

New Deal for
the Education
Workforce



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Leadership

National Leadership Development Board

**Leadership development –
provision for middle leaders**

Leading, learning, inspiring

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Introduction

We acknowledge and celebrate excellent leadership at all levels within Welsh schools. We want to grow leadership capacity so that excellent leadership is a feature of all schools because we know that, together with teaching and learning, leadership drives learners' attainment.

It is vital that all practitioners are encouraged and supported to develop their own leadership potential and the leadership potential of others.

Practice-based, career-long leadership development is embodied in the [leadership development pathway](#) that we have endorsed. The pathway is wholly consistent with the National Professional Learning Model and the principles that underpin the pathway are equally relevant to all practitioners and career stages. Although middle leadership development is the focus of this document, it sits within a wider continuum of leadership development.

Middle leaders are key to improving standards. That is why the Minister for Education and Skills was right to highlight middle leaders in the Statement he made on the National Professional Learning Model in June 2014. That is also why we as a Board have decided to prioritise middle leadership provision. We want all middle leaders to have access to appropriate development opportunities which will enable them to drive improvements in teaching and learning as well as developing their own leadership potential. Welsh Government, regional consortia, schools and individual middle leaders themselves all have key roles in securing that provision.

We believe that the long term solution lies in building a self improving schools system, in which schools are enabled and empowered to lead their own improvement and to take collective responsibility for the improvement of other schools. As such, we agree with the National Model for Regional Working that there should be an increasing hand over of responsibility for delivery from consortia to schools. This is equally relevant to leadership development provision and we therefore endorse the approach that consortia are already taking in moving in this direction. School to school working is therefore a key driver for leadership development and is already operating effectively in some schools. We will provide more information on how this can be developed further in due course.

We recognise this cannot be an overnight transformation despite the progress already made and that, in the shorter term, schools need to be supported to move towards a more sustainable approach to developing their staff.

The purpose of this guidance

As members of the NLDB we are committed to strengthening leadership capacity in schools in Wales. We do not see our role as setting out a theoretical basis for building leadership capacity – there are others who have already done that well. We see our role as providing practical support and guidance to practitioners, schools, consortia and Government. In doing so we have sought to prioritise our work and have therefore adopted this early focus on provision for middle leader development.

It is no secret that this area of leadership development is crucial for the success of our schools, something that has already been well reported by Robert Hill and the OECD, among others. There are a number of key challenges that we want to address through the middle leadership programme:

- More consistency in the range and provision of leadership development.
- Clarity about the expectations for middle leaders.
- Alignment of work at school, local authority, regional consortia and Welsh Government levels so that a coherent offer of leadership training and development can be made.
- Succession planning and talent management.
- Recognition and, where appropriate, accreditation for leadership development.
- Capacity of schools to be able to deliver leadership provision.

Whilst there is no lack of programmes that claim to address these areas of need there is little to guide schools and practitioners' understanding of what will have greatest impact. In publishing this guidance we are seeking to improve the access of middle leaders to high quality development experiences wherever they work in Wales.

We intend to achieve this by setting out what we consider to be the key characteristics of effective middle leader development so that all those involved – practitioners, schools, local authorities and consortia, Government and other providers - will be better placed to make informed choices about development activities that have a positive and sustained impact on leadership practice.

However, that in itself does not go far enough and so we have also provided examples of how this can look in practice. In so doing we also want to show that a 'programme' does not necessarily need to be complex, expensive or externally provided. We believe there is provision that can be accessible to every practitioner and school, both within and between schools. This provision can form an integral part of schools' daily operation.

Who are our ‘middle leaders’?

There are no dictionary definitions to help us here and, in reality, practitioners who fall into this category will vary depending on sector, phase and size of school. However it is reasonable to assume that this group contains experienced professionals who already have some leadership responsibility and either wish, or need, to develop their leadership capacity further.

It will be for practitioners and schools to determine where individuals sit on their leadership journey. This guidance is intended to be practical and flexible so that it can be adapted to address individual and school needs at differing points of the middle leadership journey. These needs will be identified through a combination of voluntary engagement with the Leadership Standards via the Individual Leadership Review, performance management reviews, school self evaluation and the school development plan.

Whilst the Leadership Standards for Wales already set out the skills, knowledge and behaviours expected of leaders, we believe it appropriate to set out some of the distinctive attributes we should see in our middle leaders. These include:

- Ability to recognise and drive excellence in teaching and learning including effective use of classroom observation.
- Strong inter-personal skills – including motivating and leading others to achieve and dealing with challenging situations.
- Ability to build effective relationships with colleagues they manage and with those who manage them.
- Understanding and applying the factors that translate vision into effective action.
- Reflecting on their leadership practice and that of others.
- Supporting others in their leadership role through coaching and/or mentoring.
- Ability to analyse performance, including effective use of data.
- Engaging with the latest thinking and educational research (including leadership theory in education and beyond) and sharing that within and beyond the school.
- Knowing when it is appropriate to take risks and being able to manage risk effectively.
- Understanding the nature of leadership responsibilities that relate to the next tier and applying this to developing their own leadership capacity.
- Commitment to continual professional learning and improvement for self and others set against the context of impact on learner outcomes.
- Willingness to embrace accountability and to hold others to account (including challenging other middle leaders to ensure consistency).
- Promoting collaboration within the school and across schools.

- Driven by a strong moral purpose to improve learner outcomes across the system.
- Resilience in the face of challenges.

What does effective middle leader development look like?

In this section we will initially set out some high level principles that should be a feature of all middle leader development. By 'development' we mean all forms of professional learning which help to develop leadership capacity whether provided internally by schools, across a group of schools, by consortia or by other providers. Effective professional learning and leadership development may include, but is certainly not limited to, formal programmes or courses.

We will then move on to describe how these principles can be applied in practice.

High level principles

Activities and programmes that result in effective middle leader provision in Wales will be characterised by the following:

- They are clearly referenced to the Leadership Standards.
- They are driven by practitioners' needs as identified by self review (via the Individual Leadership Review (ILR)) and performance management outcomes and are linked to the school's self evaluation and school development plan.
- They are accessible to all middle leaders in English and Welsh.
- They are practice based and have clear intended outcomes that are 'SMART' and which demonstrate impact on leadership practice.
- They form part of a 'continuum' of leadership development.
- They involve the key features of the professional learning model:
 - Collaborative learning
 - Reflective practice
 - Coaching and mentoring
 - Engaging with relevant data and evidence from research
- They maximise the opportunities within school and between schools to provide development opportunities for middle leaders.
- They assess the impact on learners of development activities, including those resulting through teacher absence.

Practical application

The above principles will only deliver improvement if they have a practical application. In Appendix 1 we provide examples of activities that are informed by feedback from practitioners where they have described activities they have found to have worked well in building either their own or their colleagues' leadership skills and knowledge.

These activities can be blended to form part of a larger programme or can be a programme in their own right. The examples provided are not intended to form an exhaustive list and there will be other experiences not included that will be equally beneficial.

How should it be delivered?

Many of the activities provided in Appendix 1, by their nature, suggest a particular approach to delivery and the overarching principles described above also indicate delivery that is firmly skewed towards collaborative learning. As with content, the mode of delivery will reflect the particular needs identified.

As noted above, we advocate moving to a school to school approach as the preferred means of delivery, beyond what may be provided within schools. Many schools have already adopted this as their 'default' approach. Whilst we urge all schools to consider how they can strengthen their working with other schools we recognise that, where the expertise or capacity does yet not exist within schools, consortia may need to put more short term measures in place to ensure availability of provision.

Roles and responsibilities for delivery

Effective middle leader development will work best when it is a product of a concerted effort by all key stakeholders to focus on what works well and to adopt a shared purpose in providing support for middle leaders as they develop their leadership skills.

We have set out some broad roles and responsibilities below. We deliberately start with the individual as self motivation and the desire for improvement is key to effective development.

Practitioners:

- Take responsibility for own development and engage in regular reflection and self review (e.g. Individual Leadership Review);
- Seek opportunities to learn from and support the practice of colleagues;
- Apply the principles of the professional learning model to own development;
- Regularly discuss their leadership development with their line manager and others;
- Middle leaders have a responsibility to identify aspiring leaders, those who may not yet be in a leadership position but that are aspiring to such a role, and coaching them in the use of the Individual Leadership Review to assisting them in progressing to middle leadership.

Schools:

- Develop a culture that positively encourages leadership development as part of their commitment to develop all their staff;

- Have a structured approach to in-school provision that supports middle leader development and reflects the principles in this guidance;
- Work in partnership with other schools to enhance and enrich leadership development programmes;
- Establish internal quality assurance to ensure provision meets needs and delivers outcomes;
- Aspire to become centres of excellence in leadership development.

Local Authorities/Consortia:

- Deploy Challenge Advisers to monitor schools' commitment to, and provision for, middle leader development and to intervene as required where schools need support to strengthen provision.
- Establish minimum provision that enables ready access for middle leaders to structured programmes (increasingly delivered by schools and groups of schools) that build leadership capacity in the system and which reflect the principles set out in this guidance.
- Build further capacity in schools to deliver leadership support. Broker school to school working so that the schools that already excel in leadership development are active in leading middle leadership development for other schools.
- Provide strategic inputs to promote school to school working including facilitating the sharing and dissemination of effective practice.
- Where circumstances demand, broker provision from 'third party providers' as a catalyst for growing capacity in schools so that such provision diminishes in the longer term as school to school leadership development becomes embedded.
- Develop a 'talent-spotting' role in gathering local intelligence of developing middle leaders and ensure they are being provided with the necessary support.
- Develop 'centres of excellence' to act as an early focus of effective practice in middle leader development but in pursuit of excellence becoming widespread.
- Support access to the latest educational research and approaches to leadership from education and other spheres. This might be addressed through organising conferences, seminars and webinars. Also, consortia and higher education institutions to develop highly tuned approaches, which would ensure that middle leaders were exposed to these influences and learning opportunities.

Commercial providers:

- Develop products and programmes that reflect the principles contained in this guidance.

Welsh Government:

- Ensure there is a clear vision for education in Wales that sets a clear context for leadership development.
- Ascertain that there is a clear framework for leadership development in terms of content of provision and the roles of all parties.
- Define the relevant professional standards for leaders.
- Make available high quality resources that support effective leadership development.
- Support the NLDB in establishing a clear vision for leadership.
- Challenge and support the work of consortia as part of the national model of regional working.

Estyn:

- Use the existing provisions of the Common Inspection Framework to record evidence of effective continuous professional development.
- Share best practice case studies identified from inspection.

How will provision be quality assured?

All of the stakeholders above have a role to play in quality assuring provision. There is a particular responsibility on each school to ensure provision meets the needs of the school and its staff and this will be evident in the School Development Plan.

Consortia also have a key role in ensuring the quality of the practice that takes place. Consortia, via their challenge advisors, need to have an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of each school in terms of its leadership capacity and professional development. This needs to be regularly reviewed and updated so that ongoing development is supported and schools with a lead role in school to school working continues to justify their sector leading status. We acknowledge and welcome the fact that these quality assurance procedures are already being developed and implemented by consortia and look forward to there being consistent provision across all consortia.

There are some fundamental questions that should be applied to all provision that will assist in confirming provision is of an appropriate quality:

- How does the provision reflect the high level principles set out above?
- What are the intended outcomes?
- What criteria are being used to judge if outcomes are being met?
- Does the activity/programme provide value for money?
- What is the impact on learners – short and long term?
- How does the activity/programme fit in a continuum of leadership development – what opportunities are there for further progression?
- What opportunities exist for collaborative learning and development?

Areas that the NLDB will consider further

We hope this guidance is found to be helpful. As a Board we will continue to focus our attention on strengthening provision for leadership development. We therefore intend to provide further guidance on specific aspects – these will be informed by the progress made by schools and consortia in developing provision. We intend to develop stronger links with consortia to inform this work but would also welcome contact from schools and practitioners, either to comment on this guidance or to provide evidence of what works for them, We can be contacted at:

SchoolLeadershipArweinyddiaethYsgolion@Wales.GSI.Gov.UK

Appendix 1: Content of provision

Middle leader provision

The suggested provision and development opportunities set out in this appendix reflect the key areas of the leadership standards and the self-evaluation tool which allows practitioners to review their professional experiences and plan for future development (the Individual Leadership Review (ILR)).

The key areas form a holistic approach to leadership involving engagement with all key areas simultaneously. Some development activities are therefore mentioned in more than one key area.

The provision and opportunities for development are not prescriptive. It is not expected that practitioners complete them all. Practitioners should be encouraged to select those which reflect their particular needs identified following self-evaluation.

Creating strategic direction

Under this key area consortia, supported by schools, should ensure that provision, subject to assessment of need, covers:

- contributing to and articulating a clear vision that has high expectations and improves performance in teaching and learning and learner outcomes;
- understanding and using data to create and contribute to a school/department development plan;
- incorporating learner voice and internal and external feedback in planning;
- identifying priorities for own area of responsibility and contributing to others as appropriate;
- tracking and monitoring progress against priorities and targets;
- identifying and maintaining clear routes to improvement;
- managing change;
- developing own self-evaluation skills and those of others, contributing to whole school self-evaluation and own area of responsibility;
- developing creativity and vision;
- creating an inclusive professional ethos which encourages participation in the planning process;
- creating and articulating a vision with and for the team/department/year
- using research and innovative practice to inform planning;
- contributing to policy development and strategic whole-school planning.

Development opportunities might include:

- participation in SLT meetings;
- participation in governing body meetings;
- shadowing senior leaders;
- responsibility for developing elements of the School Development Plan;
- leading a whole school initiative.

Leading learning and teaching

Under this key area consortia, working with schools, should ensure that provision, subject to assessment of need, covers:

- helping develop a curriculum that secures learner engagement and improves achievement;
- evaluating curriculum planning and delivery to ensure it meets learner and national requirements;
- good subject knowledge and/or knowledge of area of responsibility;
- supporting school or subject wide focus on learner achievement;
- ongoing commitment to develop and model excellent learning and teaching;
- sharing excellent practice;
- identifying and disseminating school-based research which informs practice;
- listening to learners;
- working collaboratively between departments and phases to improve the quality of provision;
- observing lessons and conducting scrutiny of learners' work with purpose;
- supporting and planning learning with colleagues;
- setting, achieving and maintaining high standards;
- managing performance of others effectively;
- creating an effective climate for learning, including addressing issues such as behaviour for learning and attendance, to maximise learner engagement;
- ensure that the quality of teaching meets the needs of all learners.

Development opportunities might include:

- leading and participating in peer observation;
- leading on introducing new curriculum developments;
- involvement in/leading a PLC;
- mentoring/coaching a colleague;

- being coached or mentored;
- leading a whole school initiative.

Developing and working with others

Under this key area consortia, working with schools, should ensure that provision, subject to assessment of need, covers:

- inspiring and motivating others;
- being emotionally resilient, optimistic and forward thinking;
- modelling positive leadership behaviours;
- creating a culture of continual professional learning within the area of responsibility;
- leading and developing a team (including the impact of individuals on group and whole school performance);
- coaching and mentoring as appropriate;
- facilitating effective collaborative working to improve standards;
- dealing positively with difficult situations and resolving conflicts;
- recognising and nurturing leadership potential;
- holding others to account and providing challenge and support using the performance management system;
- managing workload of self and others;
- trusting others to deliver by sharing agreed success criteria;
- working effectively with support staff;
- building a positive working ethos and reducing/managing stress;
- treating others fairly and equitably.

Development opportunities might include:

- mentoring student teachers and NQTs;
- collaborating with colleagues across and beyond the school;
- observing good senior leaders as role models;
- observing lessons with peers;
- leading on introducing new curriculum developments;
- involvement in/leading a PLC;
- mentoring/coaching a colleague;
- being coached or mentored;
- working with other departments to contribute to school objectives and outcomes;
- leading a whole school initiative.

Managing the school

Under this key area consortia, working with schools, should ensure that provision, subject to assessment of need, covers:

- creating improvement plans that are based on an accurate self-evaluation and performance data;
- securing an effective and safe learning environment;
- managing a range of staffing issues including recruitment, retention and deployment of staff;
- managing the budget for an area of responsibility and relating this to the whole school budget;
- deploying resources effectively so that they are used to improve the quality of teaching and learning and standards;
- ensuring whole school and departmental policies are implemented;
- being productive at meetings, and chair meetings effectively;
- setting clear and appropriate priorities and managing staff and resources to deliver these;
- making use of feedback to improve provision and outcomes.

Development opportunities might include:

- shadowing SLT members;
- voluntary SLT participation e.g. project allocated to address a whole school issue;
- participation in SLT meetings;
- participation in governing body meetings;
- responsibility for developing elements of the School Development Plan;
- leading a whole school initiative.

Securing accountability

Under this key area consortia, working with schools, should ensure that provision, subject to assessment of need, covers:

- being accountable to the headteacher or senior leaders for an area of responsibility;
- using data to track progress;
- working with relevant advisers to secure improvement;
- conveying challenging accountability messages effectively to colleagues;
- providing updates and reports as required by the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team.

Development opportunities might include:

- writing reports and presenting to governors on area of responsibility;
- participation in governance training;
- knowledge of school development plan;
- experience of setting whole school targets;
- reporting to the challenge adviser on area of responsibility;
- practising difficult conversations;
- identifying local stakeholders;
- contributing to parents evenings;
- leading a whole school initiative.

Strengthening the community focus

Under this key area consortia, working with schools, should ensure that provision, subject to assessment of need, covers:

- developing and maintaining positive stakeholder relationships (including senior leaders, pupils, parents, governors and the wider community);
- contributing to the positive reputation of the school;
- collaborating with other schools to identify and promote excellent practice in improving outcomes;
- establishing effective partnerships with other professionals/agencies;
- establishing and maintaining effective transition arrangements which enhance pupil progress;
- developing productive relationships with the school's community partners;
- promoting the vision and achievements of the school in the local community;
- engaging parents and carers in the children's learning.

Development opportunities might include:

- promoting the school (e.g. contributing to Open evenings);
- undertaking learning activities in the local community;
- identifying best practice in learning from the community;
- involvement in/leading a PLC across a cluster of schools;
- mapping external relationships;
- developing protocols for engaging in social media communication;
- leading a whole school initiative.

Appendix 2: Effective forms of delivery

The key to ensuring the effectiveness of the provision will be that the professional learning model is used in delivery. Below are some effective approaches offered as a guide to consortia.

- General features
 - Blended learning approach – face to face and online.
 - Leadership Standards are explicit in the content and delivery.
 - Linking sessions to practical school/classroom environment.
 - Ability to influence content and making the programme genuinely tailored to the participants.
- Practical tasks and assignments that are linked to school
 - Exercises involving analysing data from an anonymous school.
 - Exercises involving action planning for school development.
 - Being interviewed by current head teachers, presenting to governors and parents from a data task and/or action plan.
 - Mock in-tray exercise.
 - There could also be a personal development task.
- Collaborative learning
 - Local leading practitioners sharing good practice.
 - Not being overly ‘tutor’ led ensuring that sufficient time is provided to share good practice and network with like-minded professionals.
 - Going to different schools and networking with head teachers and deputy head teachers.
- Reflective practice
 - Providing time for reflection as part of the provision.
 - Using the ILR.
- Coaching and mentoring
 - Practitioners to receive coaching/mentoring.
 - Practitioners to identify future leaders and provide coaching and mentoring support to them.
- Using data and evidence from research
 - Interaction with latest literature in the form of writing a review.