



NPQH Case Study

Jill Whitehouse

Background

Jill Whitehouse was an Assistant Head Teacher at a large primary school in Newcastle when she first applied to take part in the NPHQ provided by the North East Teaching Schools partnership. Having previously completed a Senior Leadership Development course she decided that she now had the experience and desire to embark on the journey towards Headship and that the NPHQ was the natural step to take.



The application process

Applying to take part in the NPHQ programme was an intensive process. It started with the completion of an on-line application form. This required Jill to think carefully about her role as Assistant Head Teacher- to delve deeper into the competencies that she used during the day-to-day tasks she performed, as well as her relationships with her colleagues. The process ended with an 'Application day' where Jill took part in a variety of challenging tasks that encouraged her to start thinking like a Head Teacher. It was at this point that she realised that she was ready for the programme and would benefit from taking part in it.

"The application day was varied and challenging- right from this point it put you in the role of a Head Teacher and how you would think, plan, budget and analyse."

The programme

In order to complete the programme participants need to take part in three *essential* and two *elective* modules. Jill found all of these interesting and useful and felt there was an excellent selection of modules to choose from. She particularly enjoyed the face-to-face days where she was able to listen to a range of speakers as well as take part in discussions with fellow participants. This opportunity for discussion enabled her to share her experiences, but also listen to the views and experiences of others. It also provided her with new links and contacts.

There were however two features of the programme that Jill felt were of real benefit. Firstly being provided with the opportunity to shadow a Head Teacher in a placement school within a different Local Authority, which enabled her to experience a contrasting school environment to the one she was working within. She was able to attend a variety of meetings and school events and was thus able to gain a sense of what the day-to-day working life of a head involves, plus a sense of what she might expect if working in a different authority. The second benefit of the programme was the opportunity to undertake coaching. This Jill states was 'fantastic'. She was paired with a coach who was extremely supportive and who worked with her to prepare her for her final course interview

Assessment

It is fair to say that taking on a course such as the NPQH with its related assessment tasks is a big commitment. For Jill, working through the modules and linking them back to the face-to-face meetings she attended as well as her own work context, meant that the assessment tasks that she had to complete began to make more sense and feel less onerous. In fact she found the tasks so interesting that she began to keep files for each module and would use post it notes to jot down interesting quotes, references and observations. These she has kept to go back to when she embarks on her first Headship.

"At the end of the day the assessment tasks are as useful as you want them to be."

Impact

Halfway through the programme Jill successfully applied to become a Deputy Head Teacher in a Newcastle First School. She was, at this point in the course, more confident, having learnt such a lot from the experiences, tasks, reading and assessments. Looking at herself and her skills in such detail had enabled her to acknowledge what she could do and what she had already achieved. In her new role as Deputy Head she has finally been able to put all of her knowledge and skills into practice. It has also influenced her relationship with the staff in the school where she works. She finds she is always looking at them to see what leadership qualities they possess. In this way she is able to support their career development.



For Jill embarking on the NPHQ programme proved to be a challenging but extremely worthwhile experience. Most importantly for her it helped her to work out 'what kind of a leader' she wants to be – something that she is now putting into practice.