



Leading with Love - at the heart of Aspire Schools

Leading with Love is fundamental to the vision and values of Aspire Schools. I accept that for many people that it is a challenging concept, and one that might not seem tangible and deliverable in practice.

The approach has developed organically over my career, based not only on my personal experiences, but also on the reading and research I have done, and through professional encounters with experts working in the fields of leadership, education and positive psychology. Leading with Love is what makes us unique and a special place to work.

Leading with Love is both a leadership strategy and a leadership framework

To 'lead with love' is to be deliberate and intentional in one's planning and interactions. It is not a leadership 'style' or a 'trait' that either comes naturally to you or does not. Instead, it is a conscious set of decisions about how you will 'be', how you will 'lead' and how you respond to others. To lead with love, you need to understand the way that your body and mind responds automatically to certain situations so that you can interrupt that cycle, take a step back and ask yourself: how do I want to be in this moment?

There is no place for fear in an organisation fuelled by love

"Leaders who project strength before establishing trust run the risk of eliciting fear, and along with it a host of dysfunctional behaviours" (Cuddy, Kohut and Neffinger, 2013)

Research suggests that it is actually warmth that creates effective leadership, and acts as the 'conduit of influence', facilitating trust and the communication and absorption of ideas. It is through very simple non-verbal signals that this can begin to be created: a nod, a smile, an open gesture that shows a colleague you are pleased to be in their company and are attentive of their concerns. In this way, leaders are able to show they are present, that they notice their colleagues and that they care.

Relationships are at the heart of what we do when we lead with love.

"Too often relationships can be the by-product of decisions taken with other priorities in mind. They're often neglected, undermined or put under intolerable pressure." (Relational Schools)

To lead with love is to prioritise what it is to be human, and the opportunity to build and nurture high-quality and meaningful relationships is at the very heart of that. However, we cannot leave the formation of them to chance, and we must provide staff and students with the time and space they need to develop and nurture these relationships. We need to embrace the messiness and vulnerability of what it means to be human and this takes courage. It is not a fluffy concept, but a deliberate effort to think consciously about all that you do, and the impact that you have on other people.

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