MoE Mantle of the Expert

MANTLE OF THE EXPERT
Handbook





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INTRODUCTION

Information in this handbook contains the Mantle of the Expert programme, learning and teaching methods to be used, key dates, and assignments to be completed. The handbook is also available on the Mantle of the Expert website, mantleoftheexpert.com.



Please visit the website, where you will find further details of the programme, as well as resources, articles, assignments, and research.

Over the past twenty years we have been planning and teaching courses in Mantle of the Expert and have learnt there are no quick fixes or shortcuts to understanding the approach.

It takes time and dedication to grasp the range of complex elements involved, and a willingness to take risks.

The different stages will ask a great deal of you and you will need to make a commitment from the beginning to engage enthusiastically with the assignments. From past experience we have learnt that success relies heavily on six interlinking factors: the unwavering support of your school leadership team; regular and sustained practice in the classroom; a commitment to reflect, evaluate, and adapt your practice in response to your experiences; ongoing and regular support; high-quality training and the opportunity to see the approach being demonstrated; a willingness to be observed and to accept supportive feedback.

Teaching is a very challenging profession with often competing pressures on our time and expertise. This course has been designed to be rigorous and intellectually demanding. There are likely to be occasions when you feel your commitment sliding. At those times, talking to colleagues, discussing the pressures with your mentor, and sharing your feelings with others are a vital part of this professional learning. You are not alone. Although the process of learning Mantle of the Expert is intense and time-consuming, we hope you will find the process exciting, intellectually stimulating, and, ultimately, professionally rewarding.

COURSE OVERVIEW: MANTLE OF THE EXPERT PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICE

This programme of professional development focuses on the wide range of skills and understanding required to become an advanced user of the Mantle of the Expert approach. This will involve developing your teaching skills and your repertoire of drama techniques, such as the use of different 'voices', which can be used to enable teaching in subtle and sophisticated ways. You will find your use of language – particularly questioning – will be at the heart of your research during this programme.

In addition, you will learn how play, drama, and thought are interconnected, and how to deploy a wide range of drama strategies to create classroom-based make-believe and imaginative contexts for learning.

The theoretical and practical basis of Mantle of the Expert will be investigated, as well as the understanding of drama form and the application of theatre strategy in teaching. Furthermore, you will gain insights and wider knowledge through selected reading, individual coaching, and opportunities to observe experienced practitioners using the approach with your students.

During the course you will learn how to use role, how to use different forms of representation, how to plan for engaging and challenging activities, how to co-create meaningful contexts for learning, how to attract your students' interest using stories, symbols, role, and images, and how to build investment and concern. There will be discussions on subjects such as engaging hard-to-reach learners, differentiation, the use of scaffolding learning, power and authority, and methods to support your class in their personal, intellectual, spiritual, and moral growth. Finally, you will be involved in investigations into deploying high-level questioning techniques, and the use of sign.

Over the four terms of the programme you will develop from novice practitioner to someone advanced in using the approach. Key to this development will be your work in the classroom, planning, practising, and reflecting on your use of Mantle of the Expert. To support you in this process you will have a personal mentor, who you will have contact with online throughout the course, so you can discuss your development, ask questions, and receive feedback.

ELEMENTS OF THE COURSE

Your course will involve a combination of face to face and online training, demonstration lessons, coaching, support, observation, and feedback.

The course is made up of four supportive elements:

1. Face to face and online training	2. In school development days
3. Online coaching and support	4. Observation lessons, with feedback and support

Element 1: Face to Face and Online Training

Over the course of the programme, you will take part in a carefully structured sequence of training sessions designed to develop your understanding and use of Mantle of the Expert, alongside the associated elements of inquiry and drama for learning. The aim is to support you in building confidence and fluency with the approach, moving from early experimentation to more sophisticated and responsive practice.

This training is the product of over twenty years of research and development and plays a central role in deepening your pedagogical thinking, practical skills, and creative planning. It draws on a wide range of examples, models, and demonstrations to bring the work to life.

Training will be provided through a combination of in-school INSET sessions and online self-directed modules. These will include video demonstrations, reading materials, practical tasks, and opportunities to reflect on and apply your learning in your own classroom context.

Element 2: Development days

Development days are practical, in-school opportunities to explore Mantle of the Expert in action. They provide a chance to observe experienced practitioners working with children in real classroom contexts and to engage in collaborative professional dialogue.

Each development day will involve a demonstration lesson, followed by reflection and discussion. The content will be planned in collaboration with the host teacher, using the curriculum theme of their choice.

The aim of a demonstration lesson is to look at the Mantle of the Expert approach in practice: to examine how it works with children, to explore the various challenges (including behaviour management, engagement, curriculum development), and to reflect on

the kinds of teacher skills required (questioning, listening, organisation, collaboration, and so on).

The aim of the reflective session is to unpack the observed lesson, and to discuss planning, teaching, assessment, and other subjects of interest in a supportive and informed setting.

The development days are designed to be flexible, in order to allow participants and the course tutor opportunities to shape and use the sessions in ways that meet their needs and interests.

Element 3: Online coaching and support

During this course you will need to reflect regularly on your practice and development.

To support you in this process you will have access to an online mentor throughout the project, who will guide and support you in your development of the approach. The mentors are expert practitioners in Mantle of the Expert and will be able to give you advice and support on planning, teaching, assessment, behaviour management, and many other aspects.

Your mentor will also support you with the completion of your assignments and on your regular teaching and reflections on the approach. From past experience, we know that using an action-research approach (that is, planning, teaching, reflecting, evaluating, and using assessment to plan next sessions) is the most effective way to develop an understanding of Mantle of the Expert.

Element 4: An observation lesson with feedback and support

The fourth element of the course is lesson observation. The observation will take place in your classroom and will last for between one hour and half a day, depending on the age of the students and your individual requirements. It will be followed by discussion, feedback, and ongoing support.

The aim of the observation lesson is to assess your understanding of the approach and to provide any necessary support and guidance on further development. Please note that the observation will not be judgemental: there will be no grading or marking against Ofsted standards. The experience is designed to be educational, collaborative, and responsive to your development, not a judgement on your teaching skills.

Assignments

There will be four assignments over the course. Each of the assignments is designed to be reflective in nature. Although the tasks will have general headings and guidance, we aim to give you as much freedom and responsibility as possible to mould and interpret each assignment as you choose, and in ways that are most useful to you and your own professional development.

Assignment list

TIMESCALE	INQUIRY	FORM	PURPOSE
Assignment 1	What am I finding out about Mantle of the Expert?	Flexible - e.g. an essay, a letter, a short film, a slideshow, etc.	To reflect on the main elements of Mantle of the Expert; to consider how the approach works in your classroom and how it benefits your students.
Assignment 2	How can I plan and teach a Mantle of the Expert context for my class?	To use and adapt the planning format from A Beginner's Guide to Mantle of the Expert.	To plan and teach a Mantle of the Expert context, looking at the elements of planning, making connections across the curriculum, and creating opportunities for learning.
Assignment 3	How have I developed my use of Mantle of the Expert and my skills as a teacher?	Flexible - e.g. an essay, a letter, a short film, a slideshow, etc.	To reflect on the course up to this point, to look at your own professional development, and to think of next steps and goals.

Weekly practice of Mantle of the Expert in class

A fundamental part of developing a deep understanding of Mantle of the Expert is a commitment to rigorous and sustained practice in the classroom. We strongly recommend you practise at least once a week; less than that and you are unlikely to benefit much from the course. Mantle of the Expert is a complex approach, needing practice, and there are, unfortunately, no shortcuts.

It is vital, therefore, that you are prepared to start practising Mantle of the Expert the week after your first training session and that you are willing to increase your practice from there, and throughout the course.

The following are minimum requirements (we recommend more whenever possible):

Timetable of teaching practice

TIMESCALE	PRACTICE	REFLECTION	FORM
Term 1	One hour per week (minimum)	Thirty minutes in a journal after each session	A single, 'standalone' session, or a combination of sessions
Term 2	Increasing use of the approach with links across the curriculum	Thirty minutes in a journal per week	A context (or contexts) planned and taught over a number of weeks, making links to other areas of the curriculum.
Term 3	Utilisation of Mantle of the Expert into wide areas of the curriculum	Thirty minutes in a journal per week	A context planned, taught, and sustained over half a term, with multiple areas of the curriculum

Timetable of teaching practice

Term 4	Consolidation of Mantle of the Expert into daily practice	Thirty minutes in a journal per week	A Mantle of the Expert context is planned and taught as an integral part of classroom practice, used and applied when most effective.

Reading

During the course you will be required to engage in reading on and around the subject of Mantle of the Expert. This reading is planned to support your understanding and develop your professional development.

A Beginner's Guide to Mantle of the Expert by Tim Taylor is a prescribed text.

You will find further reading on the Mantle of the Expert website.

PROGRAMME OF STUDY

The programme of study for this course is divided into four modules. Together they will introduce you to and then develop your understanding of the three components of Mantle of the Expert: inquiry, drama for learning, and Mantle of the Expert pedagogy.



The first module will give you an overview of the Mantle of the Expert approach; the second an introduction to inquiry teaching; the third will delve deeper into Mantle of the Expert as a pedagogy; the fourth explores drama as a medium for learning. Please don't consider the four modules as separate or sequential.

Module 1: An overview

This module is designed to give you an understanding of the key elements of Mantle of the Expert. It will help you to see the big picture, as well as giving you an insight into the principal components. During the training courses (online and face to face) you will be introduced to a number of Mantle of the Expert contexts, which will provide you with the chance to experience Mantle of the Expert as a participant and to share being inside a fictional context. From this perspective you will be able to grasp the underlying aspects of the approach, such as sequencing, progression, and continuity, as well as to develop an understanding of how the approach can be used to create meaningful and engaging contexts for learning.

Module 2: Using inquiry

Module 2 focuses on socially constructed practices and inquiry, including a detailed understanding of the difference between enquiry and inquiry as modes of teaching and learning. Deep attention will be placed on the concepts of structured and open learning as well as tackling the notion of discovery-based learning. The first weekend will enable you to review and hone your skills in knowing the pitfalls and benefits of these pedagogic domains.

In addition, this module focuses on:

- Children as questioners, teacher as mediator.
- The use of different teaching methods: inductive, instructive and the choices teachers make when using them.
- Exploration in detail of the concepts and practices of 'community of inquiry': the investigation of tensions, problem-setting and problem-solving and the strategies associated with adults sharing power with learners.

- The different applications of Mantle of the Expert practices to represent learning (iconic, symbolic, expressive) and understanding how to deploy interactive and reflective questioning that elicits responses of high demand from students. The idea is to ensure learners do more meaningful talk than the teacher.

Module 3: Mantle of the Expert pedagogy

During this course you will explore the main concepts of the dramatic structure of Mantle of the Expert and how these can be used to develop learning across the curriculum.
Mantle of the Expert has three defining features:

1. The students operate within a fictional setting, as an expert team with power and responsibilities.
2. The team works for a client, who sets standards, needs to be communicated with, and requires information of some sort. This is the driver for the outcomes in the mandated curriculum
3. The client (imaginary) commissions the team to perform tasks and activities towards an end outcome. This might be a product, a problem, or a project. The tasks and activities create opportunities for the students to study the curriculum across wide subject areas.

While exploring these features you will learn how to plan for Mantle of the Expert and how to use the approach to generate engaging and meaningful opportunities for learning.

Language, as you will discover, is at the centre of this process, and you will spend considerable time analysing your use of language (in particular questioning) in order to work collaboratively with your students, to share the power to make decisions, and to build a community of inquiry.

You will also learn about the use of narrative in Mantle of the Expert and how story-making is used to make learning memorable.

Module 4: Drama for learning

This module will examine how drama can be used to create opportunities for children to explore situations from multiple points of view, and how this experience can be used to develop significant curriculum study.

You will learn how to use the different facets of teaching in and out of role, how to develop dramatic tension, how to use the dimensions of dramatic fiction, and how to plan for drama in Mantle of the Expert.

You will also study the ingredients of drama – people, ‘now time’, role, tension, and reflection from different points of view – as well as how to use signs, texts, images, and other resources to attract children’s interest and build deeper levels of investment.

General Teaching Skills

This course is designed as a programme of professional development. Its primary aim is to develop your skills and understanding in the use of Mantle of the Expert and associated practices, such as drama for learning and inquiry. However, as you master these practices, you will also develop the skills and dispositions of a highly effective teacher, what Husbands and Pearce have called the Nine Hallmarks of Great Pedagogy.

These hallmarks are listed as:

1. Serious attention to pupil voice
2. Strong teacher knowledge, behaviour, and beliefs
3. Long-term learning goals
4. Building on prior learning
5. Effective scaffolding of learning
6. Use of a range of teaching techniques
7. Higher-order thinking and dialogue
8. Formative assessment practices
9. Inclusion and equity

This course is not only about learning how to use a particular pedagogical approach, but about strengthening your overall professional practice, deepening your judgement, expanding your repertoire, and developing the habits of thought and inquiry that underpin great teaching.