

ASSOCIATE

DAVE WHITAKER

“Schools work best when adults believe in children and children believe they believe in them”

It only takes a few minutes of a visit to the very special Springwell Special Academy where Dave is the Executive Principal to realise quite how special it is. And it doesn't take very long talking to the staff, the pupils or to Dave himself to realise quite how special Dave's approach is too - to special education, to leadership, to meeting the needs of all of some of the north of England's most challenging and challenged young people, to what education is all about.

In fact, it doesn't take very long before you realise that the lessons you are picking up from Dave and his school are lessons that are relevant for schools of any type working with all young people.

Judged 'Outstanding' by Ofsted in 2012, the cross-phase establishment is part of the Wellspring Academy Trust. Dave also leads Springwell Alternative Academy along with the local Behaviour Support Service. It is also home to a centre for anxious and phobic pupils as well as the EATOS service. All of which gives Dave a unique insight into how all aspects of the school system do – and don't – bring the best out of young people.

Springwell's approach to the children in its care from KS1 to KS5 can be summed up in one phrase – unconditional positive regard. And while many teachers may have heard the phrase, in this school and under Dave's leadership, it is lived and breathed in every interaction.

What's more, as Dave is proud to point out, at Springwell, they don't have a Behaviour Policy; they only have a Learning Policy. Get that right and the behaviour will follow on accordingly.

And unconditional positive regard is right at the heart of the Learning Policy.

Before moving into special education Dave worked as a senior leader in a large secondary school where he was responsible for inclusion and Special Educational Needs.

He is a National Leader of Education, Head of a Teaching School and works extensively for the Wellspring Trust across the north of England supporting the development of specialist behaviour academies and services.



“We believe every child deserves the very best care, attention, support, guidance and dare I say it, love, we can give them as caring professionals” - There is Another Way

Feedback from recent events include:

“Wow ! one of the most engaging insets I've ever been on - inspirational and informative”

“Absolutely fantastic ! great skills and knowledgeable - came away with lots of ideas”

“Super ! very entertaining and thought provoking”

“Brilliant. A real restorer of the values that we all hold true but can lose sight of in the daily grind”

Books written by Dave Whitaker:

- *There is Another Way* (contributor)

Dave has been with Independent Thinking since October 2012.

All Independent Thinking Associates are DBS checked.

See our website:
www.independentthinking.co.uk
for more information.