

Introduction



South Witham Academy is a one form entry primary school in the village of South Witham, Lincolnshire. They joined the Brooke Hill Academy Trust in 2016 which comprises of one town primary school and another small village primary school. In 2016 under one of

the first new Ofsted framework inspections South Witham was graded as requires improvement. Significant progress was identified since the school joined the Trust.

This programme of strengths development was initiated by the Executive Headteacher and was led by the Deputy Headteacher. They wished to raise the levels of self-awareness, engagement and collaboration across the team to support sustained and rapid school improvement. The programme took place during the second lockdown period (Sept – Nov 2020) and reducing isolation and supporting the team through this period of uncertainty was also a key driver.

This initiative involved all five class teachers including the deputy head who was new to role and three teaching assistants. This is a team with a wide range of experience and the programme took place during the Covid 19 period. The team had not used CliftonStrengths as a developmental tool before.

"I have learnt so much during this process and have more confidence in myself to make decisions when necessary and work collaboratively with my colleagues.

Deputy Head, Ailsa Jackson

The programme delivered..."a much more positive approach to teamwork and a greater understanding of the strengths of the team." CEO, Sharon Milner

Goals for the project

Our key goals were:

- to bring the team together to support, understand and learn from each other during the Covid period
- to visibly invest in the team and build high expectations of each other and the children
- to build morale, trust and professional confidence during Covid and beyond.
- to develop the deputy headteachers leadership capacity in her new role

Process

Team Talent Programme for South Witham Academy Sept 2020

	07-Sep	14-Sep	21-Sep	28-Sep	05-Oct	12-Oct	02-Nov	09-Nov	16-Nov
		Week 0	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7
For the leader	Alignment session (60 mins)		Leader coaching session (60 min)	30 min	Leader coaching session (60 min)	30 min		Leader coaching session (60 min)	
		Set up activities	Online nudges, reflection activities and insights					Online nudges	Review activities
For the team			Team session 1 (90 min)				Team session 2 (90 min)		
		Set up activities	Online nudges, reflection activities and insights					Online nudges	Review activities

Impact

Employee engagement and feedback survey results demonstrated the following results:

- 12 out of 16 engagement aspects rose during this period.
- 7 out of 16 engagement indicators rose by 10%+ (0.5 – 0.95)
- Feeling proud to be part of the team and valuing the teams mission and purpose showed particular increases (0.5 & 0.7).
- 80% of the team felt that the behaviour and attitudes of the team had changed in a positive manner.
- 90% of the team felt that this was a great investment of time for them and for their organisation in terms of their professional development and impact.
- 84% of the team felt that the insights gained, and progress achieved would be sustainable over time.
- 90% of the team would recommend this process to a colleague and felt that it had been a good investment in their time.

The executive headteacher and deputy identified how the programme had helped progress in all three key goals:

- The team felt the programme was positive, supportive, and highly developmental. They were visibly and meaningfully invested in.
- Greater collaboration is beginning to develop across the team
- Confidence and positivity rose noticeably within the team

"I would recommend this to all schools to bring their staff closer together. All of the staff at our school thought it had improved their well-being too.."

*Deputy Headteacher,
Ailsa Jackson*

The team identified that this strengths development programme had helped them in the following areas:

- Greater openness, understanding and confidence in each other
- All responses were positive and focused on how this approach could drive forward the success of their professional development and the success of the team

When the team were asked what they would **do more of** because of this programme

- Increased confidence
- Offer to help others regarding organizing rather than criticise.
- Communicate with everyone on a regular basis
- Think more deeply about what we do and how we do it

When the team were asked what they would **do less of** because of this programme

- Doubt themselves less
- Avoid people they don't know as well
- Judge other people without understanding them
- Worry
- Feel negative about impact and role in the team

Conclusion

The structure of the programme focused on building sustainable habits that build trust and allow the whole team to use their strengths for greater collaboration, raising performance across the Trust.

The team and team leader were extremely positive about the impact that this programme had on their own leadership development and the development of the team. They intend to continue to use the language and knowledge that the programme has given them to drive forward their most important goals.

When asked what they would do more of because of the programme

"Believe in myself! I think looking at my strengths and making decisions through the process has helped me to be more confident. I have also found ways to discuss things with the team which I would have been apprehensive about before.

*South Witham Team
Member*

"It's very easy for me to think I've not made the right decision or let other peoples opinions impact what I do and so since doing this programme I now believe in myself more and go with my gut feeling.

*Ailsa Jackson, Deputy
Head*

“Such a great opportunity and the delivery of the whole course has been awesome. Thank you, Karen Muir,”

*South Witham
Team Member*

Next steps

The same programme has been rolled out in the two other schools in the Trust and we now are planning how to embed this learning whilst including other team members in this development.

The South Witham Academy Team have successfully explored the discovery stage of strengths development. They now will embed 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