



Catmose College is a popular secondary academy school in Oakham, Rutland with 989 pupils. The majority of students are drawn from the county town of Oakham and surrounding villages. The College is one of the highest achieving in Rutland and Leicestershire and was rated 'Outstanding' in all categories in Feb 2012. In 2019 75% of students achieved grade 4 (pass) and above and 46% achieved a grade 5 (strong pass) or above in GCSE examinations. The school offer a broad range of experiences beyond the classroom to build independence,

resilience and leadership skills that are critical for success in adult life.

Strengths development was introduced to the English Department who have a strong record of performance. They have experienced considerable change, most notably a new Head of Department and significant curriculum changes as the GCSE demands rise.

This strengths initiative involved ten English teachers including the new Head of Department. This is a highly committed team with a wide range of experience who are making rapid progress. Many of the team are part time and so time to meet together to build the team has been problematic. Strengths-based development was deployed as a vehicle to develop and support the team during this time of change and build collaboration, better understanding and strong, supportive working relationships.

Process

Teacher team:

- Teaching team took the StrengthsFinder survey and received their top 5 report
- The team took an employee engagement survey at the beginning and end of the project
- Teacher team had two individual coaching sessions with Karen over a 4 month period.
 - Session 1 focused on understanding their profile and exploring insights to raise performance on individual and team goals
 - Session 2 focused on identifying success so far and future goal setting on individual and team goals
- The whole team had two team strengths discovery sessions to share insights and feedback to others
 - Session 1 focused on sharing insights and getting to know each other at a deeper professional level.
 - Session 2 focused on applying further coaching and discussion insights to drive the performance and engagement of the team.

Impact

Employee engagement survey results demonstrated an enormous rise in scores

- Participation in the survey rose from 77% to 100%

- All other areas rose by between 0.1 and 1.2 These are huge improvements in scores. Only one area reduced (by 0.1 out of 5)
- Recognition (2.7 to 3.8), being cared about (3.9 to 4.6) opinions counting (3.3 to 3.8) and having friends at work (2.9 to 3.8) rose most significantly.

The team survey produced the following results

- 91% of team felt that the strengths initiative had positively impacted their performance at work as a teacher and a leader.
- 89% of team felt that this time was a great investment of time for them and for their organisation in terms of their professional development and impact in the classroom and leadership goals.
- 86% of team felt that the insights gained, and progress achieved would be sustainable over time.
- 97% of the team would recommend this process to a colleague.

The team identified that strengths development had helped them with the following areas:

- *A better understanding of their strengths to apply to their role and wider life*
- *Allowed team members to get to know each other better and so support each other*
- *Valued time for deep reflection and goal setting at an individual and team level*

Comments received about the experience include:

"Karen was so knowledgeable about the themes and seemed to identify key aspects of our personalities that linked to those themes. She was so easy to talk to and it helped me understand myself more. I am still learning about others so it is early days in terms of how I can use this to utilise working with them."

"The experience made me view myself differently and appreciate what I bring to the team."

"It gave us an insight into parts of our own personality and our strengths that we rarely get to use"

Next steps

The Catmose team have successfully explored the discovery stage of strengths development with the whole team. They now face the challenge of embedding the benefits, language and behaviour to get maximum and sustained impact on raised performance, expectations and engagement. They will do this by keeping the language and philosophy alive by regular discussions in team meetings and 1 : 1 meetings which will use strengths to inform their discussions. They look forward to welcoming new colleagues into the team and introducing strengths to them as well.

If you would like to discuss how initiatives like these can support and develop your team then please get in touch.

Karen Muir, Rutland Coaching karen@rutlandcoaching.uk For further testimonials please see www.rutlandcoaching.uk and www.soar.com/KarenatRutlandCoaching