



## Case Studies & Testimonials

Whenever I carry out any piece of school improvement work I refer to these guiding principles:

# Empower Practitioners Enrich Practice Embrace Change

*\*\*Due to the nature of the work that was carried out during the following case studies, I have anonymised the providers and practitioners. This is to maintain the confidentiality agreements and the working relationships that continue to be based on trust. The names used are fictional; any provider or practitioner with the same or a similar name are coincidental.\*\**

## Turning Around a Failing School: A Case Study

### Introduction:

As an adviser for school leaders, I was approached by a struggling school with extreme challenges. The school was failing to meet educational standards and was at risk of being labelled as a failing institution. With a commitment to improving pupil outcomes and transforming the school's culture, it was my pleasure to take on the challenge of turning around this struggling school. It felt as if I was the last hope for this school.

### Background:

The school, which we will refer to as Lincoln Primary School, was facing numerous challenges, including low academic achievement, high rates of pupil absence, teacher turnover and an extreme overspend in the school budget resulting in a lack of quality resources. The Acting Head Teacher was recently recruited from a local school and had limited experience of underperforming schools and the role of a Head Teacher - learning how to prioritise was key in this case. The school had received a poor rating from Ofsted and was at risk of being placed into special measures for Leadership & Management if drastic improvements were not made rapidly.

### Strategy:

To effectively and drastically improve Lincoln Primary School, I first conducted a comprehensive assessment of the school's current situation. This involved talking to the pupils, analysing data on pupil achievement, conducting classroom observations and environmental walks, engaging with teachers and staff. As a result, this led to the identification of key areas for improvement.

Based on this assessment, I developed a strategic plan focused on three key areas: improving teaching and learning, enhancing school culture and building strong partnerships with the community. Of course, there were plenty of opportunities for improvement but it is important to prioritise otherwise nothing will change rapidly. I always recommend three focused actions which can be sustained, they must be realistic and demonstrate the greatest impact.

#### Key Actions:

1. **Implementing Professional Development:** I worked closely with teachers and other staff to provide ongoing professional development and support to enhance their teaching practices. This included workshops, coaching sessions and collaborative planning sessions to improve instruction and align teaching practices with pupil needs. Understanding inclusive practice was key here to ensure that every pupil was engaged and motivated to learn. It became apparent that pupils were bored and under stimulated, hence the deterioration in their behaviour. Reminding teachers of the basics was essential and led to professional discussion and renewed strategies in the classroom. I used my '5 Point Pinch' and 'PII' resources (available on my website) to gather evidence and formulate the next steps required to improve standards.
2. **Establishing a Positive School Culture:** I implemented strategies to foster a positive and inclusive school culture. This involved implementing a school-wide behaviour management system, promoting pupil engagement and motivation and creating a supportive environment for both pupils and staff. I set up working parties in collaboration with the pupils, senior leaders and staff to develop the policy to coincide with the ethos of the school - after all, they know it best! Key members of staff were allocated specific roles that empowered them and drove the changes that were needed. It is a large team and so each member of staff had a trusted person to liaise with in order to seek advice and guidance.
3. **Community Engagement:** I gave direct instructions to the senior leadership team on how to effectively engage with parents, carers, local organisations, and community members to build partnerships and support the school's goals. This involved organising community events, creating volunteer opportunities and seeking resources and support from external stakeholders. Using my previous experience and characteristics, I modelled to the team successful interactions with key stakeholders to ensure that communication was effective and built relationships. There were multiple interactions with families regarding attendance, we promoted a member of the team to focus on improving attendance and I trained her with the skills to communicate the importance of high attendance, almost as a sub strategy. Collective attendance for the previous term was 63% and it was clear that something needed to be done to drastically improve this. Some pupils were in receipt of single figure attendance which also raised safeguarding concerns.

#### Results:

After implementing these strategies and key actions, Lincoln Primary School experienced significant improvements in pupil outcomes and school culture. The school's academic performance improved, pupil attendance rates increased, teacher retention improved and overall morale within the school improved.

As a result of these improvements, and after extreme commitment and hard work from the team, Lincoln Primary School received a positive rating from Ofsted, recognising the school's transformation and commitment to excellence. The school was no longer at risk of failing and was on track to becoming a thriving institution that positively impacted the lives of its pupils and the surrounding community.

#### Conclusion:

The successful turnaround of Lincoln Primary School demonstrates the power of effective leadership, strategic planning and a commitment to continuous improvement. By implementing targeted strategies and key actions focused on improving teaching and learning, enhancing school culture and building strong community partnerships, I was able to transform a failing school into a high-performing institution that sets pupils up for success. This case study serves as a testament to the impact of dedicated educators and leaders who are committed to making a difference in the lives of pupils.

Title: Meeting the Challenge of Extending Excellence: A Case Study

#### Introduction:

In my role as an adviser for school leaders, I was approached by a high-performing school that was seeking to further enhance its academic excellence and meet the challenge of extending its success beyond its current achievements. The school, which we will refer to as Churchill Hall Academy, faced pupil pressures stemming from high expectations at home and a desire to push pupils to reach a potential beyond their capability. The mental health of the pupils was a concern for this Head Teacher.

#### Background:

Churchill Hall Academy was recognised as a top-performing school with excellent academic outcomes and a strong reputation for providing high-quality education. However, the school leadership recognised that in order to continue to excel and meet the demands of their pupils and families, they needed to identify new challenges and opportunities for growth. They wanted an accelerated wellbeing programme and a team of staff who felt confident to support pupils accordingly.

#### Strategy:

To address the unique challenges faced by Churchill Hall Academy and support their efforts to extend excellence, I conducted a thorough assessment of the school's current strengths and areas for improvement. This involved gathering feedback from teachers, pupils and parents, analysing pupil performance data and identifying key areas where the school could raise the bar.

Based on this assessment, I developed a strategic plan focused on challenging and supporting pupils to achieve even higher levels of success. This plan centred on three key areas: academic rigour, pupil well-being and family engagement. I identified that although pupils were able to explain the process of their learning it was not necessarily fully embedded and therefore able to be applied to other situations, mathematics especially. Staff were not utilising the skills of the school's curriculum and being creative in their approach to delivering education. Dynamic approaches to teaching and learning were required.

### Key Actions:

1. **Academic Rigour:** I worked with school leaders to develop the curriculum that challenged pupils to think critically, solve complex problems and engage in high-level academic discourse. This involved implementing more rigorous activities in the form of projects over a sustained period of time, providing opportunities for application and enrichment through educational visits and visitors while promoting a culture of academic excellence.
2. **Pupil Well-Being:** Recognising the pressures pupils faced from high expectations at home, I implemented strategies to support pupil well-being and mental health. It began with understanding the feelings of the pupils and the causes of their concerns. Questionnaires, workshops and conferences were carefully designed to ascertain the information required - it really was eye opening! Further strategies included providing access to counselling services & resources, promoting mindfulness and stress management techniques and fostering a supportive and nurturing school environment where pupils felt valued and supported. Staff were equipped with skills and resources to support pupils - the staff took part in a weekly meditation and mindfulness session which I led at various points during the week (videos available on my website and a service that I offer). Having a direct experience led to clearer understanding of the benefits and effective ideas to support others.
3. **Family Engagement:** Understanding the importance of parent and family involvement in pupil success, I developed initiatives to engage families in their children's education and foster strong partnerships between home and school. This involved hosting parent workshops, creating opportunities for family involvement in school activities and establishing open lines of communication between teachers, parents and pupils. There were some key staff who required a direct support programme to improve their effective communication and confidence with 'demanding' stakeholders.

### Results:

Through the implementation of these strategies and key actions, Churchill Hall Academy saw continued success in academic performance and pupil well-being. The school maintained its high standards of excellence while also providing the support and resources necessary to meet the pressures faced by pupils from high expectations at home.

As a result of these efforts, Churchill Hall Academy was able to challenge and support its pupils to reach their full potential, further solidifying its reputation as a top-performing school. The school's commitment to academic rigour, pupil well-being and family engagement enabled it to meet the challenge of extending excellence and provide a well-rounded and enriching educational experience for all pupils.

### Conclusion:

The case of Churchill Hall Academy highlights the importance of constantly pushing the boundaries of excellence and seeking new challenges to support the growth and development of high-performing schools. By recognising the pressures faced by pupils from high expectations at home and implementing targeted strategies to support pupil well-being and academic achievement, Churchill Hall Academy was able to continue its legacy of success while also meeting the evolving needs of its pupils and families. This

case study serves as a testament to the ongoing pursuit of excellence and the dedication of educators and leaders to provide the best possible education for all pupils.

## Title: Embracing Diversity and Inclusivity: A Case Study

### Introduction:

As an adviser for school leaders, I was approached by a school facing significant challenges related to limited cultural diversity and a lack of inclusivity. The school, which we will refer to as Harmony Junior School, predominantly served a homogenous population of white, middle-class families who struggled to accept diversity and difference. With concerns about potential racism and a lack of representation of diverse backgrounds, the Head Teacher sought guidance on fostering a more inclusive school community.

### Background:

Harmony Junior School was located in a rural location with limited diversity in terms of race, ethnicity and socio-economic status. The school's pupil body reflected the demographics of the community, with few pupils from diverse backgrounds or experiences. The Head Teacher was concerned about the lack of exposure to different cultures, as well as the potential for racism or discrimination to manifest within the school environment.

### Strategy:

To address the cultural limitations and lack of diversity at Harmony Junior School, I worked with the school leadership to develop a comprehensive strategy focused on promoting inclusivity, celebrating diversity and fostering a more welcoming and accepting school community. This strategy was designed to challenge existing biases and promote a culture of respect, empathy and understanding among pupils, staff and families.

### Key Actions:

1. Cultural Awareness and Education: I implemented a cultural awareness program that introduced pupils to different cultures, traditions and perspectives. This involved incorporating diverse literature, artwork and historical figures into the curriculum, organising multicultural events and celebrations and inviting guest speakers from diverse backgrounds to share their experiences with the school community. It was essential that the approach was subtle to equate to the normality of difference rather than making an unnecessary divide. Staff were encouraged to select resources that may reflect a range of perspectives from same gender adults in families, names of characters from around the world or illustrations including hearing aids or prosthetic limbs. Exposure to the real world is key!

2. Equity and Inclusion Training: I provided staff with training and resources on equity, diversity and inclusion to help them address issues of bias, discrimination and racism within the school. The preparation for the resources was thorough and thoughtful; requiring a vast degree of taste. This included workshops on cultural competence, implicit bias and creating inclusive learning environments where all pupils feel valued and respected whilst valuing and respecting the variety of other demographics that may differ from theirs.

3. Community Engagement: I worked closely with parents and families to promote a culture of inclusivity and acceptance within the school community. This involved hosting parent workshops on diversity and inclusion, creating opportunities for families to engage with diverse cultural experiences and fostering open dialogue around the importance of embracing difference and celebrating diversity. Initially the parent workshops were poorly attended, so after much perseverance we needed to change our approach. Smaller workshops where the community were personally invited were far more successful!

#### Results:

Through the implementation of these strategies and key actions, Harmony Junior School saw significant improvements in its school culture and community dynamics. Pupils became more open-minded and accepting of diversity, staff members gained a deeper understanding of equity and inclusion and families became more engaged in promoting a culture of respect and understanding within the school.

As a result of these efforts, Harmony Junior School was able to overcome its limitations in cultural diversity and inclusivity, creating a more welcoming and inclusive school environment where all pupils felt respected, valued and celebrated for their unique backgrounds and experiences. The Head Teacher's concerns about racism and discrimination were addressed proactively, and the school emerged as a model of diversity and inclusivity within the community.

#### Conclusion:

The case of Harmony Junior School demonstrates the transformative power of embracing diversity and fostering inclusivity within a school community. By implementing targeted strategies to promote cultural awareness, equity and inclusion, the school was able to overcome its limitations in cultural diversity and create a more inclusive and accepting environment for pupils, staff and families. This case study serves as a testament to the importance of celebrating diversity, challenging biases and creating a culture of respect and understanding within educational settings to ensure that all pupils feel valued and supported in their learning journey.

I have worked with a vast array of schools, however, these ones particularly remain in my heart and mind. Whilst working with each of these case studies, there was an enormous focus on the principles of collaboration, open-mindedness and clear communication. At no point were any of the journeys easy, but building a 'road map' together was what led to the success of each provision.

Would you like to be involved in the next case study?

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