



TOMORROW'S
LEADERS
TODAY

Greenhouse Schools

Lessons from schools that grow their own leaders



National College for
School Leadership

Inspiring leaders;
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Greenhouse Schools is part of a suite of materials produced by NCSL to support the development of school leaders. Other titles in the series include:

Leadership succession: an overview

Turning Heads - a guide to marketing your school for prospective headteacher applicants

Career Moves - practical guidance to support aspirant heads succeed in the headship application process

Recruiting headteachers and senior leaders

What's good about leading schools in challenging circumstances

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Introduction

This report draws on the outcomes of a study investigating how school leaders actively encourage and secure future leadership capacity by identifying, nurturing and developing leadership potential in their schools. The study involved case studies carried out by a group of four NCSL research associates and the findings from a Leading Practice seminar held in London in June 2006.

This report is aimed at providing school leaders with examples of practical strategies used by a selection of schools from across phases that have made growing tomorrow's leaders an integral and essential part of what they do. It explores and shares how they are beginning to put in place systematic succession planning programmes to serve the needs of both their schools and the system and that will enable school leaders to:

- assess their own practices
- consider how the lessons uncovered in this report might influence their development



Background

This report builds on the literature that has already highlighted the issues around succession planning, notably those commissioned previously by NCSL (Hartle and Thomas, 2003; Creasy et al, 2004; Hartle, 2005).

The issues highlighted in these reports were reflected in the remit letter from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to NCSL dated December 2005. In this, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (Secretary of State) outlined priorities and targets for 2006-07 thus:

Succession planning

A significant number of headteachers will reach sixty within the next eight years. I should therefore like the College to consider how more people can be encouraged and developed to take on school leadership roles. I look to the College to provide me with advice, by May 2006, on how succession planning can be addressed, and to work with the governor associations, and other key partners, including local authorities, to develop advice to chairs of governors on recruitment, selection and succession planning.

In recognising that there are system requirements for the creation of a developing pool of leadership talent, others have also highlighted the issues around succession planning in schools. Fullan (2004, pp16–17) states:

School systems have terrible or non-existent leadership succession plans, often including the over-reliance on charismatic or highly visible leaders to bring about what turns out to be episodic change. What is needed instead is the selection of leaders who have a track record and commitment to developing other leaders on the job through expanding their learning contexts.

Whatever the demographic challenge, as the findings from this report show, there are also powerful reasons why today's school leaders and governing bodies should regard the development of future leaders as an important part of their responsibility.

NCSLs (2006) advice to the Secretary of State concerning succession planning stated that it needed to take account of:

- *the important contribution to be made by existing heads in proactively identifying and nurturing future leaders (para 4.1.2)*
- *that the challenge of succession planning cannot be managed by individual schools working alone (para 5.1.1)*

This report responds in part to these recommendations. The second of these was particularly addressed in the proposals outlined in the Leading Practice seminar (see Appendix).

Aims

We set out to:

- identify school leaders who are purposefully nurturing and developing future leaders for their own internal use and for other parts of the system
- look in detail at the effective practice of these school leaders
- explore how such leadership potential is identified
- explore the conditions for such practice – structures and systems, processes and relationships
- explore the impact on the schools themselves
- explore the impact on the wider system
- develop guidance for leaders in schools
- develop detailed case studies of effective practice that can be used by practitioners

Case studies

Four research associates looked at eight schools across England: three primary schools, one 3–19 special school and four secondary schools. In each case, interviews included the following:

- the headteacher and/or the person responsible for leadership development
- a staff member aspiring to headship
- a staff member aspiring to senior leadership
- a staff member aspiring to middle leadership



Key findings

The key findings respond to the following questions, asked at interview, each of which will be addressed in turn below:

1. How does the school identify leadership potential?
2. How does the school nurture and develop leadership potential once it has been identified?
3. What conditions enable identification and nurturing of leadership potential?
4. What impact has the school's practice of growing leaders had on the school?
5. What impact has the school's practice had beyond the school?
6. How transferable is the school's practice in developing leadership potential?
7. What might be the messages for other schools embarking on this practice?

1. How does the school identify leadership potential?

Schools used a range of strategies in order to identify leadership potential. These included those applied prior to appointment and post-appointment.

What schools did prior to appointment

- Assess the potential of final practice students at the school in relation to future opportunities for employment.
- Adopt a policy of wording advertisements so that potential applicants were aware that they were being invited to apply to 'teach and learn at...'. This proved successful for one school.
- Focus the recruitment process upon specific criteria, one of which was 'an ability to learn and share'. One headteacher cited:

Schools like this are not improved by people coming in and knowing all the answers ... so what you are looking for is humility ... professionally open not closed ... but if you ask the wrong question at interview you don't hear it.

- Trawl applications for evidence of prior leadership experience when shortlisting, eg from running a rugby team to organising charity events, in order to identify 'people who have actually shown some interest in leadership'.

When staff were in post, there was a mix of informal and formal processes aimed at identifying those with clear leadership potential.

What schools did post-appointment

- Conduct pre-determined, day-to-day informal observations of colleagues at work: assess how they work with others and respond to different situations.
- Attach senior leaders to departments as internal consultants to aid their professional knowledge of leadership potential.
- Provide opportunities for teachers to try out leadership in the context of, for example, a specific project or task.
- Carry out less formal career chats in addition to performance management.
- Monitor classroom practice.
- Observe contributions at meetings.
- Track staff participation in leading extra-curricular and voluntary activities.

At Dartford Grammar School, a list of characteristics of high leadership potential has been compiled as a result of a survey of businesses and work with the Hay Group and NCSL. These were part of the school's continuous professional development document and reflected its systematic approach, which comprised:

- Seeks opportunities to learn.
- Acts with integrity.
- Adapts to cultural differences.
- Is committed to making a difference.
- Seeks broad business knowledge.
- Brings out the best in people.
- Is insightful – sees things from new angles.
- Has the courage to take risks.
- Seeks and uses feedback.
- Learns from mistakes.
- Is open to criticism.

One headteacher stated:

I consciously look out for [leadership potential] and all the [members of the senior leadership team] are involved in talent spotting. You watch staff at different times of the school cycle, periods of development and periods of stress ... you watch how they cope, how they cope with managing change, whether they can cope with developing ideas and see if they are risk-takers ... how they manage themselves and how they are with others. The philosophy in school is if you have the capacity as a leader then let's create the opportunities for you.

2. How does the school nurture and develop leadership potential once it has been identified?

Schools encouraged prospective leaders to actively seek opportunities to 'exercise their leadership potential'. In more than one case, this was an identified role for the school's senior leaders. Schools also employed supportive strategies aimed at enabling leaders to develop their skills and behaviours.

What schools did to nurture and develop identified leadership potential

- Provide leaders with space to try things out and learn from their efforts.
- Offer support but encourage independence: leaders stated more than once across different schools that they were never on their own.
- Enable leaders to operate within a no-blame, yet accountable culture of trust and autonomy.
- Offer external professional development opportunities, eg MA(Ed) programmes, outreach work, international visits, NCSLs Leading from the Middle (LftM) programme.
- Provide internal training and development such as:
 - school-based middle management programmes. In one case, this involved pairing an existing middle leader with an emerging middle leader; the balance of leadership responsibility transferred from the former to the latter over two years
 - training plans for teachers produced in consultation with line managers
 - outstanding teacher programmes. One school offered a twilight immersion programme run by staff and offering outreach work both locally and abroad
 - in-house leadership courses aimed at those aspiring to either middle or senior leadership. One school did this in partnership with another school over a year

- external consultants supporting in-house leadership programmes and self-evaluation
- induction programmes for new teachers providing basic training and the allocation of a mentor
- formalised opportunities for discussions focused on leadership. One school supported these with academic articles or think pieces
- opportunities to carry out research projects
- Provide internal role development opportunities such as:
 - funded temporary acting up opportunities following an open access formal selection and interview process
 - other acting up opportunities, eg in response to headteacher secondment
 - shared leadership opportunities, eg the appointment of joint post-holders to the leadership of the science faculty and pooling of subjects in a primary school to enable co-leadership
 - bespoke posts to match specific areas of leadership potential
 - opportunities to participate in working parties
- Offer coaching and mentoring such as:
 - shadowing postholders
 - constructive feedback on leadership actions
 - pastoral mentorship for new staff members into school or post
 - professional mentorship, usually the line manager, for all staff
 - peer coaching
 - buddy systems to allow teachers to develop leadership skills by working with other colleagues and in one case with two others

Teaching here is a real career; it's about developing you as a whole individual. Different qualities are nurtured and brought out from the start.

Head of department

It was notable that over half the schools had developed their own leadership development programmes. **Further details of these can be found in the case studies (available as downloadable items from the NCSL website):**

Primary – Oldway Primary School

Special – Whitefield Centre and School

Secondary – Dartford Grammar School, Notre Dame High School and Ravens Wood School

3. What conditions enable identification and nurturing of leadership potential?

A positive ethos within the organisation was highlighted as being the significant condition in relation to this question; those spoken to felt valued and trusted. High levels of collaboration contributed to this.

It's the ethos more than anything else: being in a fair environment where leadership is not something that only certain people can have, it's open to everybody. That's what makes a happy team.

Year group leader

One teacher described how at her previous school she was just teaching, but now she was really “carving her career. In many schools, teachers lose their way because the way isn't shown”.

What schools did to create the conditions

- Foster appreciation, interest and curiosity in the work of others.
- Recognise and reward leadership activity.
- Be open about people's strengths and weaknesses so that appropriate support can be given.
- Place an emphasis on emotional intelligence.
- Seek to understand and identify individuals' needs and deliberately look out for appropriate leadership opportunities to develop these.
- Exhibit high levels of trust.
- Encourage teamwork as opposed to competition.
- Value the bringing forward of new ideas.

- Look for organisational opportunities that might provide informal support. For example, one of the secondary schools had a policy of office-sharing for middle leaders, which although informal, provided effective support:

One of the best supporting mechanisms that you have is because of being able to talk to people and bounce ideas off each other.

Head of middle school

4. What impact does the school's practice of growing leaders have upon the school?

Benefits were:

- successful recruitment of high-quality staff due to the school's reputation for developing leaders
- increased leader responsibility and accountability resulting in improved quality of teaching and learning
- increased staff enthusiasm, motivation and commitment to the school leading to improved retention of staff
- enhanced succession planning as high-quality leaders can be promoted from within
- improved internal capacity as leadership opportunities enable staff to gain better knowledge and insight and share their professional learning with others
- encouragement of innovative practices keeping these schools at the cutting edge:

It does re-energise staff. Every time someone comes up with a new idea it's reflected back in our own classroom practice.

Deputy head

- high outcomes in terms of pupil progress and attainment
- leaders equipped to build on their experience through further professional studies

Potential disadvantages were:

- organisational and logistical difficulties such as the release of staff and funding of leadership opportunities
- tension between potential disruption to pupil learning and teachers being released to take up development opportunities and/or enhanced leadership roles

- loss of key people through promotion. However, one headteacher stated it was a “price worth paying” because the school benefited from three to four years of “high value” from such people
- potential complacency when leaders have been retained for too long and/or when vacancies are consistently filled internally

5. What impact has the school’s practice had beyond the school?

All the case study schools expressed a shared commitment to the local community. A number of the schools extended this commitment to include the national and international dimension.

There were a number of commonalities in terms of the impact of the respective schools’ practice beyond their immediate environment. These can be broken down into the following broad categories:

- local impact
- national impact
- international impact

Local impact includes:

- appointment of staff to leadership positions in other schools within the locality:

The headteacher and her leaders all had a positive, benevolent attitude towards the fact that leaders grown by the school would move on elsewhere ... Because of the strong ethos of growing leaders within the school, they were confident that “there will be someone equally good to take their place”.

- local authority secondment, eg one headteacher co-led a review and redesign of a local authority leadership programme before helping lead it

By working together, schools could increase opportunities for and benefits derived from:

- outreach work in other schools such as:
 - advanced skills teachers developing middle leadership
 - leaders supporting departmental leadership
 - supporting preparation for Ofsted

- active participation in local Leadership Incentive Grant (LIG) clusters of secondary schools
- supporting schools in moving out of special measures
- collaborative work with the local diocese and other agencies

A distinctive feature in Whitefield Centre and School was the provision of adult learning opportunities offered at the school's training centre. The head describes the school as a regional resource, with other schools accessing training and support from the Centre.

Further details of this can be found in the case study (available as a downloadable document from the NCSL website).

National impact includes:

- working in partnership with NCSL, eg contributing to its programmes
- working with the Training and Development Agency for Schools to train student teachers

International impact includes:

- reciprocal staff training between schools in, for example, Canada, Sweden and Slovenia
- presentations to conferences worldwide, for example, the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO)
- staff exchanges with European countries
- involvement with international voluntary sector bodies. For example, one head is a founding trustee of a charity that aims to set up training facilities with partners in India, Pakistan and countries within Africa

6. How transferable is the school's practice in developing leadership potential?

All the schools felt that the strategies they had put into practice could be transferred. However, the effectiveness or otherwise would be dependent upon a school having some or all of the following factors:

- an understanding of its own context and state of readiness
- a headteacher with a vision for leadership development
- a critical mass of those within the school community committed to the development of such practices

- leaders with the capacity to develop and implement appropriate strategies
- an ethos that encourages and is receptive to innovation
- trusting relationships
- a collective sense of responsibility
- a willingness to share and learn and consider how external practices can transfer to a new context

In Notre Dame High School, a graduate of its senior leadership programme has taken up a senior role in another school locally. Both schools now offer joint provision of the two programmes offered by her previous school and are accessed by both sets of staff. She co-leads this development.

For further details, see the Notre Dame High School case study on the NCSL website.

7. What might be the messages for other schools embarking on this practice?

10 strategies for growing tomorrow's leaders

1. Start at the recruitment and selection stage to identify potential leaders – consider how your school's procedures reflect a focus on leadership and offer candidates an opportunity to demonstrate these.
2. See in-post identification as a mixture of formal and informal processes, and raise awareness that everyone is a leader and that culturally developing this is on the agenda.
3. Know what you are looking for in developing leadership potential. Develop clear role profiling (Hartle, 2005) to aid this.
4. Offer opportunities for aspiring and developing leaders to take a lead and/or step up within the school and learn from this through reflection and feedback.
5. Provide systems such as buddying, mentoring, coaching, shadowing or team-based working to support professional growth.
6. Provide local solutions in collaboration with others, eg schools or external bodies, or alone, to provide a structured development pathway of leadership opportunities.
7. Promote an ethos that makes a clear statement about investing in the individual.
8. Develop support structures such as training plan discussions that enable individual and team growth.

9. Look beyond the school for local, national and international opportunities for leadership development.
10. Plan strategically, both within and across individual schools, to allow for the development of internal capacity and succession, whilst at the same time taking into account individuals' career needs and those of the system.

Final points

These schools built, through the way in which their philosophies translated into action, leadership capacity both within their own schools but also for the wider system.

It was clear also that their development of leadership capacity and the commitment to sharing knowledge and best practice enabled the engagement of school leaders in system leadership roles locally, nationally and internationally.

It should be acknowledged, however, that sustainability of practices needs to be considered. In the same way as strategies are aimed at aiding leadership succession, embedding strategies to make them the remit of more than the committed or charismatic individual is essential.

The programme is now riding on its own. There's enough of an ethos within the school to sustain it. There are a lot of learning partnerships and a lot of strength.

Deputy head

Three messages from school leaders to school leaders

Have faith in people. If they don't get it right first time, support them so that people aren't afraid to make mistakes.

Head of middle school

If you want to develop leaders of the future, you have to create the space for leaders to grow and show them professional respect. Headteachers need to be confident enough to let people get on with the role but not abandon them ... balance the intervention with allowing them to grow.

Headteacher

Give people the opportunity to lead and achieve. Be there to support them if they need help. If you give people a chance, leaders will emerge.

Co-ordinator for gifted and talented pupils



Three conversations between school leaders

The following leadership conversations have been drawn from some of the key strategies used by schools. Each is offered to represent the dialogue that did or might have occurred within these schools based on the case study research.

Oldway Primary School

Okay – but exactly how will my leadership potential be identified?

Leadership is defined and identified in all parts of the school and has been documented in a document, any alternatives *Leading Learning*.

Opportunities will arise from many areas of your work – more formal opportunities such as performance management and lesson observations will be there for you as well as the less formal opportunities such as chats with the headteacher and opportunities to lead staff meetings.

This entitlement to learn could just be the chats with my line manager or access to courses.

Staff at this school have an entitlement to be developed and to learn.

It could, but it isn't. You will have a pastoral mentor for one year when you are new to the school as well as a professional mentor. You will have an individual training plan drawn up in consultation with your line manager and he or she will give you day-to-day support and actively look out for leadership opportunities for you.

That sounds good, but what will happen once I want even more responsibility and am looking for experience in middle leadership?

After two years, you will be offered the school's middle management course, where you will be partnered with an experienced middle leader. Over the two years, the shift of responsibility will move from the experienced manager to yourself. So there are lots of ways the school enables you to develop and learn.

If I want to apply for a post at this school, how will I know if you take leadership development seriously?

The whole process of identifying potential leaders begins with job advertisements.

Advertisements for jobs invite you to apply to 'teach and learn' at the school. So we send out early messages that we are looking for people who have a desire and the capacity to learn.

I like the idea of being given responsibility but I don't want to be thrown in at the deep end with no support.

From the outset, teachers are given responsibility; for example, managing the learning and support assistants in each class is an opportunity to show emerging leadership.

Don't worry. There is an induction programme and you will be allocated a mentor for the first year. Your own personal priorities will always be incorporated into the induction and support programme.

Well this all sounds wonderful but will the process feel a bit overwhelming for me?

The existence of the training centre symbolises the importance that the school places on training but it also makes it easier for study to take place. There is no excuse because everything is provided to make studying successful.

We hope you won't feel overwhelmed because the progression of training opportunities is carefully managed. A strategy to entice you onto the next step is the way that the last part of one course is the first part of the next.

What does 'throwing them in' mean for you?

The headteacher adopts a principle of 'throwing people' into leadership roles when they join the school.

"You've got to give them an opportunity to lead as quickly as possible – that test of standing on your own two feet. I have a policy of not supporting them but I keep an eye on them".

The headteacher has given me an open-ended task to see what I can do. I found that a really good challenge. If I have any problems along the way I'd speak to him and he would point me in the right direction, but he's not prescriptive, he's supportive.

So he doesn't support them as such?

He does not prescribe how a teacher should do something but he provides resources for them and is always in the background to help if needed.

So, if there's no real prescription, are leaders trusted to develop ways forward?

"Really successful leaders have to establish their authority as a leader through reputation and skill. Everyone that comes to the school gets something that they own and that they lead from the start; that's the testing ground. So I test their leadership from that point".

One of the key things the headteacher said to me was "Think outside the box". Don't think the same way as everybody before you has thought.

Are these programmes formal sit-down and learn sessions, or do they include an active practice element?

The school runs programmes to develop leadership in subject areas. For example, the outstanding teacher programme is an immersion programme for staff, with twilight sessions run by staff and outreach work both locally and abroad. In training staff, for the most part the school uses expertise developed in the school.

The school gives you opportunities ... the place is full of opportunities to do things. I've taken on board things and that has been noticed. As a result, I have been given further opportunities to develop.

And is the idea that everyone will develop to be a senior leader?

Opportunities are given to the teacher to demonstrate his or her leadership potential. They may not move forward to being a senior leader, but they do discover where they want to be on their career path. As the headteacher said: "They then take their point on the track."

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Appendix: Key messages from the Leading Practice seminar

Lessons from the 20 best global companies for leadership (Hay Group and CEO Magazine, 2005), as translated to a school context, were as follows.

1. Make leadership development a priority and create a culture of leadership.
2. Hold leaders throughout the school (system) accountable for creating high-performance work climates.
3. Provide development for intact leadership teams and not just individual leaders.
4. Focus development for individuals on the things that have the greatest impact.
5. Start early, make time and ground leadership development in the real world.
6. Use objective assessment and feedback to focus development in the areas that make the greatest difference.

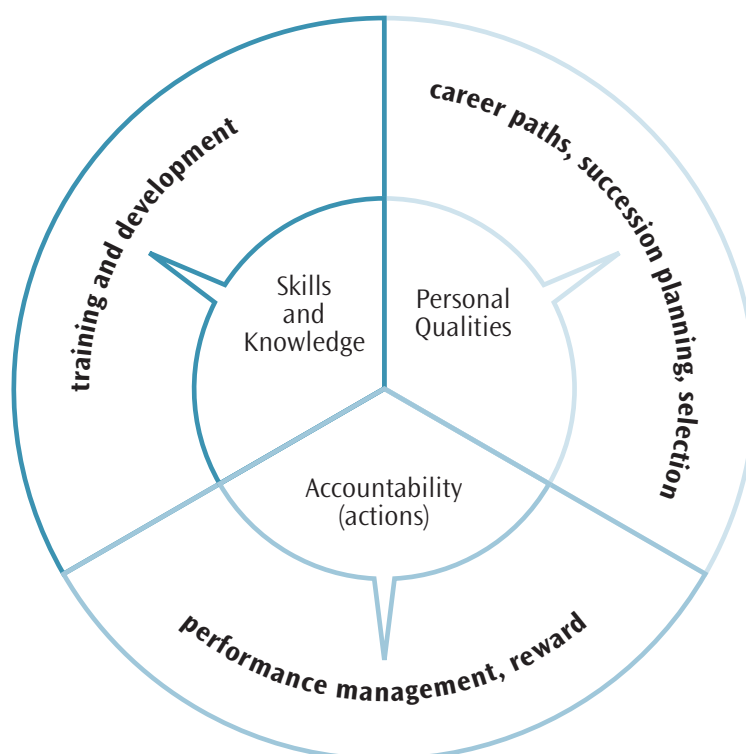
Attention was drawn to the importance of **role profiling** and the need to consider different leadership roles and the preparation that each requires, for example strategic leadership role, hands-on or delivery role and the networking role.

The use of role profiles and career pathways will enable a more personalised approach to leadership development within the school and should ensure that individuals focus on developing the right qualities for their current and future roles.

NCSL, 2005, p15

Role profiling matches a job description for a particular role with skills and knowledge, accountability and personal qualities, as shown in Figure 1 below (ibid).

Figure 1: Role profiling



A **three-tier perspective** was proposed in which leadership development should be seen as the responsibility of schools themselves, using both localised solutions (eg local authority provision) and national solutions (eg NSCL training programmes). This incorporated the following insights.

- Mentorship from headteachers is a key factor in the development of potential leaders and heads.
- Potential leaders need to be guided to a series of roles for development.
- Strategies to achieve accelerated leadership development are required.
- The succession planning system will need to be driven at many different levels as neither central control nor complete school autonomy will be enough.

- More cross-school processes should exist to match potential leaders with appropriate roles.
- Recruiting processes should be better designed.
- Heads should make more effective use of their leadership teams.
- Cross-school networks should facilitate inter-school leadership initiatives.

The learning design of any programme-style approach should be considered alongside the content itself. For schools considering their own provision, this holds similar importance and should include:

- school-focused action learning
- challenge and problem-solving approaches
- collaborative learning
- consideration of alternative perspectives
- school-based coaching and mentoring

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