



Coaching and Learning in Schools

A Practical Guide

Sarah Gornall and Mannie Burn



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Dedication

In memory of Chris Lindup, a wise, inspiring and generous coach.

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About the Authors

Sarah Gornall is an experienced coach accredited with the International Coach Federation, coach supervisor and mentor. She started an independent company, Coaching Climate, in 2005, running training in coaching and management skills alongside individual and team coaching. Sarah is an associate with CMC Career Management Consultants Ltd and has designed and delivered MA modules in coaching at Bath Spa University. Sarah has a background in educational leadership and was Director of Bristol Education Action Zone from 2000 to 2005. She has taught in secondary, further and higher education sectors, and has worked with numbers of primary and early years settings. Her first book *Building Learning Power In Action* was published in 2005. She loves music, green spaces, learning and her wonderful family, who are spread around the globe.

Mannie Burn is an experienced coach and educator. Her particular interests are in professional development, learning and the leadership and management of change. She began her career with 14 years in music education where she taught, then trained and inspired hundreds of teachers, children and parents to use a singing-based music curriculum. She then moved into primary school teaching and leadership. For the last three years Mannie has been focusing on professional and organisational development. She now works part-time as a senior education consultant for Best Practice Network in Bristol and has her own independent coaching practice. Mannie lives in Bristol with her husband. They have four adult children who have been and continue to be a source of inspiration and joy.

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Introduction

This introductory chapter includes:

- Our aims in writing the book
- A guide to the shape of the book
- An explanation of our use of dialogue to start each chapter
- An overview of the contents of each chapter

Coach How about starting by telling me a bit about the book?

Mannie The idea first came to me as I was walking the dog! I found myself thinking that coaching often appeals to school leaders at a gut level. Although they instinctively see its potential, they may not have the time to look into it in depth. I thought that a book that laid out the big picture and key points about coaching under one roof could be useful.

Coach You're sounding excited . . .

Mannie Yes, I think it's worth spending time exploring coaching because it can really help to develop the capacity to learn and change. It's important for education and for meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Sarah If teachers and school leaders understand more about the *how* and the *why* of coaching, extend their skills and help others thrive as a result of reading the book, then it will have repaid the effort.

Coach I've heard two claims. That coaching develops the capacity to learn and change. And that coaching helps people thrive.

Mannie We've seen it enable all sorts of people – teachers, education leaders, students and pupils – to do things they didn't feel were within their grasp before. For example, rebuilding and leading what had been a fragmented team, working effectively with a new colleague, even enjoying school!

- Sarah We'll be bringing evidence to back this up: case studies where we unpick both the impact of the coaching and how it was achieved; times when coaching has helped both children and education professionals develop their self-awareness, their confidence and their learning.
- Coach So that's *why* you think coaching is powerful. What about the *how*?
- Sarah There are a couple of chapters where I'll explain different models and frameworks for coaching, which are what you might *do* as a coach. And I'll write about how to *be* as a coach as well.
- Mannie I'll describe how a couple of schools have trained staff and worked to embed a coaching culture. Of course, it isn't an overnight fix. Cultural change takes time.
- Sarah It also takes time to learn how to coach people at a deep level. The good news though, is that just shifting the way you relate and listening more actively is the start of the process, and that's within everyone's grasp.
- Coach And when people have read the book, what do you hope for beyond that?
- Sarah That it will be both an inspiration and an ongoing resource for development. Rather like a stone that's thrown into a lake: we'd like the ripples to roll out, catching up more and more people, enriching their coaching and bringing benefit to others.
- Coach It feels like the beginning of a journey . . .
- Mannie As if sparks might fly!

Genesis and Aims

The idea for this book has come about from our observation that school leaders often know instinctively that coaching is a 'good thing', that it meets a need and that they want a coaching culture in their school. Yet they are often challenged to explain to others what coaching is and why it is a good idea, how it supports the current education agendas such as 'learning to learn' and 'the self-regulated learner', how it ties in to their own education philosophy and vision and how it can strengthen learning relationships in schools.

As external coaches, university lecturers and coach trainers, we have also noted that there is a huge amount of confusion about what coaching is. This is not surprising, as coaching is still establishing itself as a profession and the *National Framework for Mentoring and Coaching* was only published by the Centre for Research and Evidence in Education in 2005 (CUREE, 2005).

Coaching is increasingly seen as an important means of professional development in many sectors. We think that, in general, it has been adopted at an instrumental and transactional level in education, and that the philosophical, educational, relational and developmental potential of coaching may not yet have been fully explored.

There are other manuals, toolkits and handbooks which tell us *how* to do coaching, which is part of our focus. However, we have yet to find a book which helps us to explore *why* we might spend precious resources of time and money on developing a coaching culture in schools and what the impact might be on adults and young people if we were to do so. That is what this book aims to do.

We hope that implementing the ideas in the book will benefit children both directly, from fresh approaches on a one-to-one or group basis, and indirectly, from the quality of their interactions with self-aware and growing adults, who are supporting each other in their own learning.

Shape of the Book

The first thing that might strike you is the use of dialogue to introduce each chapter. Our rationale for this is twofold. First, the book was born out of dialogue. We spent days discussing our ideas before we started writing. We interspersed our writing with discussion, which was sometimes supportive and sometimes challenging. Secondly, it is a book about coaching and coaching is conversation. So why not include as much of it as we could? Maybe we could both model something of the nature of coaching and at the same time introduce our ideas and points of view?

There are two authors of this book. At times we speak with different voices. You will get to know us from the dialogues, from what we say about our experience in Chapter 2, and from the way in which we write our respective chapters. We both hold a strong belief that coaching has the potential to transform lives and the learning experience. We both have years of experience as educators in different sectors and have both turned to coaching as a later development of our careers.

Each chapter starts with an overview of what we will cover. There is then a short dialogue that introduces the content rather more fully and emphasises certain points that we plan to explore. The structure of the main part of the chapter varies a bit according to the focus. You can expect to find:

- narrative which shares our knowledge and experience
- descriptions of coaching models and frameworks
- examples of coaching conversations
- case studies of one-to-one coaching
- examples of how coaching has been implemented in educational settings
- summaries of some research into the impact of coaching.

We end each chapter with a summary of key points.

Content of Chapters

Chapter 2 Our Position

We start by describing what we bring to the book as authors: our own pivotal experiences and our perspectives on coaching and education, so you can assess the fit with your own views and weigh up our conclusions with foreknowledge of any bias we might have. Then we hear from a primary headteacher, who wrote a report on the impact of coaching and of external advisers with coach-like attitudes, on both her and the staff in her school. We sum up with a number of conclusions about the nature of coaching drawn from these personal stories of coaching.

Chapter 3 Definitions of Coaching and Learning

Our third chapter defines what we mean by both *coaching* and *learning*. The term ‘coaching’ is used to mean a range of different approaches, with different expectations about confidentiality, setting the agenda and giving advice. We explain our definition and what we see as the differences between coaching and other sorts of learning relationship, such as teaching, training and counselling. We draw a distinction between dedicated coaching, being coach-like and having a coaching approach. We give a brief outline of the informational and transformative aspects of learning in order to inform our discussion about how coaching and learning connect. Imagine the huge question of what learning is, as just one part of one chapter of one short book! We end with an overview of the history of coaching from its origins in the work of other disciplines in the 1930s to its global spread in the today.

Chapter 4 Impact of Coaching on Personal and Professional Development

This chapter is all about evidence of the impact of coaching on school leaders and teachers. We hear from an experienced headteacher, with an excellent report from the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) in a previous school, who none the less felt that maybe headship was not for her – until she had coaching. We hear how the experience enabled her to shift her leadership style to be more true to herself and her values, and to benefit her staff. We ask ‘How was this outcome achieved?’ Then we look at several other studies of coaching, including the evaluation of two small-scale coaching projects for headteachers, the impact that training in coaching skills had on a number of teachers in terms of their interactions with pupils and their own professional development and research by the National College and we discuss the common themes that emerge.

Chapter 5 The Process of Coaching: Being, Having and Doing

Chapter 5 is about the being, having and doing of coaching. This is what we think are the essential attributes of an effective coach, based on our experience. From this, we hope that you will understand both how to bring yourself to coaching and how to build the sort of trusting and productive relationship that is typical of coaching. We also give you some tips for staying in focus as you coach. Most coaching books explain the process of coaching as an adult – adult interaction. Here we

use two case studies of adults coaching children. The first is based on a small-scale project carried out by a teacher as part of a postgraduate professional development programme. In the second, the coach is an early years practitioner, who was inspired by a course on coaching skills to try out a different approach with her own daughter, when the latter was having problems with her literacy homework. We discuss what happened in each instance and what the two coaches in the case studies actually did to be effective.

Chapter 6 Impact of Coaching on Learning

In Chapter 6, we discuss the impact of coaching on learning. Here we develop our thinking about the connections between coaching and learning to a greater degree than we did in Chapter 3. We ask a series of questions to tease out the factors that underpin effective learning and then consider how coaching might support those factors. We don't pretend to be exhaustive, simply to shed our own perspective on this perennially fascinating subject. Our writing is informed by research on learning and the Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory (ELLI) and Building Learning Power (BLP) frameworks. We explain how we see that these two approaches connect with coaching and then discuss two case studies: a special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) coaching a group of Year 4 boys, with impact on their attainment in writing, and an independent coach coaching a mature student to improve his awareness of himself as a learner. We conclude that coaching really can help to raise attainment.

Chapter 7 Models and Types of Coaching

This chapter is the first of two with a very practical focus. We outline some of the major approaches to coaching, such as solution focused and behavioural coaching, and give light-touch descriptions of a number of practical coaching frameworks with examples of questions and dialogue as illustration. The illustrative questions are based on personal coaching experience. The next section is on psychological approaches to coaching, some of which also engender frameworks. We give an example of cognitive behavioural coaching in action with a secondary school manager, and touch on the use of neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), and transactional analysis (TA) in coaching. You will realise from this outline that coaches can draw on a wide range of traditions, leading to the concept of the eclectic coach. We end the chapter with some ideas for putting some of these approaches and frameworks into practice in an educational setting.

Chapter 8 Coaching Tools and Activities

This is our second practical chapter. It focuses on coaching tools and activities, what they are, and how and why you might use them. Our approach to tools is that they must serve the development of the coachee. The way they are used is very important, as is permission from the coachee to use them in the first place. We describe the coaching wheel and two contexts in which you might like to use it with staff. Then we give you some ideas for varying your approach to suit different people and different preferences. These include working with pictures, diagrams and objects to stimulate thinking, using physical movement and visualisations to