

Hayley Dunn, Windmill Primary School, Telford

Windmill Primary School is a LA maintained community school based in the Telford area of Shropshire. The school received good-outstanding ratings for behaviour and ethos in its last Ofsted report. The school is based in an area which means the majority of pupils come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and the school is now looking to improve attainment levels.

Hayley came to work in the School Business Manager role in January 2012. Prior to this, she had worked for several years in a Senior Finance Officer role in the Local Authority, and prior to that, in the accounting industry. In the accounting industry, Hayley was responsible for client accounting, as well as supervising sole trader and company accounts, along with VAT return work. To support her finance and accountancy roles, Hayley first studied on AAT courses ahead of completing the ACCA professional level 7 qualification.

When Hayley heard about the NASBM Professional Standards, she soon started to map out her current skills levels against the functions, completing a self-assessment exercise during May 2016. The exercise mirrored the fact that Finance, and also large parts of Leading Support Services, were very strong areas for Hayley, with a predominance of tier 4 ratings. Hayley believes this is a combined result of overall experience and time in finance roles, and training which has supported her CPD.

Hayley also completed the NASBM Professional Standards self-assessment exercise with the school's Site and ICT Manager which gave the Infrastructure (ICT) perspective, and also showed Hayley where she might further develop within the Infrastructure discipline. In terms of Human Resources, some of this activity is outsourced, and currently means there is less need to develop this within Hayley's CPD portfolio, though in the future, along with areas of Procurement and Infrastructure, Hayley sees a distinct benefit in learning about these areas:

'Completing the self-assessment exercise did take me a couple of hours to complete, but it is absolutely worth it. The most important piece of advice I can give, is when you work your way through the statements remember that it is a self-assessment of business management in your school or MAT; not purely a self-assessment of you. You will be part of a team delivering the support services; along with various external providers.

The way I approached the task was to start with the area I am most experienced; which for me is finance. As I read each statement and put in the appropriate number; I also added a colour coding so that I could clearly pick out the areas that need improvement. I also chose to add a notes column, which I used to add annotations of evidence, details where someone other than me was completing the task or where I wasn't completely sure what the statement meant.

I have also discussed the use of the self-assessment tool to share experiences, which I found really useful. The next stage of the process is for me to write a business development plan to address the gaps. Which will include planning CPD to upskill current members of my team. The focus for my personal development will include procurement, in particular the use of joint arrangements and the use of frameworks.'

Hayley also mentors two aspiring SBMs who work on finance and marketing projects within the school. The initial self-assessment indicates that some of the Finance work is already at Tier 2 level, and having the two colleagues to assist in these areas both supports Hayley's workload and provides mutual learning benefits:

'Encouraging and supporting the career aspirations of other people; especially those that I work with is very important to me. I am passionate about the school business management profession which anyone who follows me on Twitter @ShropshireSBM will know.

Making the investment in the two aspiring SBMs that I am mentoring is improving the service provision in my school, which in turn is having a positive impact on teaching, learning, behaviour and safety. It is also providing succession planning and supporting the profession. They are both enthusiastic about the possibility of being SBMs in the future; they have great potential and lots to offer. One coming from a marketing background has assisted with a grant application and designing a new staff induction programme; and the other from a banking background has improved our processes and customer service practices.

I have previously employed apprentices within the administration team, who have competed NVQ Level 2 and 3 qualifications, this has worked really well. It is also great to offer work experience placements within the support services team, especially at the end of term when it is school reports time!

When I started as the Business Manager at my school it was the first time they had had someone doing the role. This has meant that the role has developed and evolved over time. My network of contacts and service providers have been pivotal in helping me to develop and improve my knowledge and skills; and now I have the opportunity to share that with others coming in to the profession. Being a business manager has the potential to be a lonely role, but it doesn't need to be. SBMs should make the time to attend group meetings, CPD and conferences. The NASBM Conferences are an excellent opportunity to access high quality CPD, meet suppliers and to network with other professionals working at various levels.'

In the future, Hayley would like to continue to develop her career and in time progress on to a Finance/Business Director position.