

Evaluation of Leadership Development At A Secondary Special School

The Programme:

Session 1	24/25.06.25	Introductions/Vision of Education
Session 2	14/15.07.25	Curriculum and Teaching
Session 3	09/10.09.25	Culture and Ethos
Session 4	23/24.09.25	Organisation Effectiveness
Session 5	07/08.10.25	Governance/Accountability/Ethics& Professional Conduct
Session 6	21/22.10.25	Strengths/Development Need/School Project
Session 7	11.11.25	Meetings with Headteacher

The Development Tool

All participants were provided with access to the school leader development tool. All used the tool to assist them in identifying their strengths and developmental need.

All participants have created a diagrammatical representation of their self-evaluation outcomes.

The Participants:

Middle leaders and assistant heads. Seven in total

The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher were given an overview of the content covered each week.

Headteacher Evaluation

The recent School Leadership Programme has been an outstanding success and has made a significant contribution to developing leadership capacity within the school. The programme required participating staff to identify an aspect of the School Development Plan as the focus for their individual leadership projects. These projects were then presented to the Headteacher and to Mike at the end of the programme, providing a valuable opportunity for participants to share their learning and demonstrate impact.

Throughout the programme, staff engaged enthusiastically with the training and showed a high level of commitment to both their personal development and the improvement

priorities of our school. The sessions provided a strong foundation in leadership theory and practice, which participants were able to apply directly to their chosen projects.

Staff reported that they learnt a great deal through the process, gaining deeper insight into the complexities of leadership, including communication, strategic planning, and managing change. They demonstrated a clear understanding of how leadership operates at different levels within a school and how effective leadership can drive sustained improvement.

One of the most positive outcomes of the programme was the extent to which staff were able to reflect on their own leadership strengths and identify areas for further development. This self-awareness has been a key step in their professional growth and has encouraged a culture of reflective practice across the staff team who took part.

The final presentations showcased a range of innovative and impactful projects; all firmly rooted in our school's strategic priorities. Participants articulated their learning confidently and provided evidence of measurable outcomes. I was extremely impressed by the high standard of work produced and the professionalism shown by all involved.

Overall, the programme has been transformational for those who took part. It has not only developed individual leadership skills but also strengthened the collective capacity of the school to lead improvement from within. The motivation, confidence, and insight gained through this experience will undoubtedly have a lasting positive impact on both the participants and our wider school community.

I would like to thank Mike for his support and guidance which has also had a positive impact on my own practice as a Headteacher.

Headteacher

Participant Evaluations

The main purpose of the sessions with Mike was to support me in reflecting on, evaluating, and strengthening my leadership practice so that I can be more effective in driving school improvement and building leadership capacity.

The sessions provided valuable, structured time and space to reflect on my leadership behaviours, values, and the impact I have on others. Through my discussions with Mike, I was able to think deeply about how my actions influence staff culture and student outcomes. He shared a range of practical examples, strategies, and solutions that were both relevant and informative across many areas of leadership.

Using the School Leader Development Tool enabled me to reflect systematically and assess my strengths and areas for development across key domains of leadership. This

process helped me to identify specific, evidence-informed priorities for improvement.

As a result of the sessions, I feel more empowered and confident in developing colleagues and distributing leadership effectively. I am also more comfortable approaching and managing difficult conversations in a constructive way, rather than avoiding them.

Overall, the sessions were well planned, purposeful, and thought-provoking. They provided valuable insight and led naturally into key areas of leadership development that will continue to inform my practice moving forward.

Participant A

I have found the programme to be incredibly helpful and a genuinely powerful leadership development tool. Below is a summary of my evaluation and the impact your programme has had on me and my work at Corley.

1. The programme has been particularly helpful for me in terms of developing a clear understanding of what effective leadership looks like in practice: e.g. 'what does 'good' look like'. This is now re-framed through the lens of the new framework.

Impact: This has enabled me to evaluate and refine my own leadership approach, ensuring that my expectations of teaching and learning are consistently aligned with high standards and best practice across the school. In the recent Learning Walks, I have noticed that I am holding myself and others to account more using the criteria- which I always have done- but now use data more robustly alongside my more anecdotal or instinctive observations.

2. One area that has been incredibly useful has been around governance. Mike's sessions and the development tool booklet have both significantly deepened my understanding of governance and operational management—areas in which I previously had limited experience. Although I had created CPD for them, which Mike was happy with, and engaged in 1:1 monitoring visits, I don't think I quite understood the significance of their role with its links to quality of education.

Impact: As a result, I am now better equipped to contribute strategically to whole-school decision-making, collaborate more effectively with senior leaders and support the school's broader development priorities with greater confidence. I am more attuned to sharing headlines via the Governor meeting agendas and also, when my next 1:1 monitoring visit takes place, will be ready to respond to them as critical friends with pre-prepared data.

3. The programme has supported me in my Associate Lead for Pedagogy role across the trust by reinforcing the importance of aligning all aspects of teaching and learning with the school's core values and culture, rather than solely relying on the Teachers'

Standards or Rosenshine's Principles. I always knew values and culture underpinned practice but I am now able to share this more explicitly in my review documents such as 'Teaching and Learning on a page' or with staff during CPD sessions.

Impact: This shift in perspective has strengthened the coherence between professional development, classroom practice, and Corley Academy's four values, leading to more meaningful and sustainable improvements in teaching quality. The recent quality assurance has identified that, alongside a significant number of staff strengths in the 8 Teachers' Standards, the values are being embedded within their practice and student outcomes, which is fantastic to see.

4. Mike's programme has also provided valuable insight into how to more effectively lead and support middle leaders, helping me to 'join the dots' between individual leadership approaches and a consistent whole-school vision. I have always found it challenging to delegate or to relinquish control, particularly in areas such as whole school literacy or Rosenshine's Principles (where my passions lie) but, in recognising how to empower others, I have seen better results than 'doing it all myself'.

Impact: This has led to greater consistency in practice across departments, improved communication and more unified leadership that directly benefits staff development and student outcomes. One example is the cascading of best practice in terms of how to conduct a thorough work scrutiny- previously, I had sole responsibility which was not best practice for many reasons. Now, through making time and space for Middle Leaders to have responsibility for their staff and subject (e.g. curriculum time, success criteria and coaching), this is a more sustainable model.

5. Finally, on both a personal and professional note, I found the exploration of the 'blind' and 'hidden' self particularly thought-provoking, highlighting the importance of developing greater self-awareness as a leader. I have always known my faults and can be self-deprecating but this programme has taught me to look at the impact I have had, the positive results of leadership decisions or initiatives and present myself to others with greater self-assurance.

Impact: This has encouraged me to reflect more openly on my own leadership style, seek feedback more regularly and model a culture of continuous self-improvement among colleagues. In CPD sessions I have led, I have been trying to communicate my compassion- which is not false but deeply engrained in my leadership style and personality- in terms of staff wellbeing but also in the child-centred approach I strive for. The impact has been that many more staff have come to me in recent months for 1:1 coaching, advice, support and have been more open to the quality assurance process of learning walks and feedback. There is a sense that staff 'know' my feedback- however honest or developmental- is driven by putting their wellbeing and the positive outcomes for our Corley learners first.

Participant B

This course has enabled me to pause and reflect on my own strengths and areas for development in a way that I rarely get to do day to day. I feel that my meetings with Mike have made me realise that leadership is not just about ambition but it can come from a place of wanting to make a difference as well. I have often said before that "I don't care about ever being SLT, I'm just happy as a classroom teacher" but Mike made me realise that I could also be a very happy and effective leader. I truly believe that my practice has and is changing and developing because of my meetings with Mike; I am now more confident, more focused and feel as though I have more ownership over my work.

I am excited about my career again and I feel as though I can make the difference that I set out to make when I first undertook my teacher training at the age of 22. This vision and purpose had been lost for a while but now it is back.

Thank you, Mike, for giving me my purpose and direction back and for always being honest yet kind. I have thoroughly enjoyed our meetings and I will miss them. You have made a difference to me and to all of the students who I teach and work with.

Participant C

Firstly, I just wanted to say a personal thank you for delivering such a thought-provoking leadership programme. I've really enjoyed being part of it and have taken so much from the sessions, both professionally and personally. The course has helped me to reflect, and think more deeply about the kind of leader I am and the one I aspire to be.

What went well / what I found most useful:

- The catalyst framework was incredibly easy to use and provided a really clear visual representation of strengths/areas for developments. It helped me to see how the different aspects of leadership connect with the wider running of a school and where my strengths and development areas lie.
- I really appreciated your personal reflections and examples from practice in the various settings you have worked and led in, they made the content feel real and helped me understand how theory translates into day-to-day leadership and running of a school.
- I found it particularly valuable when you expanded on key points and shared wider leadership experiences, as this gave me a fuller understanding of the range of responsibilities, challenges, and perspectives leaders face.
- The focus on values-driven leadership gave me a stronger sense of how school values underpin decisions, accountability, and culture.

- The course gave me time and structure to reflect meaningfully on my leadership, which is something I often don't make enough time for in the busyness of school life.
- I know this was something you have added recently but having the opportunity to speak through my ideas of a project before the meeting with Mark, was invaluable and I think without this, I would have been a bit lost and definitely wouldn't have been as polished (I hope) as it was.

Areas for development / possible improvements:

- I think it would be helpful to have opportunities to reflect on the catalyst framework alongside someone else, either with you or a member of SLT who knows me and my teaching/leadership journey better (possibly line manager). I often find reflection challenging and can be overly critical of myself, so a shared conversation might make the process more accurate and constructive. After hearing what Mark was saying during our meeting, it made me reflect that I am quite hard on myself and overlook parts of my practice and my achievements.
- Including more collaborative or group discussion opportunities could help myself and others share different perspectives and learn from each other's experiences (although I understand the course is sometimes delivered in this way).

I really hope these points are helpful. Thank you again for your time, insight, and for sharing your own leadership experiences so openly. The programme has genuinely made me more reflective, confident, and intentional in my approach to becoming a leader and has really made me reflect on where my career could go! Thankyou Mike!

Participant D

First of all, I would like to thank you both for the opportunity to take part in this development program, I have really appreciated the time you have taken Mike, and the input you have given for me to consider and evaluate my practise.

Strengths or What I have enjoyed!!!

I really appreciated the openness of the course, although I feel that I have a good working relationship with the Senior Leadership Team here at Corley it was very beneficial to have conversations where I felt there would be no judgement as confidentiality was discussed at the start of the process. This meant I could truly open up (and challenged) on my ideas without concern of how they would be seen by others who may in the future be making decisions about my career progression. Mikes

experience and knowledge was exceptional, discussing real life scenarios, often linking some of my thoughts to scenarios he has seen or been involved with in the past, allowing me to learn from errors others had come up against, in turn allowing me to adapt some of my ideas and processes within the Maths department.

The course gave me confidence in some areas as it reinforced my personal strengths, backing up what I do with research and recommendations, but also allowed me to consider other areas which I may not have had the opportunity to be involved with in the past, allowing me to consider the viewpoints of other stakeholders, processes and legal requirements.

What could be Developed

The one element I personally found frustrating was one that all teachers have to deal with at all levels; I would leave meetings with ideas and a fresh opinion of how I could develop the Maths department and my own personal practise, and then before I knew it 2 weeks had passed, and I was attending my next meeting thinking have I made best use of what had been discussed from the last session.

As time progressed, I realised that this would be a longer-term personal intervention and things I had considered would be utilised later in the school year, (and in future years) especially once my project had started.

I liked the online tool, but during the sessions I took notes and, on the occasions, I tried to paste images, they could not be seen in my online notes.

It was excellent to get the opportunity to sit with Mark and Mike and discuss the process and my project gaining advice on how others such as OFSTED may view my work. However it would be interesting to see how others across the Trust are completing projects especially any good practise that could be utilised at Corley, especially those linked to Numeracy and Mathematics.

Participant E

I found the overall process extremely useful and informative, especially prior to an Ofsted inspection.

I found the process was a good opportunity for reflection on my current practice and to reflect on the knowledge I already know. To identify strength as well as fully understanding the areas I feel confident in.

On the other hand, it has allowed me to prioritise areas for development and consider how I can develop my skills in order to support my own career progression.

Participant F

1. The programme has been very helpful for me with reference to assisting me in gaining an overview of how the different elements covered by the Development Tool interact with each other. This has provided me with a holistic view of how schools' function and operate. This has made me a more effective school leader as I now appreciate in greater depth the role of others and how these support and support.
2. Another area of focus that has developed my practice has been 'organisational management'. This area - particularly in relation to school finance and HR procedures- is one which I have not had much experience of. However, I feel now more confident in understand how these areas work and can see more distinctly how they directly link to other areas such as teaching and curriculum and assessment.
3. The school development leader development tool has greatly assisted me in planning and delivering my project which focusses upon creating new assessment grids. I found it particularly useful in ensuring that I was incorporating and involving the whole school community of staff, students, governors and parents/carers. This is an acquired skill that I will bring to my future projects.
4. I also feel that the programme has assisted me in making my action planning sharper and more focussed upon identifying the outcomes I want to achieve and the steps by which I will implement these.

Overall, I have greatly enjoyed the programme which I found constructive, thought provoking and genuinely useful. It has helped me to reflect further on my role as a school leader. I found the source material and organisation of information clear and easily accessible.

Participant G

The Projects

As part of the programme the candidates have been asked to lead a school improvement project. The project needs to be of importance to the school, and where possible linked to the academy development plan.

The projects provide the opportunity for the candidates to put into practice some of the theory discussed during the programme.

The titles of the projects to be led at Corely are:

To ensure that the United Nations rights for children are embedded throughout the curriculum

To raise standards in wiring by ensuring consistently high-quality teaching throughout the department

To raise standards in mathematics by investigating strengths and developmental need in provision through data analysis.

To raise standards in reading in year seven.

To develop a high-quality trauma informed environment by

- developing a shared understanding of the definition of trauma
- creating a comprehensive framework
- providing appropriate CPD for staff

To increase the sense of belonging for girls at the academy through strengthening their voice, agency and connection to the school.

To create and pilot assessment grids for Year Seven, so as to ensure consistently accurate assessment of pupil progress and clarity with regard to what teachers need to do to move learning forward.

Improving Year 11 student progress and confidence in GCSE Biology and Physics through parental engagement by strengthening parents' confidence and skills in supporting learning and revision at home.