



MANAGING CHANGE IN EDUCATION WITH FISH! PHILOSOPHY LIVE LEARNING



Merged schools, failing status... you had a lot to take on when you came into this role?

Yes. It all required a lot of change for the staff to go through. Both schools were failing so we started at a very low ebb and there was a huge necessity to change and improve.

In addition, quite a lot of the staff had been there for a very long time so the change was always going to be a challenge.

And how did you approach that challenge?

The first phase of change was getting our processes right and getting people to do things in a different way. That kind of change is always a struggle because most people find change difficult so you're always going to face some level of resistance.

The second phase was about changing mindsets and how we approach work. Today we've got two schools that are ranked as good and outstanding. That's take a massive commitment from everyone on the team and they can see those results. That doesn't necessarily, however, make them motivated.

The huge success of the change is there to be seen. Despite that we still had a small, but vocal, minority of people who felt it was appropriate to wander around corridors being grumpy, moaning and thinking what a terrible life they had. We even had a

phrase in the school that 'if you gave them a gold brick they would complain it was too heavy'!

And what was the consequence of that?

It wasn't affecting the standard of teaching - all teachers are very good at flicking the switch at the point they go into the classroom and there's not a teacher that I've met who thinks it would be appropriate to go into a class and take out their grumpy mood on the students. What we had, though, was people who thought that it was perfectly alright to be like that within the team. It was making everyone feel very depressed.

What was your plan to motivate them?

Motivation is always a tricky one: you can only be motivated if you want to be. I knew whatever I tried to do that there would be some people who would embrace it, and some people who would just think it was a crap idea; because it was my idea!

So, you turned to FISH!?

Yes. I'd used **FISH!** myself about eight years ago so I put **FISH!** into Google and that's where I found Video Arts.

The Video Arts trainers were really good. We spent lots of phone calls and conversations talking about our situation and what it was we wanted. I really got that sense that we were getting a personalised package.

So you were pleased with how things went on the day?

Yes. We had 38 people on the day so it was a big group: teachers, teaching assistants, office staff and cleaners. The trainers managed it brilliantly. It was a very good package. I was very, very pleased with it.

Even throughout the day the trainers tweaked things to make sure that they were responding to the needs of the delegates as they arose. For example, there was one table that, whenever we talked about specific examples, always phased it within the context of their work with children. So the trainers started to challenge them to relate that to how they work with each other.

And has it improved motivation?

The feedback from the team was very, very strong and positive. And, in terms of changing behaviour I know now that, if there are people who are being negative, they will be challenged in a positive way: I think we've empowered the majority to feel that they can tackle negativity.

Our ultimate aim for the school is to be outstanding: we all live and die by Ofsted! Part of getting there is about creating the right environment: we all want to work in a happy and respectful working environment. Whether the school is outstanding or not then that's the key measure of success that we've achieved.

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