



St Nicholas CEVA Primary School is a small rural school that is part of the Rutland Learning Trust. The school has 182 pupils.

The focus of this strengths project began as building 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 leadership in uncertainty.

The initiative involved the whole teaching team and was extended to include the office and teaching assistant team during Covid 19 lockdown. Some of the teachers had been involved in a previous project two years before. 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. He had explored the potential of his own top 5 and so understood how this process could work for his team.

Team:

- The teacher team had two individual coaching sessions with Karen over a 6 month period. Office and TA team had one individual session during Covid focusing on wellbeing and team connection.
- Many of the teaching team were building on strengths learning from two years ago
 - Session 1 focused on understanding their leader role, style and impact
 - 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 blind spots

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.
- 97% of the team felt that this programme supported their wellbeing during the Covid 19 lockdown period.
- 100% felt that their coach understood their unique strengths and challenges
- 98% of team felt that it was a great investment of time for them and 87% felt that it has been a great investment for their organisation in terms of their professional development, impact in the classroom and leadership goals.
- 88% of team felt that the insights gained, and progress achieved would be sustainable over time.
- 100% of the team felt that the sessions were useful and enjoyable.
- 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
- They valued the time for reflection and deep connection with colleagues during lockdown
- An increased understanding of how colleagues tick and a wish to find out more about their team so that they could work together more effectively

Comments received about the experience include:

"During this challenging time, the Strengths sessions were a fantastic way to stop, reconnect with the team and use our strengths to support each other and the wider community. My session with Karen helped me to create a list of practical actions, which have already had a positive impact."

"In our very busy lives, this has been a wonderful opportunity for self-reflection and heightened my awareness of 'what make me tick'. I read through my 'themes' with a knowing, nodding smile... they really describe 'me' and understanding what my strengths are help me in all aspects of my professional and personal life."

"I got a lot out of the individual coaching session - especially during the challenges brought by Covid. It helped to reframe my thinking and provided challenges to strive towards. It has been helpful to recognise the strengths of others in the team as well and have an awareness of this."

"I feel I know a lot more about myself but still feel I need more time to 'unpick' the strengths of my colleagues. It has been really useful to chat in depth to others in our 'meeting rooms' and I feel I have a greater understanding of the strengths of those particular colleagues, as a result of these discussions."

Next steps

The St Nicholas 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 visit www.rutlandcoaching.uk and www.soar.com/KarenatRutlandCoaching

