

Coaching for Improvement

At the heart of all we do in New Charter Academy are out 5 core values:

- a caring culture –staff and students well-being
- a sharing culture – team working
- a learning culture – both for staff and students
- a listening culture – student, staff and community voice
- an achieving culture – distributing leadership across the staff and students

All of these aspirations are only possible if we can create an environment where genuine dialogue can take place at all levels. Developing the skills of Coaching and Mentoring will create the skills and capacity to engage in dialogue that ensures all voices are heard and that all members of the school community are engaged in continuous learning.

In identifying coaching and mentoring as a key means by which our school will learn and develop there need to be clarity about what we mean when using those terms in New Charter Academy:-

Mentoring describes what we would traditionally view as the role of the sports coach; someone with wisdom and expertise in a particular field that supports less experienced colleagues in developing their own expertise.

Expert Coaching is when the expertise of the coach lies in their skill as a coach. In this role that expertise means that any issue can be brought to the coaching conversation, the coach needs no specialist expertise in that area of focus.

Peer Coaching is a reciprocal relationship between two or more colleagues who have each developed some skills in coaching, enabling them to support one another in developing a deeper understanding of their practice in order to improve.

In all of these roles the emphasis is upon helping colleagues and students to come to a deeper understanding of themselves and the issues they face and supporting them in fining a clear way forward in resolving those issues.

Establishing a Culture of Coaching in New Charter Academy

Developing the skills of coaching across our school community creates the capacity to engage in coaching dialogue at a number of levels:

Coaching and leadership There are two distinct aspects to this:

- coaching as part of **leadership development** - creating opportunities for member of the school community to engage in coaching relationships which give them a deeper understanding of their leadership practice and how it might be developed
- coaching as part of **leadership responsibility** – using coaching skills in what will often be mentoring relationships so that leaders can have purposeful conversations with those for whom they hold a leadership responsibility

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Coaching and classroom observation

The dynamic of classroom observation is often one of teachers being held to account. Coaching creates the context for observation to be about learning not about accountability. This may be in mentoring relationships where more experienced members of staff are supporting colleagues but it may also be in reciprocal peer coaching relationships where colleagues are using coaching practice to enquire into and develop one another's practice.

Coaching for and with students

The skills of coaching can be utilised in mentoring conversations with students, enabling them to explore both academic and personal issues. Student to student peer coaching can also be immensely powerful as can be mentoring relationships between older students and younger members of the school community

Coaching to empower the community

Developing the skills of coaching with members of the school community can empower them to take greater responsibility for their own development. It can also be a powerful means by which members of the community which the school serves can be empowered to make good decisions about their life and work.

Coaching and difficult conversations

In a place where individuals often share their anxieties and concerns there need to be strict protocols around the conduct and confidentiality of coaching conversations. However over time the skills developed in those formal coaching relationships become tools by which other, more informal, but often extremely challenging conversations can be managed.

Building the Capacity for Coaching and Mentoring

The aspirations for the ways in which we want coaching and mentoring to influence the work of the Academy are extremely high. The strategy for developing the capacity to make that possible has three phases:

Phase 1 To develop a group of **Lead Coaching Practitioners**. These staff will be the first one's to participate in a training programme to develop their coaching and mentoring skills. This will be followed by a period of time when they practice those skills in genuine coaching relationships so that they feel confident in their own coaching practice. This group will continue to meet beyond the initial phase to develop their own practice and continue to be a source of expertise.

Phase 2 The Lead Coaching Practitioners will work with an external consultant to develop a **Coaching Development Programme** which can be offered to different groups from across the school community. They will be the co-designers of this package and be responsible for leading coaching development. They will come to represent the self-sustaining capacity for coaching and mentoring development.

Phase 3 The capacity the Lead Coaching Practitioners represent will enable the Academy to develop a **Coaching Strategy** which means that coach development can be focused to meet current priorities and the Development Programme can be tailored to meet the needs of the groups identified.

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