



Adam (left) is standing on a chair for a reason. He is trying to get a group of teenagers to count from one to 20. A modest challenge normally, but in this case the room contains 250 Year 10 pupils, of whom Adam is one, and each number must be called out once only. Directing his peers like the conductor of a huge orchestra, Adam shows leadership and tenacity.

The other pupils have to concentrate and tune in to those around them to prevent numbers being repeated. Naturally, being teenagers, not everyone wants to co-operate. Several times, the exercise is either sabotaged (to the sound of stifled sniggers) or goes wrong and has to be started again. Eventually, however, Adam steers the group to 20. Mission accomplished, he takes his seat and soaks up the applause.

The venue for the all-day interactive event, of which this exercise is a small part, is a conference hall next to Leeds United's football ground. The



students are from Castleford High School which is a few miles down the road. The aim of the day is to introduce the students to a qualification designed to change their approach to life and work.

It is based Sean Covey's book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teenagers*, a spin-off from his father Stephen R. Covey's best-selling self-development guide, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Covey Senior has sold 20 million books worldwide and Junior looks set to catch up, having already sold two million.

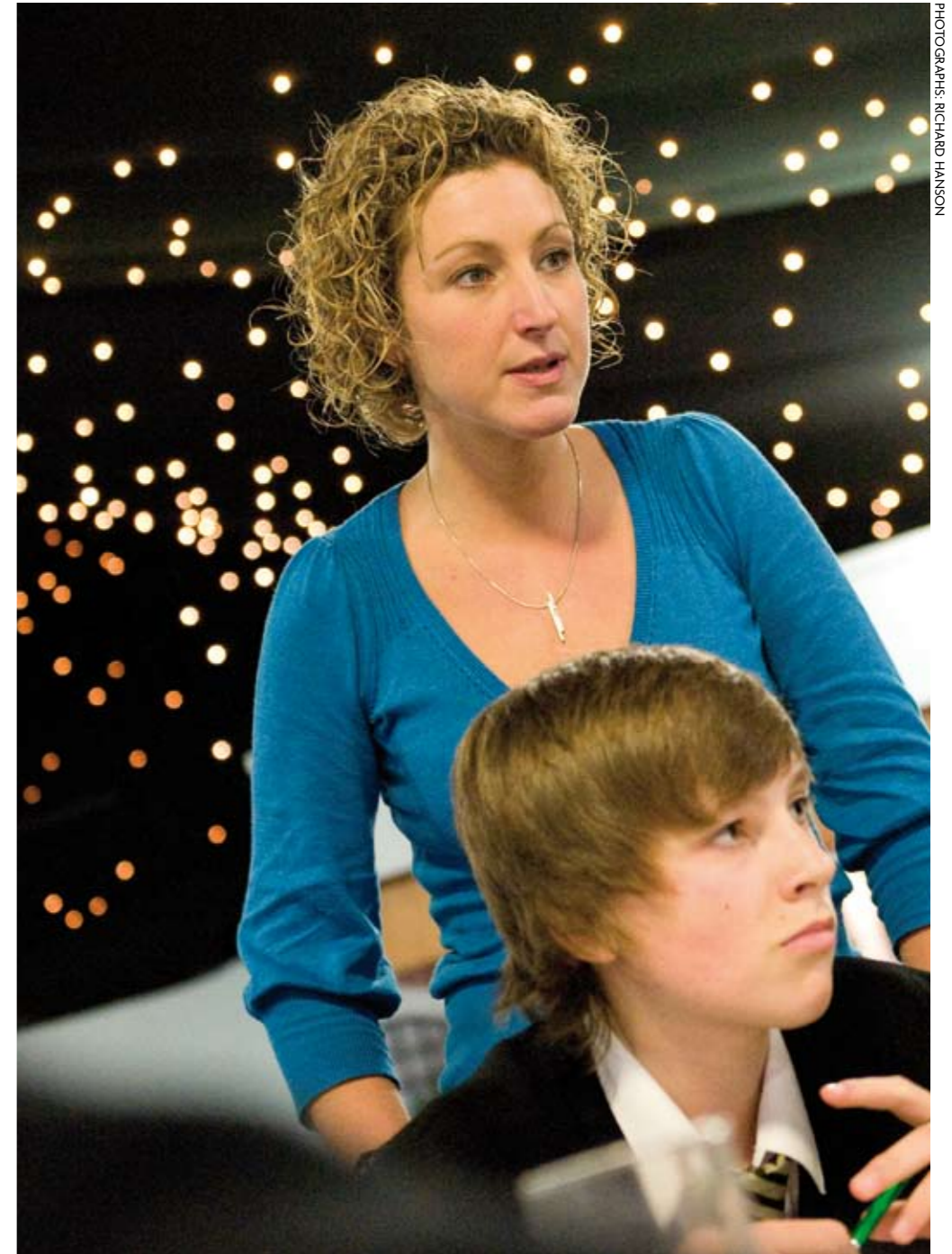
Facilitating the introduction to this QCA-approved course are two American educators who stride through the serried ranks of tables exhorting their audience to think, reflect, look back, look forward and generally

challenge themselves. Whenever the energy dips, they introduce another exercise and when they fail, after several attempts, with the one-to-20 game, Adam, unbidden, takes control.

The facilitators are delighted by his intervention and as the exercise ends, one of them, Lonnie Moore, tells the room: "This is how leadership happens and every one of you can do it." His colleague, Gary McGuey, (left) adds, with reference to Adam: "We've been doing this for about 10 years and every now and again something like this happens and it still gives me goose-bumps."

Looking on is Lucy Debrick (right), head of RE, PSHE and citizenship at the Castleford school. She thinks the day is going well. She says of the facilitators: "The kids have enjoyed having those two guys. They've got them up on their feet and really involved." She explains why the school has brought along its entire year: "We want our students to enthuse about the course and really apply it to all aspects of their life and raise their own aspirations. This event is a great way to kick off the programme."

Sean Covey's book is an exposition that extends over 250 pages. It contains all manner of tricks and treats to break up the text and boost its appeal to its target audience, including cartoons, anecdotes, poems, quotes and 'incredible stories about real teenagers from around the world'. It is packed with exhortations to 'act' rather than



PHOTOGRAPHS: RICHARD HANSON

HOW TO CREATE A 'HIGHLY EFFECTIVE TEENAGER'

Sulky and sleepy, or motivated and dynamic? Daniel Allen looks at how Sean Covey's book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teenagers* is being used in schools



The 7 Habits

- 1 | Be proactive: take responsibility for your life.
- 2 | Begin with the end in mind: define your mission and goals in life.
- 3 | Put first things first: prioritise and do the most important things first.
- 4 | Think win-win: have an 'everyone can win' attitude.
- 5 | Seek first to understand, then to be understood: listen to people sincerely and communicate clearly.
- 6 | Synergise: work together to achieve more.
- 7 | Sharpen the saw: renew yourself regularly.

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**Facilitator
Gary McGuey
tests the
effectiveness
of a teenager...**



“This is how leadership happens and every one of you can do it” GARY MCGUEY

be ‘acted upon’ and to be a ‘can-do’ person. For example: “To reach your goals in life, you must seize the initiative. If you’re feeling bad about not being asked out on dates, don’t just sit and sulk, do something about it.”

For those inclined to think that teenagers are genetically predisposed to sitting around and sulking, this is challenging stuff. Can this kind of thing really turn adolescents, with their effervescent hormones, emotions and relationships, into ‘effective’ people?

Elements of the press are doubtful. The *Daily Mail* quoted critics who described the 7 Habits programme as “absolute mumbo-jumbo” and said it “requires teenagers to do little more than think positively,

develop an ‘everyone can win’ attitude and use their ‘pause button’ when annoyed.”

The newspaper was outraged that the programme could be used by schools to boost their league-table rankings “alongside traditional subjects such as English and maths”.

Roy Vaughan, headteacher at Castleford High is unfazed. He and 20 of his pupils went to a 7 Habits taster day last year and he came away impressed by what he felt the programme could offer his school. “I was wowed by the day, to be honest,” he says.

“I thought the programme offered real quality teaching material. It just seemed to be full of good, common-sense ideas that would give kids back a degree of control over what they were feeling.”

Castleford encourages students to be independent learners and the introductory event chimed with that philosophy, says Roy. “I came back after that day and I said I wanted to introduce it into PSHE.”

But with what aim? FranklinCovey, the effectiveness training company responsible for introducing the 7 Habits to British schools, says the programme boosts employability skills by improving time management and encouraging proactive behaviour and more effective communication.

Kevin Vaughan-Smith, FranklinCovey’s UK managing director, says the programme has the potential to change communities. “Our experience of working with schools in the United States is that the school

can be a barometer of the community,” he says. By helping children to realise their potential at school and at home, there is a ripple effect on the wider community. Children begin to make better choices about their health, for example, and how they live their lives. Truancy levels and even crime rates can fall, he claims.

“We have seen all this in the States,” he adds. He cites the case of AB Combs Elementary School in North Carolina, once the worst performing school in its district. After introducing a leadership development programme for pupils based on the 7 Habits, results improved dramatically and this year AB Combs was branded a ‘school of excellence’ in the Magnet Schools of America programme.

But can similar results be expected in this country? FranklinCovey says that the principles behind the 7 Habits are universal and have been proved by thousands of teachers and students worldwide to be effective. The unifying factor, says facilitator Lonnie Moore, is that the issues teenagers face, from North Carolina to Castleford, are identical – for example, peer pressure, relationships and ‘do I fit in?’.

“These are universal questions,” says Lonnie, “and they need universal solutions. Students may dress differently, comb their hair differently and speak with different accents, but the problems are all the same across the world.” His colleague, Gary McGuey, concurs, saying that from Bermuda to Mexico to Guatemala the challenges for teenagers are identical. “The power of this approach is that it’s common-sense stuff that deals with principles.”

The principle behind one of the video clips shown at the event in Leeds appears to be

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“I think this is going to help us a lot, but it’s up to us now”

TEENAGE PUPIL, CRAIG

that providing your approach is right and your determination absolute, triumph can come from adversity.

The clip features the real-life case of a man and his disabled son who together participate in gruelling athletic events in which the father carries, pushes or pedals the boy over the finishing line. Accompanied by a soaring soundtrack, the film could be interpreted as treading a fine line between hackneyed and inspirational, but a couple of the Year 10 girls later admit it moved them to tears.

The clip adds to the slightly evangelical feel of the day’s proceedings. There is great emphasis on goals and strengths and mission statements. Lonnie shares his: “I will live a life that will make my family proud.”

“We assume a lot about kids,” says headteacher Roy, reflecting on the event a few days later. He suggests that one of those assumptions is that children are sophisticated in their tastes and are able to filter influences in the way adults can. What is trite to an adult may be genuinely motivational to a teenager.

If doubts exist about the transferability of the 7 Habits to British teenagers, Rob Harvie seeks to dispel them. Rob is a life coach who specialises in work with young people. Observing the day’s events in Leeds, he admits he was sceptical about the benefits of the Covey approach before being trained to help pilot the scheme in Britain.

Some of the youngsters he has worked with have difficult pasts but he has seen good results. “There’s something for every young person in this, providing it’s sensitive to what they are going through,” he says. The 7 Habits approach is no quick fix though; there is no substitute for forging a relationship with children to ease their passage through potentially troubled teenage years. “Build rapport, and then you can start working with them and making this really useful in their lives.”

Like Rob, Mick Brookes, NAHT’s General Secretary, has no problems with the importation of a system honed on American students. “Not to take notice of a work because it’s from another culture would

Pupils Craig, Ellie (right) and Paige found the event unexpectedly inspirational



be a huge mistake,” he says. But he is wary of too prescriptive an approach. “Part of young people’s job description is rebellion and if you or I tell them what to think they will reject it out of hand.” Better, perhaps, to ask teenagers themselves what they believe are the essential habits for success.

Back in Leeds, the facilitators are bringing the workshop to a close and after they have done so, pupils flock around them, chatting, asking questions, taking pictures on their phones. What did the students think?

George says: “We weren’t told much about the day beforehand so I came with an open mind and I was surprised by how exciting it was.” Is there anything he will take away from it? “Well, I haven’t really set goals in the past and I can see that if you do, it benefits you a lot in life.”

Liam, who hopes to become a forensic pathologist, says that some of the 7 Habits struck a chord with him: think ‘win-win’, for example. He also enjoyed the exercises and activities –

one involving an exploding cola bottle was especially popular – and he thinks these helped illustrate the points the facilitators were making. “It’s been an interesting experience,” he says.

Among the girls, Paige says: “I expected it to be boring, but they made it really interesting.” High points? “There have been loads but especially all the goals to set yourself.”

Her friend, Ellie, says that she didn’t want to come, but is glad she did. “I liked it when they did all the activities. Oh, and the video clips. And the humour.” The facilitators’ transatlantic accents also appealed.

Other views are mixed, but generally favourable: “Pretty good,” says Arjun; “Alright, but some bits were boring,” reckons Ben; Leah, meanwhile, wants time to reflect on the day and what it has taught her but says she found it interesting.

And Craig says: “I think this is going to help us a lot.” He pauses, then adds: “But it’s up to us now.” **LF**

It’s a qualified success

Publisher FranklinCovey and the Qualifications Network, a Qualifications and Curriculum Authority-approved body, have developed the Level 2 Certificate in Personal Effectiveness.



Facilitators Gary McGuey and Lonnie Moore.

Taught over two 11-hour units, the qualification maps into the KS3 and KS4 PSHE curriculum. Assessment is via a 20-item multiple choice assessment paper at the end of each unit.

Accreditation to deliver the qualification is open to all teaching professionals currently working in schools, colleges or youth organisations.

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