

ASSOCIATE

DAVE WHITAKER

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

If you want to know what inspirational leadership looks like, one that never loses sight of doing the right thing for every child in the classroom in a transformational spirit of ‘unconditional positive regard’, then look no further than Dave Whitaker.

We first met Dave several years ago as deputy and then head of Springwell Special Academy in Barnsley, a special school and PRU as well as home to a centre for anxious and phobic pupils and the EATOS service, an institution that supports some of the country’s most underprivileged and challenging young people, families and communities.

It was an incredibly uplifting meeting.

Running a number of such schools now across the north of England as well as being a National Leader of Education, the head of a Teaching School and a member of the Heads Roundtable, Dave retains his focus on absolutely doing right by the children in his care, regardless of the challenges they bring. A truly inspiring, entertaining and moving speaker, Dave is a powerful voice when it comes to putting forward an alternative to hard-line ‘no excuses, zero tolerance’ approaches to behaviour that only serve to deprive some of our hardest-to-reach and

vulnerable young people of the education they so badly need.

Apart from the number of very special special schools Dave oversees, he also leads Springwell Alternative Academy along with the local Behaviour Support 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.

For Dave, living and breathing the spirit of ‘unconditional positive regard’ is what it is all about, a spirit that is applied to all the children in his care, from KS1 to KS5. For example, as Dave is proud to point out, Springwell doesn’t have a behaviour policy as such. Instead their focus is on their learning policy, one that puts children at the heart of things. Get that right and the behaviour will follow on accordingly.

While Dave’s time for Independent Thinking is limited he is still always keen to spread the word at every opportunity and share how he is very much living our motto of ‘There is another way’.

‘Zero tolerance’ may get you somewhere but Dave’s work is proof that ‘intimacy, warmth, banter and trust’ will take everyone - teachers and children - a whole lot further.



“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:

“Dave was brilliant and inspirational. An excellent speaker bringing many issues to life with his experience and stories”

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

“Dave was just wonderful! Everything we hoped for and more. Our delegates described him as ‘inspirational’. He moved the room to tears and made many of us think twice about what we do now and how we can do it even better in future”

Books written by Dave Whitaker:

- *There is Another Way* (contributor)
- *The Working Class* (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.