

## CASE STUDY:

### Anne Hamilton - Headteacher

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#### Biggest Challenges



For the last three years, I have been the Headteacher at a Special Needs school. When I first joined the school, it was going through a difficult period of transition.

The Head and the Deputy Head had both retired at the same time, leaving the school without any leadership who had experience of running the school. This was my first substantive post as a Head, although I had been a deputy head for 12 years. I was here leading alone without any experienced leadership support, which proved tricky.

It was clear from the beginning that some of my team had different opinions about what could be achieved at the school and that many of staff were struggling to come to terms with the changes that were going on. I found myself having to constantly firefight, with no time or space to really develop my thinking and find long-term solutions to these problems.

I decided to approach my governors about the idea of coaching. Initially, there was resistance to coaching, as some of the governors took the attitude that as Head, I should be able to manage the challenges I was facing by myself. I'd been a client of Integrity Coaching before and so I had experienced the benefits of coaching first-hand.

I therefore, felt confident that they would be able to provide the support I needed to help me in my role. In the end, I set up a meeting with the chair of governors, the school improvement advisor (to support me), and put my claim forward that not only did I need coaching and so did the team. It was agreed that I could have coaching and the team would have to wait for the a while. The whole experience was not only disheartening but it was unhelpful as it meant that the process was drawn out over six months before I could finally get the help that I needed. It could have been so much quicker, if they really understood how much I needed it.

#### Coaching

Working with Viv and the Integrity Coaching team gave me an opportunity to reflect on the challenges I was facing and empowered me to work through them to find solutions. It gave me a chance to be truly open and real – if something had gone awfully, I could say it had and I knew I wouldn't be judged. It provided me with the strength I needed to come in

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everyday and the confidence that I could handle whatever would come my way.

The best way for me to describe it, would be for me to say, 'It's like facing your struggles with your best buddy by your side rather than having to tackle them on your own'. Meanwhile, my staff also had coaching as a team. They were given a space where they could be listened to, share the issues they were facing and find solutions for addressing them.

Those sessions were so helpful, because my team needed to know that there was no enemy within the group. Integrity Coaching was able to open my team's eyes time and time again as to how they could be supportive of the vision we were trying to achieve and helped them to collaborate positively together to make things work. It wasn't me enforcing this behaviour, rather Integrity Coaching created an environment where my staff chose to change so that they could best help the school.

The entire fabric of the school felt like it was changing and there began to be a real team atmosphere amongst the staff. They so loved their sessions that they kept asking for more. This meant I could go to my governors and this time, when I asked for more coaching sessions, they didn't question it as they could see the benefits and how much stronger the team had grown as a result. The school became a place where if people wanted to leave, we made sure they left well and if they wanted to stay we made sure to support them.

I just wish other governors could see the power of coaching (like fortunately mine now have) – as I feel that everybody should have an offer of coaching from their schools. No Head should be in the position that I was at the start of my headship, where they have to plead for the support they so badly need!



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