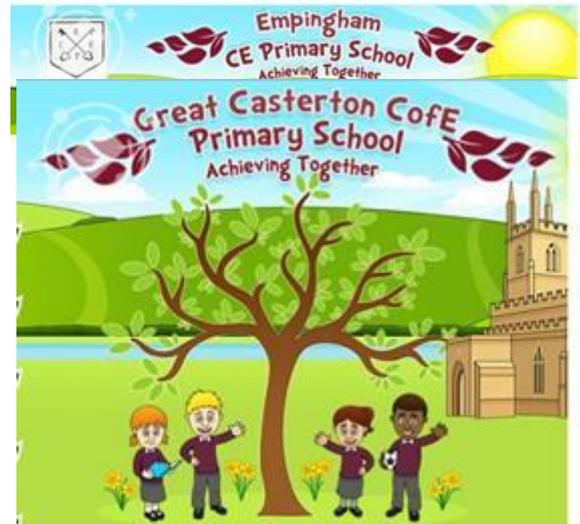


Empingham CE Primary and Great Casterton CE Primary School are small rural schools that share a Headteacher and a Governing Body and are part of the Rutland Learning Trust.

The schools have a combined roll of 182 pupils. This is the second academic year of strengths development and this year's focus is to build leadership capacity, understand each other better and hold each other to account more readily as part of their middle leadership role. Lockdown occurred halfway through this programme, so the focus moved to support leadership in uncertainty.

The initiative continues to involve the whole teaching team who work over the two sites. This is a high performing team with a wide range of experience and time served.



Process

The Headteacher had fully engaged with the strengths philosophy and we had worked together for some time. She had explored the potential of her own top 5 and so understood how this process could work for her team.

Teacher team:

- Teacher team are building on last year's strengths development learning
- The team had two individual coaching sessions with Karen over a 9 month period.
 - Session 1 focused on understanding their profile in light of their middle leader role
 - Session 2 focused on leading through uncertainty and remotely as a response to school lockdown via zoom
 - The team engaged enthusiastically with strengths discovery team sessions where they shared and discussed the impact of their combined strengths and blindspots.

Employee survey results demonstrated the following results

- 100% of team felt that the strengths initiative had positively impacted their performance at work as a teacher and a leader.
- 95% of team felt that it was a great investment of time for them and for their organisation in terms of their professional development, impact in the classroom and leadership goals.
- 95% of team felt that the insights gained, and progress achieved would be sustainable over time.
- 94% of the team felt that insights gained from team sessions have enhanced professional relationship and given them a greater appreciation of all themes bring to the team.
- 100% 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
- Encouraged teachers to think about what was next for them professionally resulting in more aspirational goal setting
- Valued time for deep reflection and goal setting at an individual and team level
- Identified how their strengths support but can also clash with each other and valued time in a safe, positive space to explore this.

Comments received about the experience include:

"It has a huge impact on my mental well-being as it is the only time that I stop and consider what is happening at work, the direction I want my career to take and how I can be more effective. It gives me lots of time to reflect, not only in the sessions, but thereafter, as Karen always inspires me to look at things in different ways and to challenge myself to improve things." Class teacher

"Karen is fantastic, beyond superlatives, and it is the most positive experience as she is warm, caring and has such an insight into people." Class teacher

"Very beneficial, especially during the Covid outbreak, I am now able to understand and accept why I feel the way I do about the situation." Class teacher

"By having the one to one sessions, I can dive deeper into using my themes to work best and in the team circumstances I have really enhanced my understanding of what others need from me and what I can take from them. It is a great opportunity to encourage one another and all play towards our strengths." Class teacher

"I think it is great for the team to think about where our strengths and weaknesses lie as this will not only assist with strategy planning but it also enables us to use the strengths of others to help us with our weaknesses. I think that the team meeting where we discussed these was such a rare opportunity to think about those around us and what we can contribute. I would therefore like to have more coaching sessions and more team meetings to focus on strengths and how these can help us build an even better team." Class teacher

Next steps

The Primary Partners team have begun the challenge of embedding the benefits, language and behaviour to get maximum and sustained impact on raised performance, expectations and engagement.

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

