

Lancashire Initiative puts School Support Staff at the Top of the Class

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A Lancashire based initiative is leading the way in driving up standards amongst thousands of support staff in schools across the country.

Support staff are seen as increasingly important to the smooth-running of schools and there are currently around 243,000 people working in this capacity across England and Wales, performing a wide range of roles from administrative and technical support to bursars and teaching assistants.

Over 1,200 schools across the country have benefited from the work of the unique School Support Staff Partnership Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE), led by Lancashire County Council. The CoVE is the only one in the country to deliver training and development specific to the needs of school support staff.

Funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the CoVE brings together the expertise of four organisations that are at the forefront of the industry to share best practice and upskill the school support workforce. The partnership includes Lancashire County Council, Blackburn College, Staffordshire County Council and Yorkshire based Star Training and Consultancy.

Amongst numerous initiatives developed by the CoVE is 'Identifit', a Training Needs Analysis tool that is currently being used by 21 local authorities and 798 schools. The online tool is used by staff in schools to assess themselves against National Occupational Standards such as Teaching Assistant NVQ, Support Work in Schools VQ and the Teaching Standards.

The CoVE is also involved with tests and trials of a unit based approach to training for school support staff through the Qualification Credit Framework. This will allow people to learn in 'bite size' chunks and therefore be more flexible for both the learner and the school.

Alan Pemberton, School Support Staff Partnership CoVE Manager comments, "Support staff play a crucial role in schools and the CoVE has been developed with their growing importance in mind. The collaboration of the four organisations in the CoVE, each bringing their own expertise to the partnership, will bring major benefits to schools across the country."

Ian Haworth, Director of Area for the LSC in Lancashire adds, "The CoVE has a wealth of expertise and is already demonstrating its impact in supporting schools nationwide. This means more staff have received professional support and training, ensuring that standards are maintained and educational achievement improved."

Ends

Learning and Skills Council:

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world class standards. Our vision is that young people and adults in England have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. We work nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers.

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