



National College for
School Leadership


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Inspiring leaders;
improving children's lives

Leading curriculum innovation in discussion



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority



Everyone involved in education recognises that it is critical to design and deliver a curriculum that inspires and challenges all learners and prepares them well for life in the 21st century.

This is a complex leadership task and one that has been embraced by over 50 schools in NCSL's Leadership Network. These schools are participating in a joint project with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). The project focuses on developing a curriculum for the 21st century. The questions that helped shape the project were:

1. What are we trying to achieve through the curriculum?
2. How do we organise learning in order to achieve it?
3. How will we know that we have achieved our aim(s)?
4. How can this drive for curriculum change best be led for success?

Activity related to the project has demonstrated how the power to innovate engages leaders involved in curriculum development in revisiting their thinking about education and school purpose. It has also required that they reframe their practice as leaders of learning. It has stimulated the creativity of school leaders, staff and pupils and promoted key, systemic shifts towards a curriculum that is more flexible, responsive and relevant to the needs and lives of learners.

Among the project's key findings was a clear recognition that there is no one model for success, because context matters. Each participating school adopted an approach to leading curriculum innovation that was right for its particular situation. Moreover, rather than tackling this task in isolation, participating schools were able to benefit from the thinking and practice of their network colleagues and so were able to articulate and shape their ideas in a way that, as one project participant put it, "enabled us to bring back practical solutions to our school in even better shape than when we took them out".

Edited by Karen Carter and Tricia Sharpe

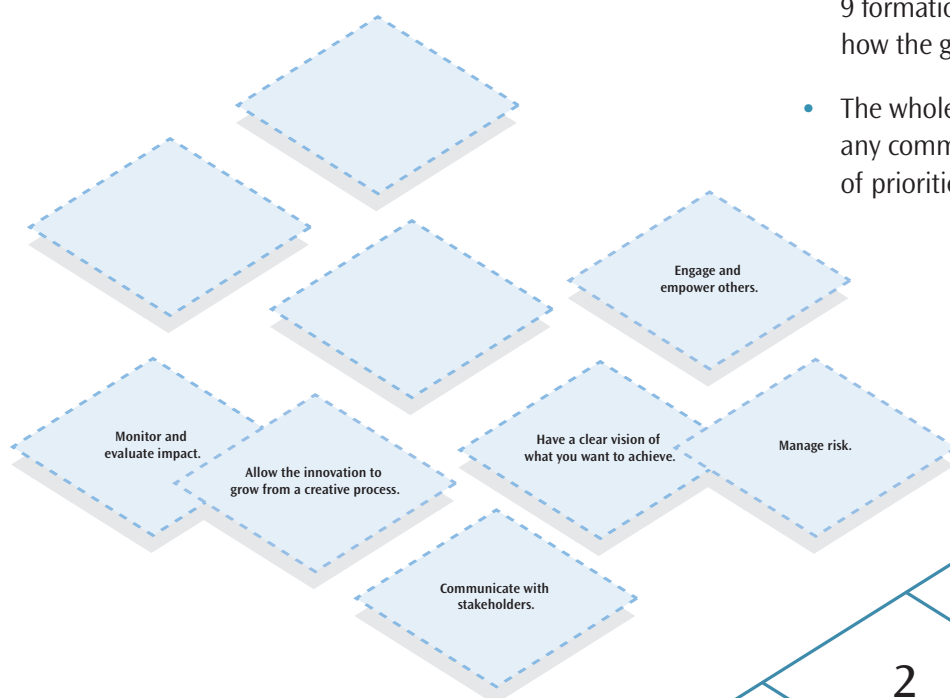
We would like to thank all the project schools for telling their curriculum innovation stories and in doing so providing the data that informed the development of this discussion tool. We would also like to thank all those who took part in trialling the use of this tool at the Developing a 21st century curriculum national conference in 2006.

This booklet combines key ideas about leading curriculum innovation with examples drawn directly from practice within a diamond 9 discussion tool that is designed to challenge your thinking and promote dialogue and debate with others.

Using this discussion tool

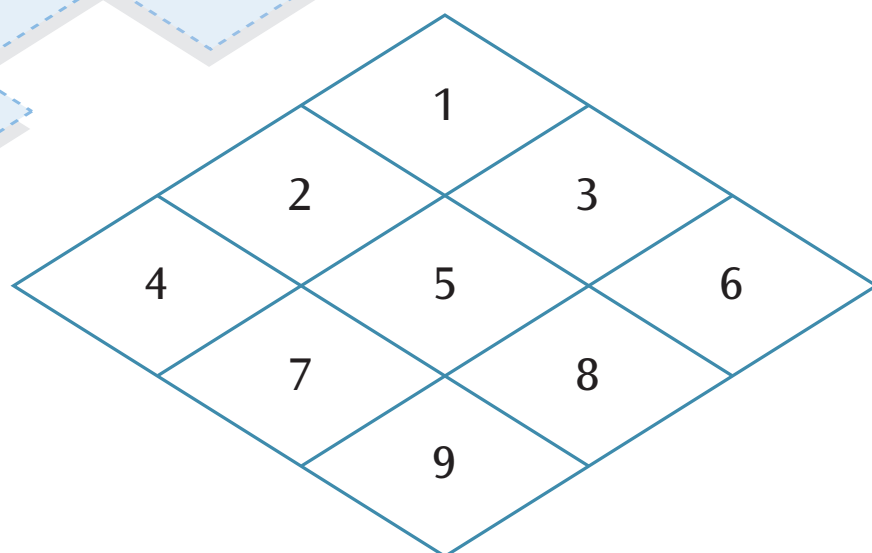
This booklet, which is designed as an interactive discussion tool, draws on the research findings of the Developing a 21st century curriculum project. It combines key ideas about the successful leadership of curriculum innovation with examples drawn from practice in the format of a diamond 9 discussion activity. It is designed for use with groups of people interested in exploring the issues and practicalities associated with leading curriculum innovation through shared dialogue, discussion and debate.

Using this diamond 9 activity as tool to promote discussion with others provides a practical way of challenging your thinking and exploring current practices in leading curriculum innovation in your context. It is designed to help you collectively prioritise a long-list of issues and agree a short-list of priorities for action with colleagues. It is an excellent way of facilitating focused, professional conversations between people as they discuss important issues together and examine their thinking and practice collaboratively with each other.



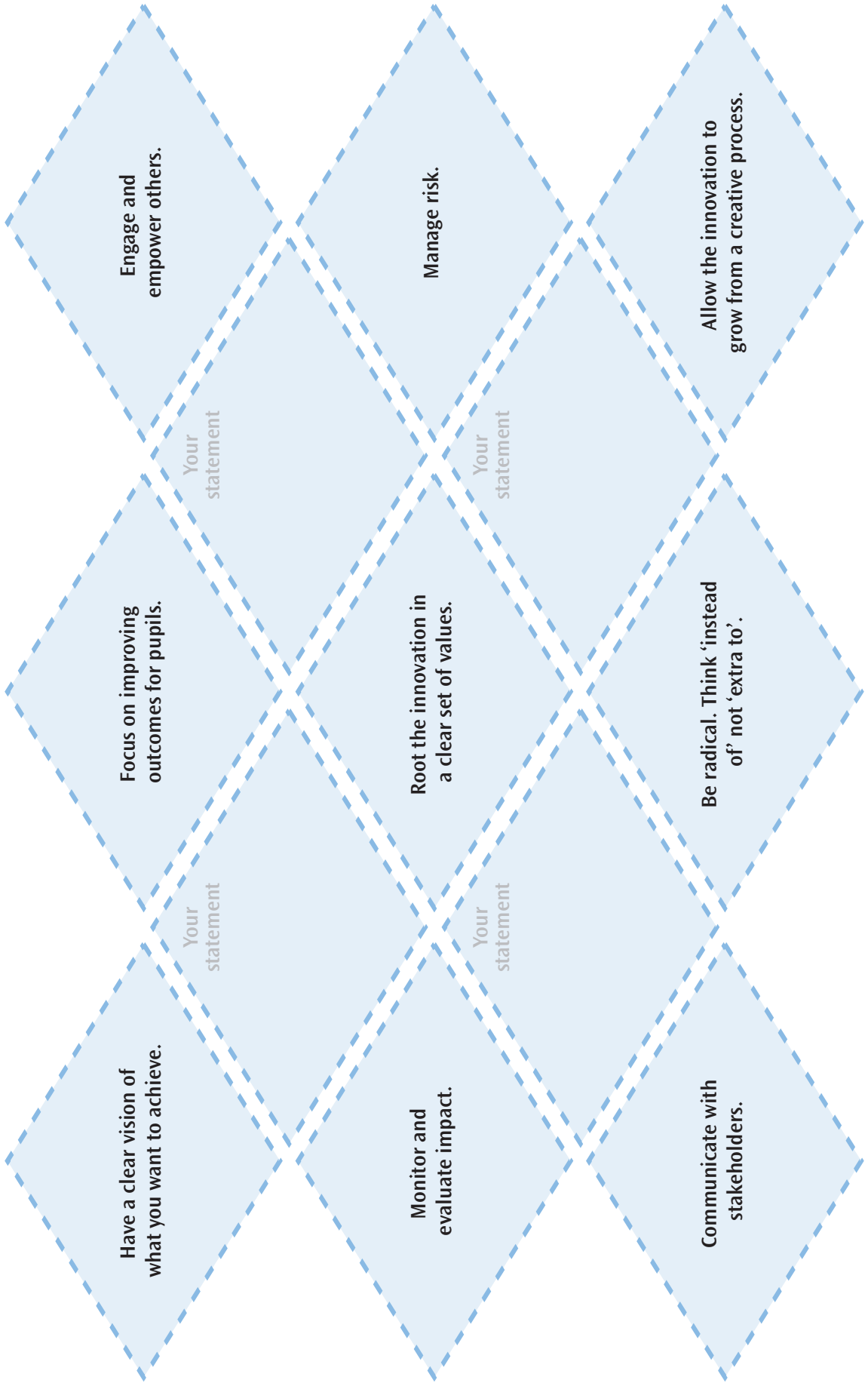
Activity guidance

- Provide everyone with a copy of the diamond 9 statements outlined overleaf. Ask participants to read each statement and reflect privately on their importance as factors in leading curriculum innovation successfully in their context.
- Organise participants in groups of between three and six people. Give each group a baseboard and a set of statement cards which can be copied and cut out from the templates overleaf.
- Ask each group to identify any factors they believe to be important but which do not appear on the statement cards and record these on the blank cards provided.
- Each group should then share the reflections of individual members on the importance of each statement and then agree a diamond 9 ranking for their group, putting the most important card at the top of the diamond on the baseboard, the least important card at the bottom, and ranking the others in the rows in between.
- Each small group should then present its diamond 9 formation to the wider group and explain briefly how the group arrived at this.
- The whole group should then attempt to identify any common choices and collectively agree a set of priorities for action.



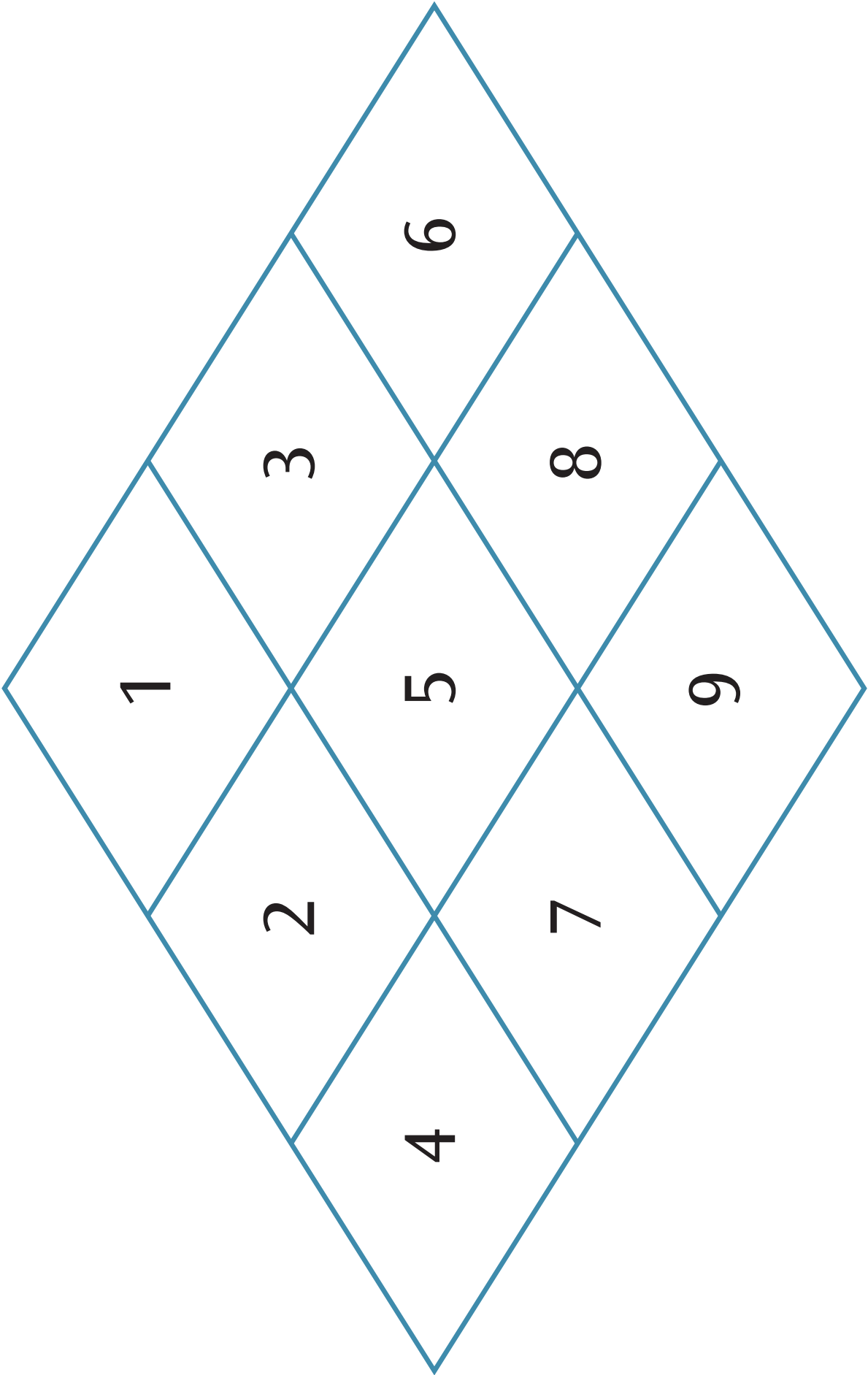
Leading curriculum innovation diamond 9 statement cards

Copy these pages onto A3 and cut out



Leading curriculum innovation diamond 9 baseboard

Detach or copy these pages onto A3





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