professional development aligns with the needs of the school and is supported by school leadership. Gaining ongoing leadership buy-in can facilitate successful implementation.
- Recognise the time constraints faced by teachers and adapt professional development accordingly. Those designing and selecting PD should critically assess how a PD programme will fit in with the school routine.



Personalised

Not one-size fits all – you need the right PD for the right person.

- Do you know what the needs of your staff are? How often do you audit this?
- Does your PD programme flex to meet their needs?
- The right PD offers the chance to close the ability gap between experienced and inexperienced staff.

Sustainable

- Effective PD is the most cost-effective way to increase student outcomes.
- However:
 - it is vulnerable to changes in leadership
 - often the first thing to go when costs are tight
 - to realise its potential, it must be valued and championed by leaders.

The impact of CPD on pupil outcomes compares to the impact of having a teacher with ten years' experience rather than a new graduate. CPD also has similar attainment effects to those generated by large, structural reforms to the school system.

Education Policy Institute

Choosing the right PD elements

- To develop a flexible, sustainable and effective PD programme, you might want to use a range of options.
- For example:
 - courses offered by external providers like Cambridge
 - coaching cycles
 - peer learning
 - inquiry models.

Diagnosing your professional development needs

Diagnosing the issues



What is your biggest student need now?



What is the teacher capability gap?



What is getting in the way?

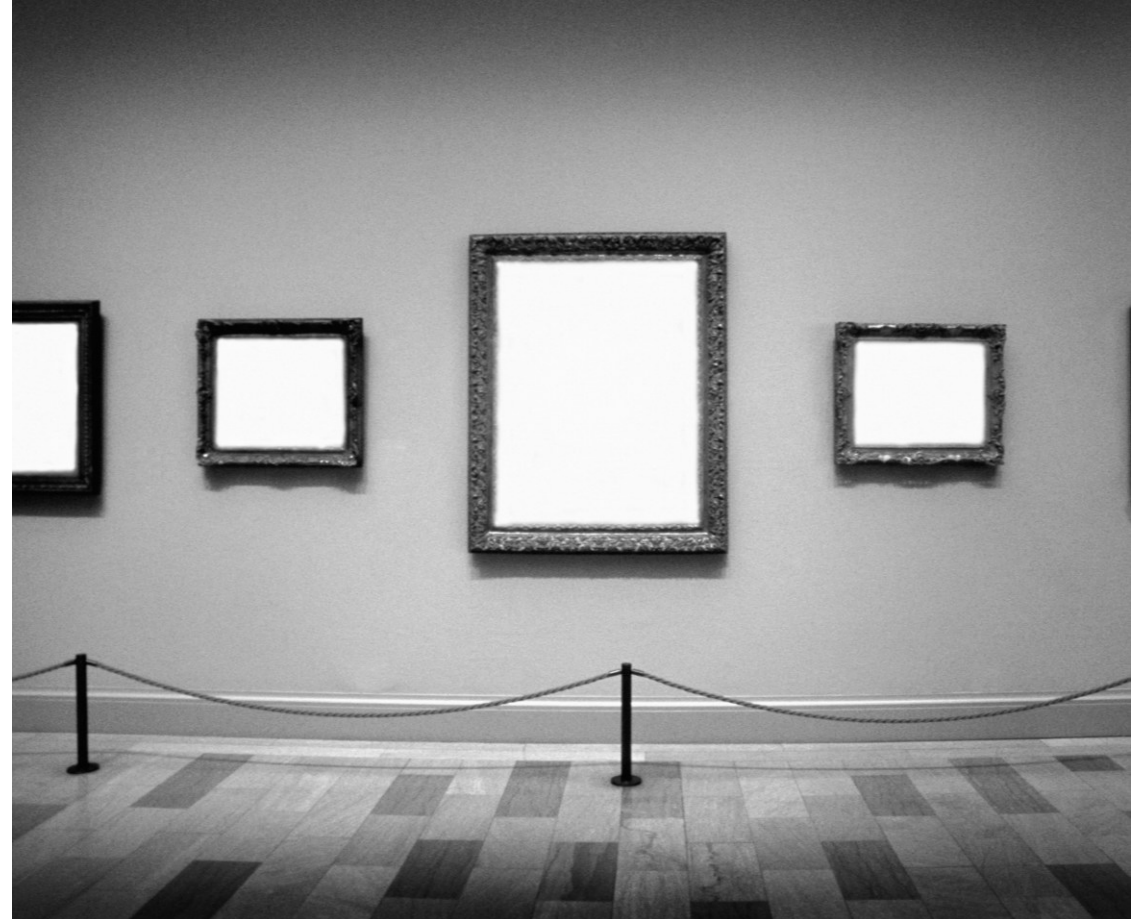
Design sprint

Designing professional development

- You need to define:
 - Purpose (what problem are you solving?)
 - Approach (how will PD happen?)
 - Sustainability (how will it stick?)

Gallery walk

- Spend time sharing and connecting with others.
- What issues or ideas resonate with your setting?
- Who might you want to connect with to discuss further?



Feedback



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Any questions?

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Thank you!

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