

# The Pure Potential Experience Through *The Eyes Of Educational Leaders*



## An incredible journey

Over the past two years more than 100 education leaders have engaged with Pure Potential's immersive leadership and development programme.

This case study focuses on a cohort of 11 educators who came together as part of a 12-week programme in 2024, which marked a departure from more traditional CPD approaches. Despite busy diaries, the group of Headteachers, Deputy Headteachers, a School Business Manager and system leaders invested time and energy in the experiential programme which prompted curiosity, challenge at times, and space for reflection to see beyond the day-to-day demands of life in the sector.

## Understanding the terrain

The 'expedition' began with a research period to get a sense of the landscape and the reality experienced both individually and collectively in their respective educational settings. It provides a vital opportunity to acknowledge what's showing up so that the programme speaks directly to everyone's specific experiences. It came to the fore that workload demands, heavy weight of responsibility, confidence and navigating difficult relationships were the key challenges for the group.



Clare Rhodes, Deputy Headteacher of Howitt Community Primary School, said:

**"Inset days are jam-packed – timetables are so full. Sometimes we just have to breathe."**



## Scaffolding the approach

Designed to create a safe space for deep learning, the programme fostered a natural intimacy by inviting participants to be honest and open about their experiences, while nudging them back to a clarity that exists in the quiet space below the frenetic mental load of Ofsted inspections, results and the like.

Commenting on the chronology of the journey and how she felt when engaging with it, Sharon Gray OBE, Director of Wholehearted Learning and former Member of the Youth Justice Board, said:

**“The content is well scaffolded in a carefully sequenced experiential journey that is anchored in safety.”**

Each of the 11 participants came to see that this leadership and development process was an opportunity to commit fully in order to experience both profound and practical benefits.

Hannah Wallis, Co-Headteacher at Pennine Way Junior School reflected:

**“You have to jump feet first into it and give yourself over to it to get the most out of it.”**

## Bringing clarity to the human design

Through a blend of group workshops and 1-1 coaching, the cohort began to get curious about the nature of the human design and the invisible filters through which we all perceive our daily lives.

The exploration was supported by the provision of individual backpacks for each ‘explorer’ to help orient their learning and to provide a simple yet clear understanding and language to make sense of their inner and outer terrain.

Claire Evans, Headteacher at Draycott Primary School, said:

**“the snow globe resonated the most for me”**

and Zoe Farrow added that it supported emotional literacy in the classroom and has helped both staff and children see that

**“We all go in and out of the blizzard at times in our thinking”.**



The programme not only created a shared language, but pointed to a powerful innate resilience, given the mind’s inherent capacity to settle.

## **A subtractive approach**

Ironically, among a group of leaders well-versed in learning and knowledge acquisition, it became apparent to the cohort that this was something of an ‘unlearning curve’. Pure Potential pointed to a clarity which naturally prompted the dense weight of the mental load to gently lift.

Alan Kealy, Director of Potentia Teaching School Hub, reflected:

**“There was a simplicity in the way it was articulated. The references, resources, terminology and toolkit made it all less complicated.”**

The invitation to slow down, to recognise that as leaders we act with greater clarity from a settled state, was a significant realisation for Dr Lindsey Smethem, Vice-Chair of Embark Federation:

**“I wish I’d known this earlier in my career. I could have saved myself years of angst by having a framework for this understanding.”**





From this quieter, more aligned space, the group felt able to access their own potential and to go back into their leadership roles with a sustained understanding of the source of creativity and ease, which is evident in their professional and personal lives.

**“Pure Potential allowed me to step back, switch off more and spend time with my family.” Alison Spencer, Headteacher, The Brigg Infant School**

## Tangible Outcomes

100% felt empowered to perform in their roles often or all of the time – which is especially pertinent against a national barometer, given that the TES Wellbeing Report 2024 states that only 45% of those surveyed reported they had autonomy to make decisions

Less worried by the OFSTED experience

Empowered to create cultural and behavioural transformation in their setting

Feeling more able to switch off and fully engage in their home life

Less reactive to the emotions or challenging behaviours of others

Clearer decision making



100% would recommend the programme to others

Greater ease in dealing with parents and staff

Being able to communicate with greater clarity and impact



The Closing Ceremony of this cohort of participants in December 2024 was an inspiring session. It offered space for individuals to share their insights and reflections and strategies for how to 'live it' and 'lead it'.

Deputy Headteacher Zoe Farrow from William Rhodes Primary School was so invested in the programme it prompted her to create a manifesto to articulate the wider impact of sharing this work:

**“If there was a shared understanding and vision of Pure Potential, the possibilities could be profound.**

**At school we have embarked on this journey with our staff and children, mapping out a plan for the year with each aspect we would introduce to the children and when. I have seen Pure Potential come alive in the children.”**

The programme’s gentle, informative and clear way of pointing to and talking about the source of potential provides a blueprint for organisational culture and systemic change.

### In their own words..

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“I am truly authentically showing up.”

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“I’ve learned to loosen the grip and have more patience as my snow globe settles.”

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“When you understand how the design works, the sky’s the limit.”

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“This experiential learning has been life-saving after the toughest year of my life.”

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“A shared understanding of Pure Potential is like planting seeds in fertile soil – anything can grow from it.”

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[www.pure-potential.org](http://www.pure-potential.org)