



Education Sector: Leadership for middle leaders CASE STUDY

THE DESTINATION

We had successfully worked with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) of a Church of England comprehensive school in the North West over several years. The school had a "Good" Ofsted rating and was seeking to adjust to the changing environment within the educational sector, devolving budgets from the Local Authority and autonomy to shape its own future. The Headteacher wished to build on this work and create a culture of leadership across the school. We were asked to develop a programme for Middle Leaders that would educate, motivate and excite them to "Step up into Leadership".

THE INTERVENTION

We worked with the SLT to engage senior leaders and managers in the changes that they would need to make to ensure there was space for the middle leaders to generate ideas for change and that these would be welcomed and supported as appropriate. They defined what they would need to do differently - and how they would need to behave - to create this development culture, that previously had only existed around teaching and learning for the classroom.

We designed an approach that covered a series of workshops across the school year, which focused on:

- building self-awareness, management style and influencing skills, leadership and its application in school
- how to engage others in change and support them through it
- how to hold people accountable and monitor progress ensuring completion of work
- dealing with conflict and managing challenging issues
- being a role model for others.

Each participant had a couple of coaching sessions during the period of the programme so they could work through the specific issues that were pertinent to them. They participated in "share and learn" sessions; this enabled them to talk about the successes and challenges they were experiencing and to ensure that the school benefited from both the individual's learning and the collective learning of the group.

These processes were further embedded by each participant establishing a change project to work on through the period of the programme. This provided the practice field to apply the skills and learning and also contributed to the development of their teams and to whole school improvement initiatives. Participants were challenged throughout, to understand how their leadership behaviours can develop and improve, and were empowered to achieve this.

This programme has been repeated, and a cohort group has been established that is at the forefront of championing change in school. This group fosters enthusiasm for and helps embed and sustain, the programme of change. By popular request, there is a Masterclass workshop before the beginning of each new school year that members of this cohort group attend.

THE 'SO WHAT' FACTOR

There is an excitement and enthusiasm for change, with lots of people volunteering to lead - or work on - whole school improvement projects. Many within the original cohort group have been promoted and seen development within their careers. Feedback from participants include comments such as "this has been life-changing" and "the best CPD I have ever had" and "every middle or senior leader should do this".

While there have also been other factors contributing, the school has now achieved an Ofsted rating of "Excellent in all categories," become an academy and has also achieved training school status. The Headteacher says "these programmes have been the most significant transformational work my school has ever undertaken. They have enabled the school to build capacity and strong, confident and resilient leadership which underpins all the educational improvement that we have undertaken. They underpin our "Outstanding" Ofsted judgement."