

## Beaumont College Distributed Leadership



### The story of distributed leadership at Beaumont College

In 2005 we were appointed by Scope to lead Beaumont College. She was a ship that had lost her rudder. The college was rated as unsatisfactory for leadership and management by Ofsted. We decided that given the seriousness of the situation and the urgent need for action that we had to involve the whole college community in moving forward. Our race preparations started here. The model we chose to achieve this was distributed leadership which to us meant empowering staff throughout the organisation to act in the best interests of the learner. We expanded the leadership team to include every college function and worked with the leaders of each function to first of all contribute to the formulation of an overall strategy of the college and then to develop detailed individual quality improvement plans to bring the strategy to life. We collectively agreed to make our measure of success the achievement of an Ofsted grade 1 throughout the college. Despite its difficulties we were very conscious as the leadership team that the college had a strong culture of learner centeredness and in our planning and communication constantly emphasised that this was the fundamental purpose of all our activity. This congruence has been a key factor in enabling us to harness the collective energy of the organisation and to achieve high performance.

We made a decision to embed leadership by equipping the managers to lead. Each level of management from the senior team to the supervisory level of manager underwent appropriate leadership development. We made a strategic decision to provide a comprehensive workforce development programme that would equip every member of staff with the knowledge and skills they needed to do their job at a very high standard. We used “off the shelf” packages where they existed and developed new ones where they did not. Maintaining a high level of investment in staff development even in difficult financial circumstances sends a message to the staff that they are valued, and this belief in their own worth enables them to challenge and contribute with confidence and skill to the college’s development.

Staff meet regularly to discuss their work. They share their learning and knowledge focusing on problem solving to give the learner the best experience. Community of practice and special interest groups are the norm, they are very well attended and provide opportunity for reflection and practice sharing which is highly valued by staff and leaders alike. The information gathered from these groups feeds back into development planning and self-assessment leading to a culture of continuous improvement.

An inspirational lecture by Mark de Rond led us to ask the leaders the “Stephen’s question”,

**"Why are we in the boat?"**.

We used the same metaphor and all staff related to it. We ask the staff in the film clip why they are in the boat and in the spirit of distributed leadership we didn't get in because we didn't need to, all seats were taken.

At the Ofsted re-inspection in 2010 we were found to be outstanding on every aspect of the CIF.

*"Inspirational leadership from senior managers has ensured that the College has made outstanding progress since the previous inspection. Comprehensive and very effective arrangements for self-assessment and quality improvement are embedded across the college"*  
Ofsted 2010.

The race goes on the line will never be crossed!

Graeme Pyle (Principal)

Maria Chambers (Vice Principal)