

Testimonial for Chris Tomkins

A month in as a new (very naive) Head Teacher OFSTED swooped in and did their worst! Whilst there was much of their report I could relate to, at the time I was truly devastated and instead of being able to enjoy my new challenge I was faced with disappointed parents and angry, despondent staff. I didn't know what to tackle first ; my dream job felt like a nightmare! And then in stepped Chris.... To put it simply she picked me up, dusted me down and pointed me in the right direction. She has been with me every step of the way taking our school from RI to Good and I know with her support we can go even further. She has become a good friend as well as an amazing adviser.

Our first meetings were more counselling than anything else. Chris is a brilliant listener. She also knows how to ask the right questions; questions that gently challenge you and help you to find the right solutions for you and your particular setting. She comes with a whole wealth of experience, not just from her own years as a Head Teacher but from the many school settings she has visited where she has observed good practice. And be assured if she doesn't know something she will always go away and find out.

Empathetic and empowering- Chris understands the many challenges schools and Head Teachers face. She is non-judgemental with a lovely sense of humour; I knew I could share everything and anything with Chris and we would end up laughing. (We got through a few boxes of tissues as my tears of complete frustration were changed to tears of joy!) Put very simply Chris helped me believe in myself and my own ability again. She helped me to love the job again.

Resourceful and Supportive: Chris can point you in the direction of good resources, excellent courses and will provide links with other schools. The first few visits were focussed on my needs but in time she was able to support me to identify other staff within my team who in turn were able to benefit from her support and step up to leadership to support me to make the necessary changes.

An invaluable 'critical' friend: Chris is a very good judge of character. She knows when it is right to go gently and when it is best to take a firm hand. With her support I was able to have those 'difficult conversations' and challenge staff to raise standards. I know I can trust Chris to be honest with me. and together we always move forward.

I could go on and on but basically she just gets it! Above all else, whilst TOGETHER you may be raising achievement and considering assessments / improving data- collection, developing teaching and learning, looking at time keeping, encouraging children's own involvement in learning and generally taking a fresh look at the school environment, you can be assured Chris will be keeping the children at the heart of everything she does. To me that means everything!

Pam Robinson

Head Teacher Mary Hare Primary School