

## Mike Boddington, CEO & Executive Head of the Enlighten Learning Trust, Surrey, a Long Winner redefining success in schools

Mike is an experienced school leader in the state sector in both inner city and suburban settings. His range of roles from pastoral leader in schools, to headteacher and Ofsted inspector have given him huge insights into the complexity of the UK educational system. As the current CEO of a group of primary and secondary schools, Mike has realised the importance of developing a culture and ways of working based around values to help teachers and pupils alike to thrive through the endless challenges that teachers and pupils both have to navigate.

Mike and I chatted about the thinking and strategies of *The Long Win* and how they offered a useful framework for his work, as he constantly considers how better to create connection and collaboration across the schools, and help foster a culture that had space for innovation and collegiality amongst the massive pressures in the education sector. Mike could see the need to articulate an ambition that went beyond assessments that so dominate the government approach to education, and keep teachers focused on the lasting value that pupils could gain from every moment at school, whether that was recorded in exam results or not.

At the Trust he leads Mike uses the concept to hold in tension the disparate demands of the sector, seeking balanced and long lasting solutions to complex problems whilst keeping the values of the organisation at the heart of decisions. This is challenging work and the context for education gets increasingly demanding, yet throughout all discussions and strategy runs the thread of human interaction; the need to help all members of the community flourish: children, staff, parents and society. This is the richest mission of education and truly the goal of 'long win' thinking.

There are many simple solutions that school leaders are tempted to employ, some of which will be successful for a while depending on the metric used to measure them. If the core values of an organisation are sound, colleagues in the teams are aligned around them and if the boundaries are regularly revisited, then the team know they can achieve success, and the members of the schools in the Enlighten Learning Trust attest to that. The challenge of working in this sector, when knowing it is something of such incredible value despite the extreme challenges, is deeply rewarding for all involved. Mike and his team understand this task is about giving leadership and impetus to this Long Win journey of education.

**The Long Win in Action:**

**Purpose & Culture:** in a role overseeing that number of schools, Mike can't achieve an impact by micromanaging or telling teachers how to teach. But he can support them by creating a broader framework of values and purpose within which they can situate their own roles, from which to approach their opportunities and challenges. This can't be a set of values on the wall or on a website, the leadership need to continually bring these to life in meaningful ways that support and enhance the teachers' work lives.

**Constant Learning:** with so much government pressure on assessment and increasing pressures on teachers to manage complex social challenges impacting on pupils, it's vital to help teachers stay able to learn, to do things differently, to innovate rather than rely on old techniques. When feeling stressed and overwhelmed, this is the hardest thing to do, but the strength of relationships with colleagues and opportunities to come together and discuss the challenges offers a vital way to continue improving how to operate in this challenging environment.

**Connections:** despite time pressures, Mike prioritised bringing the schools together, helping to forge connections across subject areas and creating a network for support and learning, increasing a sense of community across the Trust. This is about an ongoing 'long win' (or infinite) goal of building an ever stronger community.

**Mindset:** in a world that can feel overwhelmed by short-term demands, changes, challenges and assessments, helping the staff to feel they have strong networks of support around them is vital – both in their own school but also with others within the trust but in different schools offering a level of safety to discuss issues and challenges with those who understand but aren't in the immediate environment. Helping teachers and everyone who works within the trust to think of success in their own roles in terms of the 3Cs (rather than the latest government league tables) offers them a way to feel that they are part of something life-changing, rather than a bureaucratic metrics-driven nightmare. This is vital for their wellbeing, personal growth within their roles and chances of managing the pressures over the long-term.