

Reflection prompts: Collaboration

Introduction

These reflection prompts have been developed to align with the research on teacher collaboration and to support leaders of professional learning in making evidence-informed decisions. They highlight key areas to consider when applying the findings in a specific school or trust context. In this strand, the focus is teacher collaboration as a form of professional learning, with prompts designed to help leaders think carefully about strategy, culture, and the conditions that enable collaboration to thrive.

In addition to the research evidence, these prompts draw on the Education Endowment Foundation's A School's Guide to Implementation (2024). They reflect guidance on adopting behaviours that drive effective implementation, attending to contextual factors that influence success, and following a structured yet flexible process. The prompts are informed by the EEF's four implementation phases – Explore, Prepare, Deliver, and Sustain – to provide a manageable and sequenced approach. While leaders may wish to consult the EEF guidance directly, its principles have been embedded here to support thoughtful planning, delivery, and review.

Phase 1: Strategic Alignment & Awareness

- What professional learning needs, linked to teaching practice or pupil understanding, are we aiming to address through collaboration?
- What data, staff voice, or cultural signals suggest collaboration could have value in our setting?
- Why are we choosing teacher collaboration now, and how does it align with our broader professional learning and school improvement strategy?
- What barriers (for example: time, trust, competing initiatives) or enablers (for example: distributed leadership, strong peer culture) do we anticipate?
- Is there a shared understanding across senior and middle leaders of what high-quality collaboration looks like and why it matters?

Phase 2: Design & Preparation

- What specific form of collaboration will we adopt (for example: inquiry groups, co-planning time, team teaching), and how will we adapt it for our phase, subject, and school culture?
- How will we build ownership among staff by involving them in shaping the process and focus of collaboration?

- What routines, protocols, or formats (for example: video reflection, structured dialogue, lesson study elements) will help ensure depth, clarity, and focus?
- How will we protect regular time for collaboration and ensure its purposefully used for professional learning rather than admin or planning drift?
- Who will facilitate or support collaborative groups and what training or scaffolding do they need to succeed without dominating?
- How will we ensure collaboration is equitable; so early career teachers, part-time staff, or marginalised colleagues feel valued and heard?

Phase 3: Launch & Communication

- How will we introduce collaboration in a way that distinguishes deep professional learning from surface-level sharing?
- What messages will help staff understand this is not just another initiative, but a long-term investment in professional trust, challenge, and growth?
- How will we model and reinforce professional behaviours that foster trust, critique, and reflective dialogue?
- What support will facilitators and participants need to keep collaboration focused, inclusive, and professionally rewarding?
- How will we monitor how collaboration is experienced by different groups, and adjust if tensions, imbalances, or disengagement emerge?

Phase 4: Evaluation & Iteration

- What outcomes do we hope to see for teachers (e.g. reflection, pedagogy, confidence) and for pupils, and how will we measure these realistically?
- How will we collect meaningful feedback on whether collaboration is improving reflection, pedagogy, and professional identity?
- How will we evaluate whether collaboration is strengthening our culture (for example: trust, agency, distributed leadership)?
- Are we providing space and time for collaborative groups to reflect on their own impact and refine their approach?
- What indicators (for example: quality of dialogue, sense of belonging, engagement levels) will help us judge progress beyond simple participation?

Phase 5: Scaling & Embedding

- Before continuing or scaling, how will we review the outcomes and learning from the initial implementation?

- What will we do to refresh energy and purpose in collaborative work: rotating themes, inviting new voices, or revisiting shared goals?
- How will we sustain collaborative practices through leadership transitions, staff turnover, or shifting school priorities?
- What supports will be in place for facilitators and participants to remain motivated and skilful over time?
- How will we embed collaboration so that it becomes part of the school's professional identity, not reliant on any one individual or external driver?