

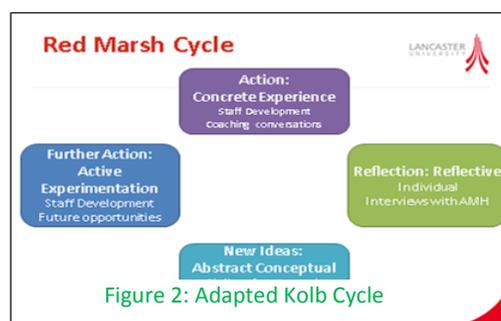
Findings

Training

The training was described as valuable by all participants and comparable in quality with other external trainers. Teachers felt the training provided staff with a shared understanding and language to discuss how they worked with each other and in particular to differentiate between coaching and mentoring which they had previously used interchangeably. One teacher explained how: *'[the training] has highlighted where I could use it, am I going to coach, mentor or do a bit of both?'* For several teachers it was a revelation that they could coach someone without being an expert: *'training was eye opening, you don't have to have the answers'*. When being coached another teacher explained how *'it's encouraging to think you have the solution at the back of your mind and coaching helps you to bring it to the fore.'*

Initial training presented research about reflective practice including Schön's (1987) 'reflecting on action' and 'reflecting in action' and highlighted the potential benefits of 'reflection before action' (Wilson, 2008). The emphasis was on using research about reflection, to learn and develop practice and staff awareness about their strengths, solutions and support needs. According to the school report, the research focus helped to engender a *'culture where we have the belief that*

we can be at the forefront of research'. When discussing the training one teacher said the research *'training explained [ideas] really well, I understood what the [coaching] concept was and this helped me to do it'*. The second training session placed the whole of the project into context using an adapted version of Kolb's learning cycle (see figure 2).



Practical activities in the training which staff found helpful included: a modelling of the coaching conversation; opportunities to coach and be coached using the two frameworks ESTA and STRIDE and the generation of coaching questions for class teams to use when discussing challenging behaviour. Teachers found the practical activities valuable and several reported on how they *'knew what we [were] meant to be doing, nice to have the list of questions, when it is something new it's good to have a protocol, and that was handy we worked through it'*.

Although the training was positively received there was universal agreement that more time was needed for the initial training to have allowed all staff to be coached and act as coach. As one teacher commented, *'I would have liked to do both processes during the training, we were short of time, [and] it was very valuable practicing it – so more time to do that'*. Four of the teachers mentioned that the training would have been more useful if they had been able to undertake their coaching conversations sooner. The time lapse between training and coaching meant that the prompt sheet and ESTA framework of questions was essential. Sanker (2009) highlights the importance of getting 'buy in' from teachers involved in coaching relationships. The use of external trainers, the chance to gain new skills and something for the CV were all mentioned as positive aspects which helped to gain 'buy in' from the staff.

Similarities and Differences between coaching and mentoring

In the interviews teachers discussed their understanding of different approaches to support colleagues including the three approaches used within Red Marsh during the academic year 2012-13, these were:

- Subject Leader observations which they categorised as a form of mentoring;
- peer to peer coaching conversations focused on topics chosen from a list identified by the Headteacher;
- informal peer to peer learning exchanges, which were only just starting so are not discussed further.

Coaching	Both	Mentoring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coachee's ideas • None expert • Greater • Personal positives • No advice • Person - Practice • Guiding • Personal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to someone • Peer to Peer • Ownership • Focus ... • Approach • Helping • Conversation • Solution focused • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor's ideas • Expert • Depends • Ideas to improve • Advice • Practice - Person • Directive • Subject / School

Figure 3: Features of coaching, mentoring or common to both approaches

Analysis of teacher's interviews suggested a number of distinctive features of each approach (See figure 3). Eight (89%) referred to coaching as enabling individuals to work out problems for themselves, the same number regarded mentoring as offering ideas. There was widespread agreement that there were benefits with both approaches and with a

number of teachers suggesting that the training and resources extended their repertoire and **'added to their toolbox of ways to engage in peer conversations'**.

Coaching

Coaching was a new approach for seven (78%) of the teachers and of those with some familiarity only one had participated in recent training, which they described as complementary to the school inset. Prior to the training two teachers had been quite sceptical about whether it would be useful, together with six of their colleagues (89%) they felt coaching was a positive and effective approach for enabling colleagues to think through challenges and generate solutions. Several teachers described how they were amazed /surprised how the coaching worked and how this resulted in a different sense of achievement. In coaching rather than **'giving them the answer'**, teachers felt that it was, **'good someone sorted it [the problem] for themselves and you enabled them, it felt different, probably nicer you are giving them, you can see the joy, you can see that eureka moment, I've been part of that, but they've done that themselves, so you [the] enabler, you've smoothed the way'**. Four staff gave examples of using the coaching techniques in other school contexts; with their class team, with other teachers or Teaching Assistants (TAs), and parents. Three also gave examples of using the coaching techniques outside school.

Mentoring

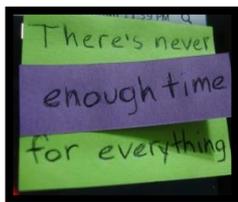
Although seven (78%) of teachers suggested that the situation and purpose would determine which approach they used. Overall teachers remained more comfortable with the mentoring role, preferring to mentor than be mentored which several suggested was largely or primarily because mentoring which they did as subject leaders was a more familiar process. They also preferred to coach rather than to be coached, which one teacher suggested was due to teachers' natural tendency to help and provide the answers. Mentoring was also popular because it was perceived as a quicker process that provided an opportunity to get ideas and reassurance from an expert, **'it's what I know and what I'm used to, it's been our role as a subject leader, teaching role and mentoring role – seeing strengths and weaknesses, its telling people how to solve it, coaching is such a new concept'**. However, as teachers acknowledged, simply getting an idea from a colleague did not automatically enable you to change your teaching and learning, as one teacher said, **'the mentee is pleased they have ideas, but it may not be the solution, whereas the coachee may feel they've got the solution'**.

Factors to consider when introducing coaching conversations

Coaching shifted the power of the expert, as one teacher explained, **'I didn't know the solution so they came up with it themselves'**, and another who commented that when coaching, **'You are giving someone the power to come up with an answer'**. Although coaching opened up the possibility of less experienced staff coaching more experienced colleagues, the interviews revealed potential obstacles which may restrict the range of topics discussed and other factors that influence the coaching relationship .

Trust and role responsibility

Trust was a central factor in the coaching conversations and is likely to influence the issues raised by the person being coached, as well as the nature of the actual conversation. For instance, teachers reported that they would be hesitant to raise an issue for which they were deemed to be an expert, such as a problem related to the curriculum subject for which they are Subject Leader. The hierarchy was perhaps more evident when teachers discussed the possibility of extending the coaching to Teaching Assistants (TAs). Some, but not all who spoke about TAs coaching felt the role might restrict what was said, *'I think some of the TAs maybe the lower level ones wouldn't want to raise what problems they have, they might think they aren't doing things [right] and ... not wanting to admit something you can't do'*. It was clearly important to have a coaching conversation in a safe space, with an explicit and shared understanding about confidentiality and with someone you could trust.



Time and timeliness

Inevitably and not surprisingly time was mentioned by all teachers as a potential barrier to coaching. Within the busy teaching day finding the suggested 40 minutes was regarded as unrealistic, as one teacher said when she heard the suggested time, *'I had flashing alarm bells, ... I haven't got 40 mins for me, let alone you!'*

Anticipating the time pressures the Headteacher identified dedicated time when the coaching conversations would happen; teachers reported that this made the conversations possible. However, having a set time raised a different time factor - timeliness. Whilst it was helpful to have a designated time and to know in advance that they were *'going to do coaching at this time, on this day, it restricted the topic. ... [I thought] what have I got an issue to be coached on with [name of colleague], ... really it should come from the person, and if they want to be coached'*. To respond to the challenges of time, a 10 minute checklist based on the STRIDE model was introduced at the second staff development session.

Topic focus and freedom to choose

The topic of the coaching conversation appeared to be influenced by:

- **When** (time and timeliness),
- **Who** (trust and role responsibility) and
- **How** the conversations were contextualised.

Lofthouse et al., (2010) identified four ways in which coaching might be linked to performance management (see figure 4). Within this pilot, teachers experienced free choice [option 1] during the training and when they used the approach in other contexts. For the paired coaching conversations the requirements resulted in the teacher being coached selecting a topic that related to options 2 or 4. Feedback from teachers appeared to suggest that the freedom to choose the topic was important. Although some would have chosen the same topic, others felt restricting the topic and determining the time made it feel more like a box ticking exercise. Interestingly, this did not undermine the potential usefulness of coaching as an approach that they could seek to use in the future.

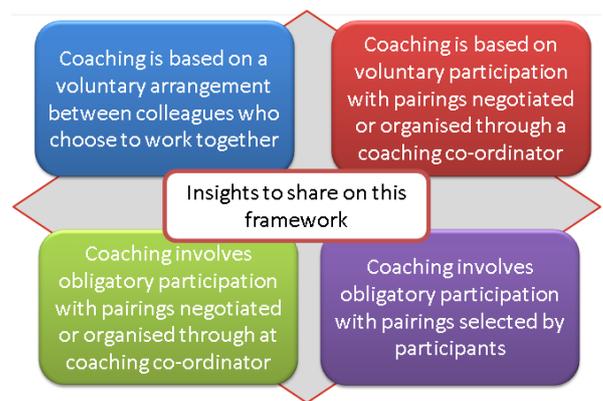


Figure 4: Coaching relationships adapted from Lofthouse, et al., 2010

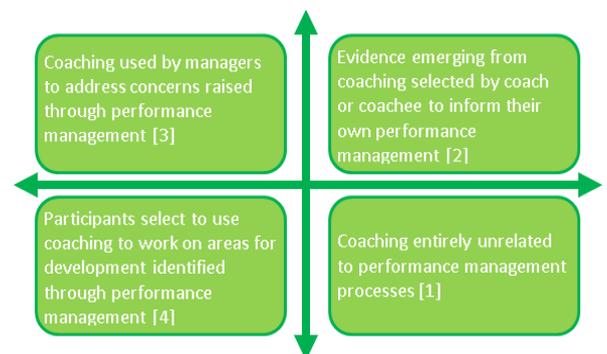


Figure 5: Alternative links between coaching and performance management (Lofthouse, et al., 2010)



Outputs

This pilot project has generated a number of outputs including:

- Red Marsh behaviour checklist (BYE-GAP) of coaching questions
- Teacher focused ESTA and STRIDE checklists as reference for Red Marsh teachers and for use in further training
- Slides with findings for wider dissemination and future training of Loyne Learning Alliance schools
- Short report for Governors and Loyne Learning Alliance website

In addition, a number of external checklists or audits for reviewing culture or suitability of coaching for a school have been identified (Curee, 2005 and Lofthouse et al 2010; see also Joint Practice Development Briefing Paper 2013).

Recommendation

- a. To build in longer time for the training sessions that include time for practicing to consolidate learning
- b. To schedule initial coaching sessions closer to the training
- c. To embed coaching within the school culture - schedule time for coaching conversations to happen – either as an annual allowance that teachers can request during the year, or at set times throughout the year
- d. To consider the use of SLE / external coach to offer coaching sessions (see LLA Website for further details)
- e. To explore providing time for one or more teachers to offer coaching for TA 3s
- f. To remind and encourage use of the 10 minute STRIDE coaching questions when supporting teachers
- g. To recognise that the choice of topic is influenced by who is involved in the coaching conversation
- h. To maximise the benefits of coaching, support topic selection and reduce the risk of box ticking:
 - Allow teachers to choose their own topics
 - Where practical support their own choice of partner and give advance warning of pairings
- i. To provide teachers with the opportunity to engage in an action research cycle because this helps to develop shared understanding of an issue, increase the potential for genuine collaboration and gain teachers' ownership of a new initiative.
 - To consider action research cycle for future School Improvement agenda
 - To capture benefits of coaching and future action research cycles for reporting purposes

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Behaviour Coaching Questions

Identifying the behaviour

- Can you tell me what happened?
- What is the main behavioural issue?
- How does this behaviour manifest itself?
- When does this behaviour occur - patterns?
- When does the behaviour occur most?
- What are the triggers for this behaviour?

Reflecting on positive experiences

- Who does he / she display positive behaviour with?
- What has been successful in the past with....?
- How does that person behave or interact with them?
- What was successful about the approach?

Future goals

- What outcomes do you want from this?
- What outcomes would you want?
- How will you know when you've achieved your goals?

Action plan

- What will you do?
- Do you need to compromise? What compromise?
- When will you review the situation?



RED MARSH SCHOOL

Learn, Care, Challenge and Share

Behaviour Coaching Questions

BYE-GAP

Behaviour - Identifying the behaviour

- Can you tell me what happened?
- What is the main behavioural issue?
- How does this behaviour manifest itself?
- When does this behaviour occur - patterns?
- When does the behaviour occur most?
- What are the triggers for this behaviour?

Your Experiences of positive behaviour

- Who does he / she display positive behaviour with?
- What has been successful in the past with ...?
- How does that person behave or interact with them?
- What was successful about the approach?

Goals for the future

- What outcomes do you want from this?
- What outcomes would you want?
- How will you know when you've achieved your goals?

Action Plan

- What will you do?
- Do you need to compromise? What compromise?
- When will you review the situation?

Generated by Red Marsh Staff and Sinead Boyd: May 2013



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