

The future of school leadership

The significance of effective school leadership

School leaders set the tone and ethos for their school and their local community. Their effective leadership and management of the whole school workforce are crucial to effective teaching and learning and to higher standards for all. From the evidence there is a clear link between good leadership and management and good schools. Securing and supporting effective school leaders, and Head Teachers in particular, is a crucial aspect of maintaining and raising standards in schools.

“Good leadership is at the heart of every good school. A strong Head Teacher, backed by an able leadership team and Governing Body, is vital for success”

(Higher Standards, Better Schools for All – 2005)

“Leadership is about learning how to shape the future. Leadership exists when people are no longer victims of circumstances but participate in creating new circumstances. Leadership is about creating new realities.”

Joseph Jaworski

STRB’s 15th Report, December 2005

The School Teacher Review Body’s 15th Report recognised “the profound process of cultural and organisational change that is underway in schools.” Major programmes of reform, such as Every Child matters and 14-19, demand a wider range of professionals within schools and increased collaboration between schools to succeed. The STRB recommended “a comprehensive independent study to be carried out on the roles, responsibilities, structures and rewards systems for the leadership group.”

PwC independent study into school leadership

The DfES commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP to carry out the study. The study’s findings can be summarised as:

- There is currently good overall assessment of leadership but the context is changing
- There are more demands on school leaders
- Some skills gaps have been identified on senior management teams and governing bodies
- There are recruitment difficulties in some areas
- New models of leadership are emerging to respond to and drive change
- “One size will not fit all”
- We need a modification but not a radical overhaul of the pay and rewards system

Models of school leadership

A range of new leadership models has begun to emerge, mainly as a response to key new policy imperatives. Generally, there has been a shift away from the traditional model of a Head Teacher supported by a deputy and/or assistant head. New models have a range of features including:

- The formal involvement of other agencies and a range of non-teaching professionals in leadership teams
- Flatter management-style structures
- Formal and informal collaboration between schools and other providers
- System leadership involving working beyond the boundaries of the institution

There is a persistence in many schools of the “hero Head” model, in which Head Teachers are responsible and accountable for everything. This approach to headship is not consistent with the new and emerging models and has acted as a constraint on distributing leadership responsibilities. It is also likely to result in rapid burnout and high stress levels. Schools need to review their current leadership arrangements in order to assess the extent to which the new models of leadership can help them meet new opportunities and challenges.

Model 1: Traditional model

The leadership team is comprised exclusively of qualified teaching staff and typically includes a Head Teacher supported by Deputy and/or Assistant Heads. This model predominates in the primary sector, but is also common, albeit to a lesser extent, in secondary schools.

Model 2: Managed model

This model has a flatter management style structure in which specific roles are allocated on the senior leadership team for senior support staff, for example, directors of finance and/or Human Resources. This model tends to be found more often in the secondary sector with almost half of Head Teachers supported by one senior staff member on the leadership team

Model 3: Multi-agency managed model

This model is a natural progression from the managed model and is, in a sense, borne out of the imperatives of the Every Child Matters (ECM) and 14-19 agendas. Like the managed model it involves a flatter, management-style structure, but is more outward looking and inter-agency focused. It can manifest itself in a wide variety of ways, but generally will involve teaching staff and professionals from other agencies working together as part of school leadership teams. This model remains the exception rather than the rule but, as outlined above, the expectation is that more schools are likely to move in this direction as a key way of responding to the ECM and 14-19 agendas.

Model 4: Federated model

This model is characterised by varying degrees of collaboration between schools and sometimes between schools and other providers, for example: "whole town" approaches to schooling; shared strategic governing bodies, with executive heads overseeing several schools; and federations between schools, Further Education and work based learning providers. Approximately 10% of Head Teachers have some sort of federation arrangement, and the majority of schools have informal collaborations with other schools.

Model 5: System leadership model

This model embraces all the different roles that Head Teachers can assume beyond the boundaries of their own school ie those that contribute to the wider educational system at a local, regional or national level. It includes, for example National Leaders of Education assuming roles that include providing advice to Government and "virtual Heads" responding to schools facing specific challenging circumstances.

Support for Redbridge schools

Support is available for schools that wish to explore these models of school leadership from the newly appointed Primary Leadership Adviser, Bob Drew. Contact details are:

e-mail	bob.drew@redbridge.gov.uk
Direct line	020 8708 3248 (Wednesday and Thursday)
Fax	020 8708 3697
Blog	primaryleadership.blogspot.com

Future planned support within Redbridge will also include the publication of a Vision for Leadership, an entitlement to leadership support for leaders at all levels, regular meetings with Governors, publications on related topics, individual support, and a specific focus on developing our Deputy and Assistant Heads.