



"Be a blessing to somebody" - Maya Angelou

At Aspire we end each and every day with Blessings

I first read about gratitude as a way to support positive mental health after suffering from a major mental breakdown. When I felt well enough to read, I read the work of Martin Seligman on Positive Psychology and tried to make their suggestions habit. Research from positive psychology has shown that **practicing gratitude can improve your overall sense of well-being** and specifically your optimism. After practicing gratitude on a personal level and feeling the benefits, I took the idea to work.

When you work in Alternative Provision it's challenging every day. I used the idea of Blessings to support my staff's well-being, keep me from the edge and **fill the air with optimism**. We already met at the end of every day to discuss the day: the issues, the students, what we learnt, what we could do differently and to support each other. Often we had cake! Blessings at the end of the day complemented the cake and was an attempt to end the day positively, to feel good about what we had achieved and the differences and change we had seen.

At the end of every day, we count our blessings, at least three

Children are our Blessings at Aspire. We collectively share which children are our blessings and why. This means it's a collective celebration of others, **collective optimism and collective hope**. It brings us together as a community of staff to share the small steps of change that happens so gradually at Aspire that you'd could miss them if you weren't paying attention. It helps staff pay attention to the small but significant steps to self-improvement, like smiling at a teacher or putting pen to paper for the first time. Our blessings, celebrations and thanks aren't for special occasions they are for the ordinary and the daily lifting of us all.

This works. It works really well when the day has been tough and we wonder why we bother. It works in a strange way when we have discussed troubling behaviours from a student who is then also a member of staff's Blessing. Blessings at the end of the day ever so slightly shifts perspective, helps us see the big picture and alters how we think and feel before going home.

Imagine...

If you were the parent of an excluded child who previously had only ever had contact with a school when they called to complain. You get a call from your school to say your child was our Blessing today. **Priceless.**

Blessings is now just what we do around here. It's a habit that's well established. We are grateful for each other and the love we share.

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