



HOOKSTONE CHASE CP SCHOOL

Harrogate – One Year On



Overview

Hookstone Chase is located in a part of Harrogate with a wide and varied socio-economic catchment. It also hosts the Autism Unit for Harrogate. The school has 258 pupils on roll, ages four to 11. It is considered to be a school within the mid-sized range in terms of pupil numbers.

For many years, Hookstone Chase struggled to achieve its potential and was inundated with initiatives from North Yorkshire Local Authority. After four years of concerted effort from the Headteacher and her staff, the school achieved a “good” rating from OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills), which lifted morale substantially. However, within this success, it was felt that there lurked the potential for coasting, since the immediate pressure from the local authority and OFSTED had been removed.

There was a consensus that the focus for the school should be on revitalising the school's purpose as well as its values and ethos. This was thought to be a good way of generating new energy as well as having the values and ethos built into the fabric of the way the school operated as it moved forward.

This case study focuses on the progress made “One Year On”.

Methodology

A short consultation with staff took place explaining the intended process and gaining buy-in to the principle. A baseline assessment was then undertaken using the Barrett Values Centre methodology. The survey asked participants three questions:

1. What are the values most important to you as an individual?
2. What values do you experience in the school right now?
3. What values would you like to see, so that the school can perform at its very best?

For each question, participants select 10 values from a list of approximately 100 values. Responses are then analysed in several ways, principally mapping them against Barrett's Seven Levels of School Consciousness and identifying the level of dysfunction that exists in the school.

Participants in the survey included pupils, staff, parents, and governors. Pupils from years 5/6 (aged 10 or 11), who are the oldest pupils and at the top of the school, were engaged through a class session and made their choices using a simplified and shortened list of values. In itself, this provided a platform for bringing the idea of collective values to life with the most influential group of pupils in the school.

The data was fed back to the Chair of Governors, the Headteacher, and the staff at a training day which explored:



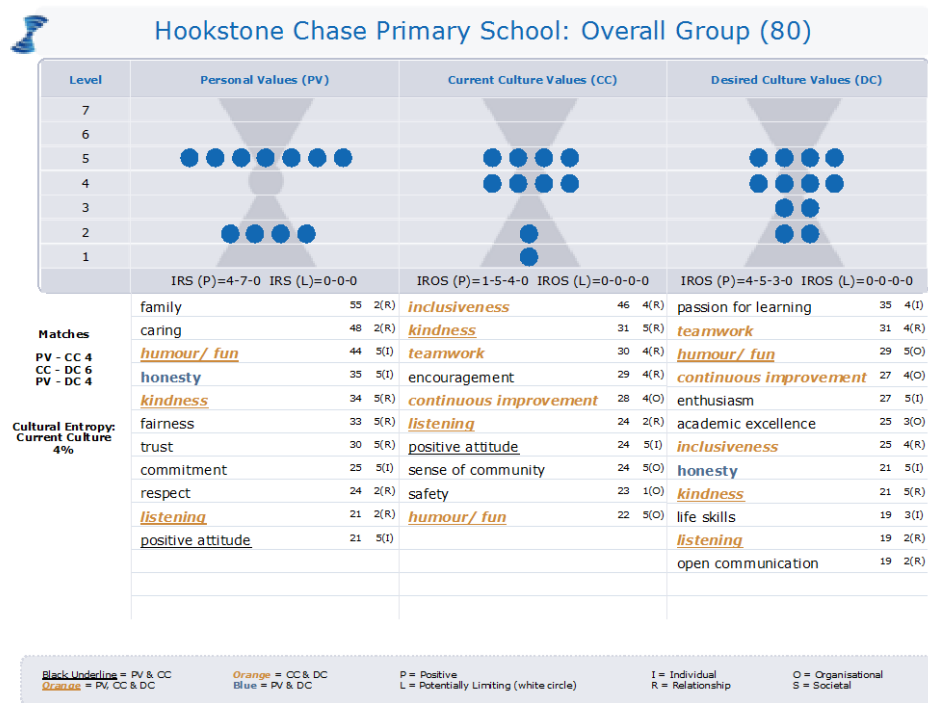
1. Re-connecting with why they went into teaching in the first place,
2. Understanding the data,
3. Choosing the core values for the school,
4. Identifying the behaviours that go with them,
5. First steps in making a plan for implementing the values-based approach to the way, the school operates.

The school then took on the task of incorporating this transformation work into the strategic plans for the school. This will be expanded on later in the case.

What the Data Said

One of the key measures that CTT includes is a measure of the level of dysfunction, unresolved conflict or wasted resource that exists in an organisation. Called cultural entropy, it records how the organisation might be getting in its own way. At Hookstone Chase, cultural entropy was 4%. This is a remarkably low figure given the history of the school. It suggested that the school is healthy, with just enough irritation in the system to enable people to remain on their toes.

The school's current culture also mapped well with the desired future (six matches between current and desired) with some interesting differences.





There were a number of new requests in the desired culture. Key amongst them were *passion for learning* and *academic excellence*, along with *life skills*, *enthusiasm*, *open communication*, and *honesty*.

There were four matches between the personal values of the participants, their views of the current culture, and the culture they desired to work in. It was felt there was a good level of alignment and commitment to create a plan that would take the school forward.

Implementation of a Values Led Transformation Plan

During the twelve months since the assessment and feedback session, the school has worked on several focused areas.

- The Purpose has been redefined in an inspiring way. This was done interactively at a training day for staff using the Barrett 4 Why's process and then ratified by the governing body.



- The core values of the school have been clarified as: *achieving excellence*, *creativity and innovation*, *inclusiveness*, *life skills and character development*, *passion for learning*, and *teamwork*. These values emerged as core during an interactive session that was based on the survey results and linked to the purpose of the school. It is clear that they



became the enablers in delivering that purpose. Behaviours, described as ‘the expectations we have of our personal interactions,’ were defined for each value.

- However, the values needed to come alive in the everyday tasks. To assist in this, several initiatives were completed:
 - First and foremost, values have been embedded into a redesigned curriculum. Part of the analysing of any curriculum submission is that it has to demonstrate how each of the values will be honoured in the delivery of the curriculum within the classroom setting.
 - Secondly, the pupils are involved in creating the content of lessons within the themes of the externally laid down learning requirements.
 - Thirdly, for about six months staff meetings reflected on how values were being lived during the meetings. This helped to maintain the focus on values as part of everyday working.
 - Fourthly, school assemblies have focused on one value at a time so that the pupils develop a growing appreciation of how values shape what happens in the school’s culture and environment.
- One of the barriers to achieving excellence was seen to be the quality and relevance of how planning was carried out. This has been reviewed and now processes have been implemented that staff feel more aligned to and feel are relevant and appropriate to performing well. It has also improved accountability.

One Year On

The question arises: Has this made any difference at all? The answer is a resounding “Yes,” and in many ways. Firstly, the data. In July 2015, the school re-took the assessment, which showed many improvements. Perhaps the most significant was the shift for staff. The table below shows the comparative data:



There are now seven matches between what staff wanted to experience in 2014 and what they *now* experience in the current culture in 2015. This is a very good level of alignment. Two values (*student centred* and *valuing individuality*) remain consistent with the current culture. These are values which are so embedded in the school they occur naturally. *Shared vision*, which seemed in 2014 to be a significant area for focus and development, now appears within the current culture in 2015. In addition, *academic excellence*, which became part of the desired values, now shows up in the current culture.

The entropy score has moved up slightly from 4% to 5%. What has happened is that peoples' expectations of themselves and the school have grown. The examination results were a record best in 2015, which demonstrates that working with values has been the cornerstone of improved performance.

Qualitative Ways of Assessing Progress

To round out the survey data, several additional ways of understanding what was happening were carried out.

1. A session was conducted with year 6 children, a group who had been part of the survey data in both years, as a means of testing whether the effects of the work had cascaded down as far as the children. In answer to the question "what is a value," the children answered "something which is important to you which you would never like to lose". They clearly understood not only what a value is, but also how it impacts their lives. They were also very clear how each of the school's values played out in every day life in and could give examples. Finally, they were clear that their experience with values would help them as they managed the transition to secondary school.



2. A focus group discussion was held with a cross-section of staff. They all felt that significant progress had been made in the following areas:
 - The purpose of the school was clear and the values had been firmly embedded.
 - Planning and processes were much clearer and everyone not only knew what was required of them, improving accountability, they also were applying them with greater impact.
 - They had a sense that since the pupils were actively more engaged in the curriculum process that there was a heightened level of curiosity and interest in doing well. From the teaching perspective, it meant that since there was an opportunity for everyone to shine, it was more exciting to come to work.

And, Finally...

3. A visit during normal school activities took place in July 2015. Classes and groups were observed informally in several settings: formal, small group work, varied activities, and at break time. There was an undeniable sense of an upbeat, happy school where children have a great relationship with staff, are keen to learn and proud to go there.

The conclusion we draw from this is that the school has made significant progress in a number of areas:

- The purpose of the school and its values are motivational for staff and children alike and underpin everything that takes place within the school setting.
- There was a need to improve the structure of the school's processes and for all to 'buy into' them. This has been acknowledged, dealt with and has led to more effective and more focused performance as well as outcomes. Ironically, having clarity around these things has created the opportunity to be more creative.
- Aspirations and achievement have been raised for staff and pupils alike.

So What Now?

The Headteacher, Chair of Governors, and staff have reviewed the data, celebrated the progress and identified some areas of focus to continue the Hookstone journey. These areas of focus were identified from the values that showed up in the desired culture, either as new values or ones that are seen to warrant more attention going forward.

Four values were felt to need reinforcing:

- Academic excellence (sometimes described as student achievement)
- Passion for learning
- Open Communication
- Positive Attitude

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It was felt that these values currently existed, however they were in need of some attention & emphasis in the next planning cycle. After being very 'internally' focused during the 2014/15 transformation plan, it was felt that a key new component will be to extend this to parents, Governors and the wider community over the next year.

This is a school to be proud of. For now, the need is to communicate its successes to external stakeholders and involve them so they can be instrumental in taking the school to the next level.

To conclude, it is worth recording four sentences written by staff during a session about celebrating what the school had achieved in 2014/15 as a prelude to deciding on the focus for 2015/16 outlined above. They said:

- "There is a greater energy around school and a belief that the school has strengths, capacity and momentum."
- "Children care more about their achievements with a passion for learning."
- "We are a more reflective school, embracing change."
- "We are clearer about assessment through better informed planning and so can maximise progress."

Sounds like a school ready for the next stage of transformation.

Consultants from Space to Grow Ltd. – John Campbell, Sue Campbell and Pauline Tomlin.
All are Barrett Values Centre's Cultural Transformation Tools Certified Consultants.