Developing leadership talent

Succession planning A planning guide for governors

Resource

A joint initiative with the National Governors' Association, Co-ordinators of Governor Services and National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services.

Introduction

The age profile of senior leaders suggests that schools in England may soon face increasing challenges in filling headship posts. As a result, developing the next generation of leaders is more important than ever before.

Many schools, local authorities and dioceses are working to build the supply of good leaders by identifying and developing those with leadership potential.

There is clear evidence that individuals who experience headship become more positive about taking on the role. So initiatives that bring aspiring leaders closer to the reality of headship can have a positive impact, providing potential headship candidates with real-life experience. These might include opportunities for aspiring leaders to take a lead on a piece of work within the school; they may be offered a mentor or coach; or opportunities for a job-shadow. Schools might collaborate to provide a structured pathway of development opportunities for aspiring leaders.

Why invest in leadership development?

Developing leadership ability is a significant commitment, so why is it important? Here are three compelling reasons:

The demographic challenge: We need to increase the number of people reaching headship by around 15-20 percent to replace experienced headteachers who are retiring from the profession.

Doing nothing is not an option: Effective leaders will not be available in sufficient numbers in the timescale that we anticipate they will be required unless their development is accelerated. The ability of potential leaders needs to be cultivated – they need to receive support tailored to their context.

Immediate benefits to the school: Identification and development of leadership potential is motivating to staff. This can have the following effect:

- raising the quality of subject and senior leadership
- establishing an ethos of responsibility and initiative through the school
- creating the space for the current senior team to be more strategic by raising the capacity for operational leadership at other levels
- attracting and retaining talented staff by offering progression and development.

A governor for more than 20 years, Doris Neville-Davies has been instrumental in the appointments of five headteachers and six deputy heads. Doris has been a director of the National Governors' Association since 2005.

You can watch a video clip or read the transcript of Doris' keynote address about growing internal talent in the governors' section at: **www.nationalcollege.org.uk/successionplanning**.

"Working together, governors and headteachers can develop internal talent in our schools and offer opportunities to experience leadership."

"I think we need to discuss together the plans for staff development and look at how we are identifying leadership potential within our schools. We need to be looking for that potential and when talent emerges we should be nurturing it."

"From early in teachers' careers we need to be giving them the opportunities and encouragement to take on responsibility. As governors we have a role to encourage our headteachers and senior leadership teams to delegate tasks in order to give others the experience of leadership. This could also help to improve the work-life balance of the head, which is, of course, one of our responsibilities!"

"It is important to provide a breadth of experience to prepare teachers for further promotion. This may be difficult, especially for small schools where there are fewer openings. With many now working collaboratively in groups through confederations and clusters, there is more scope to share good practice. We can learn how other schools are developing future leaders and the skills of experienced leaders from across the group can be used to encourage and guide colleagues and widen their experience, especially if different types of schools are involved. It may be possible to second staff to other schools or arrange a short-term exchange to help their development in a different environment and encourage a sharing of expertise."

"In response to some of these suggestions, governors may say "but our responsibility is to our school and we do not want to prepare good teachers for leadership only to lose them" – which is not unreasonable. We have to recognise that we are going to lose them at some stage and we are going to want good senior leaders to replace them – and we mustn't forget that a school can be 'refreshed' by bringing in new blood and new ideas. If nobody does anything to encourage future leaders there won't be enough headteachers and deputies to fill the vacancies."

"So, we have a duty to identify and find ways of developing future leaders for our schools. If we don't it is clear that there won't be enough headteachers to go round. In the process, of course, we must be quite sure that the training and experiences provided are of the highest standard, as nothing is more important for the progress of a school than a good headteacher."

Action checklist: Developing leadership talent

Use this checklist to identify suggested short and longer-term actions. Then transfer them to your action plan and refer to the resources overleaf for more help.

Questions	Short-term actions	Longer-term actions
How do we currently identify talent in our school? Is there a structured system?	Review and prioritise talent development activities. Refer to section 4.3 of the Framework for action guide. Clearly communicate the definition of leadership potential and the requirements for our school.	Annually review talent development activities through the continuing professional development (CPD) process. Consider whether a strategy to identify future leaders can be incorporated into performance management for the headteacher.
Are we offering specific development opportunities to attract, retain and develop those with the potential to be future leaders?	Working with your headteacher undertake the leadership development survey in section 4.5 of the Framework for action guide. Work with your headteacher to ensure staff development discussions are linked to completion of the annual school self-evaluation form (SEF). Encourage completion of the National College interactive guide Personal Training Needs Analysis tool for aspiring heads.	Review annually how development opportunities are offered to ensure these support potential leaders from diverse backgrounds. Use the Diversity in leadership checklist to support the review. Ensure development activities are assessed for their effectiveness in moving individuals towards leadership, and ensure the results feed into future development planning. Ensure that potential leaders are familiar with the entry requirements for the revised National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), and have a clear plan of how to fulfil them.
Do potential future leaders know we want to invest in them? Do we see the promotion of talented staff to leadership roles in other schools as a success?	Ensure that positive, regular conversations about personal and professional development are taking place throughout the school through review of the CPD plan and performance management arrangements. Review whether the school can offer coaching, mentoring and shadowing opportunities to build confidence and capability. Talk to your local authority, and diocese if appropriate, about local support or initiatives for potential future leaders. Celebrate promotions – whether within or outside the school.	Work with your headteacher to look beyond your own school in providing development opportunities for staff, such as work shadowing arrangements, temporary job swaps and secondments – in order to give aspiring leaders more experience. Make a feature of your talent nurturing approach in recruiting new staff – make sure they know when vacancies have been created by people achieving promotion both within and outside the school.
Do our senior leaders devote significant time and care to nurturing future leaders?	Work with the head to ensure that senior leaders engage with the responsibility for the professional development of future leaders.	Work with your headteacher to build leadership development responsibilities into the performance management of senior leaders.
Do our senior leaders offer a positive role model of distributed leadership, and do they manage their work-life balance?	Consult with your headteacher on his or her work-life balance and discuss what help they would like. Encourage the effective delegation of responsibility through distributed leadership principles.	Contact your local authority, or diocese if appropriate, to discuss additional resources eg the appointment of a school business manager. Review with your headteacher how distributed leadership can be applied in your school.

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