Episode 104 Coaching in School Final Edit

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**SPEAKERS**

Jo Wheatley, Zoe Hawkins

**Zoe Hawkins** 00:03

The Coaching Crowd podcast is for compassionate courageous leaders, HR professionals and high achievers, people who are passionate about helping others to find alignment in their lives through coaching, and do a thinking of training and developing as a coach. Welcome to the coaching crowd podcast with me Zoe Hawkins and my friend and co host Jo Wheatley.

**Jo Wheatley** 00:26

Welcome, everybody. Today, we're talking about coaching in schools, which is very different to other podcasts that we've recorded before. And we're going to be sharing with you some of our perspectives, thoughts and reflections, having, you know, been educated in school ourself and having children in the school system at the moment. And one of the reasons that we are bringing this topic today to explore is because we've had a number of coaches and people in education on our courses or attend our summit. And I was also asked recently, by somebody, what were my thoughts and views around coaching in schools? So Zoe where shall we start?

**Zoe Hawkins** 01:07

It's a really big topic, isn't it? And I think, I think a start for me is coaching, of course, for us would be incredibly valuable to have in schools, both in the curriculum available to teachers available to leadership. That's our starting point. Isn't that a you a wonderful Utopia to think about? And one of the reasons why is because coaching has been so fundamental to our lives shaping the way that we think we often talk about Jo, don't wait, gosh, if only we'd known this, all those years before how different life could have been. And not in a regret way, just in a you look at the world through a slightly different lens. I don't know what age those things I may have wanted to discover would have been. But I think the essence of learning about how powerful your mindset is, and how important your beliefs are in generating behaviours, and just helping you to understand your emotions and your behaviours through a different lens, I think it helped to avoid a lot of self critique, and complexities in relationships and all things like that. So it is a topic that we feel passionately about. But also recognise that there are huge challenges at the at the door of education when it comes to investment in all things, which obviously includes coaching.

**Jo Wheatley** 02:35

Yeah, when I think about coaching and education, I think about, like my own experience, and I think when I was a child growing up, and think I've got a teenager, and I've also got a child in still in primary at the moment, I didn't understand how my thoughts were connected to my feelings, and connected to the way that I behaved. I didn't understand it. And I was confused by, you know, my experience of that you're in a phase of discovery, trying to make sense of the world. And after all human beings are, we need meaning we're in this continual search for meaning. And I think I would have really, really benefited by being educated about it, because it would have given me a greater sense of control. And when I think about having a teenager, my teenager wants control, they want independence. And I think so does my younger one as well. But when I think about that, it's often thought about in terms of the things that they do wanting independence, to be able to go and do things, but what about how do we support our children to have a greater level of independence, you know, around the way that they think how they can have more control over the way that they think. And what I mean by that is to move from getting stuck maybe into some disempowering cycles of thoughts and feelings and actions into a cycle that is going to be more empowering, when I think about the impact that conversations can have on others, and the types of questions that we ask ourselves, or if we ask our children and how that can help to shift mood. And, you know, when I think about how do teachers respond when children make statements like, oh, I can't do that, it would be easy to go back and say, Yes, you can go on Yes, you can, which can be seen to be encouraging. What are the alternatives? What other ways are there that, that teachers and all people can learn how to respond and also to learn more about the way that that we process our experience of the world?

**Zoe Hawkins** 04:46

But coaching is a big part of our parenting, isn't it in the way that we work with our children? So you know, I've got three young children as well all under the age of 12. And I think it's more of a culture, in our, in our language and in our communication, where coaching kind of just filters through every conversation. So my son the other day, asked me, what, what is success money? We're talking about sports day or something? What is success? And I'm like, Well, that depends on the goal. And he was like, what's the goal? Yeah, so we just talked it through because his, he had a one dimensional view that to win was success. And we talked about what not everybody's goal is to win, like somebody's goal is to have fun, or somebody's goal might be to run as fast as they could or faster than they ran last time. So we had a conversation about it. And I forget these days, that those are the sorts of conversations that do instil flexibility, in, you know, in, I hope, my children's mindsets, I'm not saying I get it all right all of the time. And I do think there's an essence of that in some really good schools with some really great teachers. But I'm also aware that the pressure that teachers are under and that you can, you know, yourself when you're in a pressure cooker, there's only so much you can handle. And let's face it, classrooms can be difficult environments, where children have a whole range of different behaviours. So if you have a teacher, who's in a classroom, with some very, very challenging behaviours that are being experienced, and you yourself are stressed, and you've got mountains of work piling up, and that child might say something like, this works boring. If you are not very well resourced, you may you may get triggered by that. And I know, through experiences My children have had that sometimes teachers, because they're human, have responded in a less than ideal way to those sorts of behaviours. And so, yes, there's kind of coaching for the children to help them understand, you know, their mindset, but also how it might be really helpful for teachers to, to have support to be able to gain different perspectives on the environments that they find themselves a part of, to be able to process those reactions that they are having, when feeling challenged by the behaviour of their class. And I think coaching could provide an amazing space to be able to support teachers with that challenge.

**Jo Wheatley** 07:20

Yeah, I mean, schools are melting pots on their their community hubs. There's a huge amount of responsibility and demand on people working in education. And we need, we need great teachers and lots of them. And you know, what we hear in the news is that, that lots of people are leaving the teaching profession. And, you know, so it leaves us to consider is there a role that coaching could play in helping teachers to be able to, you know, thrive in those roles, rather than I think there's a sense at the moment that people are surviving, and working hard to survive in those roles, which is really challenging. And I see good stuff happening in education. My children have had access to a can emotions type kind of workshop that's facilitated. And as parents, we've been invited to engage in that which, which I did. And I think there's inconsistency. So what does that look like beyond the workshop or the afternoon that that the children have spent working on that and, you know, like you I, I do work with the children at home, where, where situations arise, and I think it might be useful for them, I will offer them something just to see if there's an interest there. And perhaps coaching in schools is requires coaches to get creative and playful. And it's a democratisation of coaching, I think, in many ways, is what we're talking about, you know, coaching started out being available for executives in, you know, global organisations with big budgets, and we've seen huge changes in the coaching industry. But how can we make coaching more accessible for everybody? And that's one of the things that you and I are very passionate about, isn't it? It's thinking, how can we get creative and enable more people to have access to coaching tools and techniques that don't need to exist in a six session, one and a half hour programme? But actually, you know, that can be easily utilised in your everyday conversations.

**Zoe Hawkins** 09:29

And I think a lot of it is filtering down, isn't it? So when I look at the schools that I'm familiar with, like mindfulness is often actually a quite a big part of schools these days where children are encouraged to engage in both mindful activities, actual mindfulness, yoga, all these things to help calm there are like exercise breaks and there was was it the the mile a day I think, was a challenge not long ago, wasn't it? So I think there is a growing awareness of self care, you know, which is an element of coaching, isn't it? And so I don't think it's that it isn't coming in. But it's that the pace at which is able to come in I think our education system is maybe slow to be able to pivot and to adapt. And I guess it's like all organisations, right, a school is an organisation, it has a culture. And when we look at how do organisations implement coaching cultures, it's not an overnight thing, you know, it does take time, and it takes investment. And so I think where we look, is it the leadership within schools, like actually how equipped are the leaders with coaching skills, to be able in their everyday management of both the facilities and the people and the curriculum and the decisions that are made? What is their awareness and skill in the coaching space, because that could infiltrate a lot of different places within the culture of their organisation

**Jo Wheatley** 11:01

here, when you think about the transition that's made from teaching assistant TA into teacher or teachers, or the newly qualified teachers, or making that transition to you know, head of a key stage or deputy heads or into heads, actually, managing a school these days is thought of as being more like managing a business, you know, it's quite a leap or a step away from where many teachers started out, with their passions around around that, and what support is in place to be able to, to support them as an individual with their own unique values, beliefs, gifts and talents, to be able to, as you say, you know, nurture the culture in that school, and what would a coaching culture look like in a in a school? And I think it's about harnessing the inquisitiveness, you know, that children have children have a natural inquisitiveness. And, and sometimes I think, some children's experience of school is actually that starts to shrink, whereas coaching is about the curiosity, isn't it, you know, leaning into it, and it is about the emotions and recognising if you've got 30 children in a class, how can you create space for exploration, you know, around a particular topic, because it's already prescribed the curriculum. So how do you find the gaps and the opportunities within the curriculum? Would it be a distinctive part of the curriculum? Or how would you embed key coaching principles across you know, the curriculum, whether you're focused on, you know, geography or history or arts or so on?

**Zoe Hawkins** 12:42

Yeah, and of course, budget needs to be in mind, doesn't it? So it's finding ways to weave that in? That is natural, I think one of the ways that that can be really helpful is through coaching training of key people. And the ones that come to mind for me are obviously, your your senior leaders. But in us in the schools I've had some experience with, there are like learning mentors who support children who are challenged, you know, with, with behaviours, and probably a lot of them may be neurodivergent, or from difficult homes, or having experienced some kind of trauma, but their behaviours are in contradiction, perhaps with the behaviour policies of the school, but if you take the lens of like, a child will do well when they can. And you know, the behaviour isn't the problem. Let's look at what is beneatha. Obviously, teacher training goes a very long way. And the CPD around coaching can enhance an even greater understanding of behaviour and specialist training there. So, yes, that requires investment. But there are lots of different levels and ways to access that that training as well. So there is no simple solution, I think, is what we're saying. We would love to see more coaching in schools, we would love to see it from the outset. But there is a real challenge with budget, and how do you get the impact that you want to have through that investment.

**Jo Wheatley** 14:13

And, you know, we can talk about the false economy of, you know, the cost of not investing early stage with young people to help them develop their self esteem, their resourcefulness to help you know them, to support them longer term with their mental health rather than waiting until there's a stage where people they may struggle with their mental health because they don't have the capabilities. They haven't been taught the strategies to be able to thrive and to bounce back from setbacks and to be able to tolerate stressful situations like exams or other events that might happen outside of school. And then there is the reality to have the limits of the budget, you know that there are limits with it, but What are the small bite sized chunks? Because sometimes things can feel too overwhelming and too big. So we don't get started at all. But what are the possibilities, you know, within schools? Where, where can where can we get started in schools? Or maybe it is about the peace around consistency? And how can we simplify what coaching is, so that it's able to be accessible from an early age and may be built on layers on layers for the pupils. And so teachers at different stages would only need to have a different level of knowledge, perhaps around around coaching and mentoring that continuum that we talked about, because maybe the existing model, like where does the existing education model sit along that coaching and mentoring continuum. And I think we need to acknowledge that it's not, but it's not there yet. I

**Zoe Hawkins** 15:48

was thinking as you were talking there, the concept of marvellous mistakes, and I was reflecting on you know, there is no failure, only feedback, you know, there are elements of coaching within the profession and within the curriculum that are weaved in by great great teachers and great schools. So it'd be great to see that, yeah, as a consistency across all schools. And I think probably the most pressing piece that I see them out is what we talked about earlier, like the support for the teacher so that teachers can remain great. And schools can remain great because they attract great teachers and more teachers coming into the, to the profession. And I think coaching has a real role to play in supporting in that burnout space, not when teachers are burnt out. But in ensuring that it doesn't get there, there doesn't have to be a one to one like that can be group settings, you know, in facilitating your group meetings, where ideas and perspectives are shared. And there's a place for, for emotions and challenge to be expressed as well. It takes

**Jo Wheatley** 16:49

a huge amount of energy to be able to, you know, support, you know, a class of 30 human beings, let's say 2030, however, many, you know, in a class, and all of the uniqueness of the peoples and the different energy, you know, that they bring, and where is that place for teachers to be able to, you know, offload that discuss it get new perspective, you know, really be able to sustain that over over a long period of time. So, you know, we think teachers are we're teachers ourselves, because we are, we're trainers, so we're not teachers in schools, but we do have a coaching school. So, you know, many ways, you know, we fall into a similar category. And I think creating, you know, like those peer groups, as you're talking about to be able to support each other, you know, teachers do get development. So maybe it's a case of, you know, prioritising coaching in those development periods, and then innovating, you know, in an individual school and the individual lesson, as well as bringing parents along to, I mean, when I've attended things at my children's school, that often aren't many parents that do actually attend. And it is a community I was talking about earlier, is a community approach. It's not only the school, you know, as a community, we are raising, you know, the young people of tomorrow, they're going to need to deal with complex problems. And so if we can help them at a young age, to be able to develop their understanding of how they can look after their own mental health and well being and of course, it is happening to a degree already, but what more can be done?

**Zoe Hawkins** 18:31

Yeah, and as you were saying, they're around, you know, it's a community, the thought that I had, as, you know, similar to you, it's not all on the schools, it's not all on the teachers. We have a lot of people who come on to our coaching training through the lens of obviously wanting to make an impact in their role and develop their coaches. But as parents, and we often hear on our courses that I've started using this with my teenager, I've started using this with my child like if you're a parent, and you recognise that there's you have a child who you think would really benefit from different strategies, opening up their perspective, developing a healthier mindset, like you go trained to be a coach so that you can become a parent who also has skills and strategies to be able to impart on to your children like theirs. That is a gift that you can give that may be within your ability to offer. So if you've enjoyed today's podcast, please do like and subscribe to the podcast leave us a rating if you can. We do appreciate hearing your feedback. And we whilst we have no firm answers to this topic today, we do like to discuss our different ideas and thoughts about topical subjects. If you've enjoyed our podcast today, then please do come and subscribe to the podcast and if you have the ability to leave us a review. We would love to hear your feedback. Thanks for listening and we'll be back next week with another episode. Thank you for listening to the coaching call. Are podcast with Zoe Hawkins and Jo Wheatley. We'd love for you to join our inclusive community to learn and grow in the coaching space. Go over to Facebook and search for the coaching crowd to be in good company with other aspiring coaches.