



Whole School Leadership In Action – Staff & Students

At the Mirfield Free Grammar (MFG), we believe that all our staff and students are leaders or have leadership potential.

Research shows that

- 20-30% of organisation performance is down to “climate”
- 50-70% of “climate” is attributable to the actions of the leader...
- therefore the biggest single impact on a school is **the behaviour** of it's leaders

Other research by Daniel Goleman into emotional intelligence has identified self awareness as the cornerstone to enabling leadership. Self awareness not only increases individual performance but provides people with an enhanced ability to work within or lead teams.

We had already experienced tangible benefits from implementing the Pacific Institute's “Investment In Excellence” programme across the whole school, which greatly improved attitude, ethos, motivation and achievement. We were therefore keen to implement another whole school programme linked to Leadership.

One of our Governors had used the True Colors® programme in their own work and offered to deliver some sessions at school. True Colors® is a holistic whole school approach to leadership and wellbeing in education for adults and children alike. It provides a simple way to tap into and develop self awareness. Discovering our strengths, values and needs as well as our stressors and frustrations, it helps us achieve sustainable personal change and, most importantly, understand others in the same way thus improving our ability to lead and work with them.

True Colors® was first used as part of the sixth form enrichment programme and as staff began to see the benefits it was included as an important part of our Year 10 Graduation and Young School Leader process. Students that meet all their coursework deadlines as well as maintaining excellent behaviour, attendance and punctuality were invited to become Young School Leaders and to “graduate” into Year 11.

This meant they spent two weeks off timetable, taking part in a series of different activities aimed at helping them prepare for the important year ahead. A True Colors® workshop was included and approximately 200 students took part in interactive group activities which improved their understanding about their own values, behaviour and communication styles as well as other people's. True Colors® increases tolerance, appreciation of others who are different to you and your ability to connect and work with them.

*“I'm not weird am I? I used to think that I was odd because I don't always want to be with my friends. Now I know I am not and so do they!” **Emma Yr 10***

*“Now I know why my dad always wants us to do stuff together, I won't be so mean to him in future” **Tom Yr 11***

*“I understand now why me & my Mum clash all the time. Can I take one of the books for her?” **Kirsty Yr 10***

*“It's good to know that other people get bored easily like me but I can see I have to learn to manage it” **Jacob Yr 10***

Last term we began to deliver True Colors® to staff. It was first used to improve team working within the in house catering team where some relationships had become strained. The session helped individuals to understand more about their values and how that affected their behaviours.

Having developed a clear understanding of the different members of her team the Catering Manager felt more confident in her ability to lead the team. Next were the Finance and Admin teams who were located and managed separately but needed to work together more. By understanding each other's values and preferred working styles, the team's identified ways to improve communication between them and had so much fun during the session they now socialise with each other more and actively look for ways to work together.

Programme initiated, co-ordinated and delivered by Lisa Dickinson



"I can see now why some of the team clash occasionally but I think that people will be a bit more tolerant of each other now and I feel more able to manage them"
Catering Team Manager

"This round of performance management has been the best we have ever done as I know what is important to each team member and they know the same about me. We were able to communicate so much better and had very productive discussions."
Admin Team Manager.

Our extended Senior Leadership Team which includes Heads of Faculties completed their workshop at the end of term and it has featured in many discussions since. One of the benefits of True Colors® is that it provides a language that everybody can use which is non judgemental and encourages people to find connections instead of differences.

We have also been able to identify the Leadership strengths in the team and where we have some gaps. We can now work on developing those gaps and bear them in mind when we are recruiting.

"You removed all my scepticism, got me thinking about my leadership style and gave me a great insight into the people we work with!"
Acting Head of Faculty

"Many thanks for providing True Colors training tonight. From a personal view it was nice to realise that there are some other people like me out there...I used to be the child at school that everyone wanted on the quiz team/trivial pursuit team and I used to think other people were odd for not wanting to know how the world works. It was good to see other people and to watch them in their personalities. The trick will be to blend and adapt to different situations and I am sure I can do that now when the need arises".
Head of Faculty

A basic 3 hour True Colors® workshop also forms an essential first step in the leadership development support we can offer to our Gaining Ground Partnership schools.

One of our partners found it so beneficial when their Senior Leadership team completed the programme they asked for another session for their English faculty which was experiencing some staff motivation problems. They are now considering training an in-house facilitator themselves.

"An eye opening experience"
Learning Support Assistant

"This has made me think differently about my teaching and how I want to develop my career. A real life changing experience!"
Deputy Head

Future Plans:

At the MFG we plan to roll out True Colors® to all staff over the coming year.

We believe that by implementing this whole school programme, which encourages and develops self awareness, we can develop the appropriate leadership culture for our school and move the school from Outstanding to World Class.

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