

National Standards for Headteachers in focus

Rural schools

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Introduction

Five primary headteachers from schools in rural areas met to create this focus piece on the National Standards for Headteachers. What follows is a composite of their experiences and of how they perceive their role in relation to the opportunities and challenges of working in a rural school.

Shaping the future

Critical to the role of headship is working with the governing body and others to create a shared vision and strategic plan which inspires and motivates pupils, staff and all other members of the school community. This vision should express core educational values and moral purpose and be inclusive of stakeholders' values and beliefs. The strategic planning process is critical to sustaining school improvement and ensuring that the school moves forward for the benefit of its pupils. (National Standards for Headteachers, DfES 2004:6)

Example 1: Addressing the issue of behaviour

A headteacher, new to the school, was aware from the start that he was expected by the Local Education Authority (LEA) link inspector and the governors to address the issue of poor behaviour. Early observations confirmed the need to do so. "It frightens me to see what's going on in the classrooms – children coming into class in a rowdy way, no sense of coming in and settling down to work. Groups of children allowed to wander off on any pretext." He felt that these behaviours had become "deeply engrained over many years". There was a degree of unhappiness within the school.

Two children experienced school phobia and there were a number who frequently hurt others in a pattern of playground behaviour that he found unacceptable. He believed there was a need to establish a clear focus for improvement, a vision based on beliefs about the ways in which people, both adults and children, should relate to one another and the right of all to be safe and happy within the school environment in order that they should be able to learn effectively.

In order to achieve this, against a long history of acceptance of low-level disruption, he concluded that he would have to be explicit about the issues and assertive about the need to address those issues. He was supported in this conclusion by the headteacher who was his mentor and by the recently appointed deputy head.

He planned a half-day to which every adult working at the school was invited, with overtime payments made to non-teaching staff. The programme was as follows:

- Presentation considering what is known about how the brain works and how it develops.
- Activity: to write down the name of every child in the school, with two words that come to mind in connection with that child.
- Presentation about how children gain self-awareness and learn about expected behaviours, including what they learn from adult reactions.
- Group work: mind mapping a list of inappropriate behaviours and making a mind map categorising those behaviours.
- Presentation and discussion developing ideas about how poor behaviour might be tackled.
- Hot lunch and wine.

He hoped that agreement would be reached on quiet, non-verbal means of gaining children's attention and approaches that would reward and reinforce good behaviour such as golden time, the banking of rewards and so on. He particularly hoped that a corporate approach to dealing with behaviour would emerge and regarded this as

fundamental in bringing about the necessary changes. The re-writing of the school's behaviour policy would support the process of change.

This headteacher did not think results would be immediate, nor easy to achieve; rather, he believed it would take hard work, commitment and determination on everybody's part and most particularly on his own.

This example illustrates the following knowledge requirements, professional qualities and actions needed by the headteacher to achieve the core purpose identified within this standard.

Knows about:

- ways to build, communicate and implement a shared vision
- strategic planning processes
- strategies for communication both within and beyond the school
- leading change.

Is committed to:

- a collaborative school vision of excellence and equity that sets high standards for every pupil
- the setting and achieving of ambitious, challenging goals and targets
- inclusion and the ability and right of all to be the best they can be.

Is able to:

- think strategically, build and communicate a coherent vision in a range of compelling ways
- inspire, challenge and motivate others to carry the vision forward
- model the values and vision of the school.

Actions:

- ensures the vision for the school is clearly articulated, shared, understood and acted on effectively by all
- works within the school community to translate the vision into agreed objectives and operational plans that will promote and sustain school improvement
- demonstrates the vision and values in everyday work and practice
- motivates and works with others to create a shared culture and positive climate
- ensures that strategic planning takes account of the diversity, values and experience of the school.

Leading learning and teaching

Headteachers have a central responsibility for raising the quality of teaching and learning and for pupils' achievements. This implies setting high expectations and monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of learning outcomes. A successful learning culture will enable pupils to become effective, enthusiastic, independent learners, committed to life-long learning. (National Standards for Headteachers, DfES 2004: 7)

Example 1: 'Blocked teaching'

Two headteachers have introduced the notion of 'block teaching' into the curriculum of their schools. The inspiration for this move has come from *Excellence and enjoyment: A strategy for primary schools* (DfES 2003) and the *Primary National Strategy* (DfES 2005), which provides support for new initiatives.

One was the headteacher of a school that was part of a group of 10, different in size, from different phases and in different contexts. The headteachers of these schools shared a stated commitment to thinking positively. They were 'can do' thinkers, welcoming challenges to current ways of doing things. Asked the question, 'Why do we teach a subject for a specific length of time within the school day?', they began to think creatively about other approaches to organising delivery of the curriculum.

The issues raised were taken back to school and discussed with staff. As a result, they have moved towards a more cross-curricular approach. Art, for example, is used to support other areas of the curriculum such as the study of rivers in Geography, and the "display suddenly looks great". Two weeks have been dedicated to the teaching of Science, enabling a clear focus to be established and providing opportunities for teachers to 'take risks', to become more creative and innovative in their approaches and to follow children's interests.

The other took advantage of opportunities to visit schools that were already implementing a 'blocked teaching' approach. Inspired by what she saw, the headteacher arranged for other members of staff, including an advanced skills teacher, to visit these schools too. She felt that they all learned from the opportunity to compare the practice in their own school with that of other schools. They gained insights into the ways in which they could build on their own good practice and develop it.

Both schools have begun a cycle of evaluation, of implementing new ideas and reviewing and 'tweaking' them as they have pursued these developments. They have found that some subjects lend themselves to 'blocked teaching'. Others do not. They have found management of resources easier. Judgements about what works well and what does not, reached by the staff group as a whole, are informing financial decisions. There is an increasing understanding among staff of the 'core skills' that apply to, and can be taught through, a variety of curriculum areas. Children have a better recall of what they are taught. They are highly motivated, and the pursuit of their interests at home has led to a more personalised approach to learning. Time has been created for other initiatives, such as the teaching of French to Year 2 pupils. Report writing is now an ongoing process rather than an end-of-year event. Above all, perhaps, there is a sense of growing excitement about learning among staff and pupils.

Both headteachers were conscious of the need to gain the commitment of others before implementing such a major change. They knew that not everyone would share their own enthusiasm for the idea, nor immediately see its potential for bringing about improvements in learning. One described his role as that of "a sheep dog, sprinting ahead so that people follow, then getting behind and nipping a few heels". Both were sufficiently confident in themselves as leaders and as thinkers to "listen to everyone's point of view, then make up my own mind and push through the decisions".

This example illustrates the following knowledge requirements, professional qualities and actions needed by the headteacher to achieve the core purpose identified within this standard.

Knows about:

- the development of a personalised learning culture within the school
- models of learning and teaching
- principles of effective teaching and assessment for learning
- curriculum design and management
- school self-evaluation.

Is committed to:

- raising standards for all in the pursuit of excellence
- the entitlement of all pupils to effective teaching and learning
- choice and flexibility in learning to meet the personalised learning needs of every child.

Is able to:

- demonstrate personal enthusiasm for and commitment to the learning process
- initiate and support research and debate about effective learning and teaching and develop relevant strategies for performance improvement.

Actions:

- treats people fairly, equitably and with dignity and respect to create and maintain a positive school culture
- develops and maintains a culture of high expectations for self and for others and takes appropriate action when performance is unsatisfactory.

Example 2: The teaching head

Many headteachers of small, rural schools have significant teaching commitments. One describes this as his “test bed”, a place where his own excitement about teaching and learning can find expression and spread, by ‘osmosis’, through the school. He believes there are lots of routes to the “top of the mountain” when it comes to teaching and learning and that some practitioners are further on than others.

The teaching head should be one of these, from whom others can learn. In his own case, he believes he should model the continuous search for better ways of doing things, admitting that he does not always know the answers, or indeed, in some cases, the questions. He shares his thinking about learning with the children in his class, inviting them to engage in the process of becoming effective, independent learners by reflecting on the ways in which they learn best. He uses educational literature to support his thinking, such as Guy Blackstone’s book, *Building learning power (TLO 2002)*, with its emphasis on reflectiveness, resilience, resourcefulness and reciprocity.

This example illustrates the following knowledge requirements, professional qualities and actions needed by the headteacher to achieve the core purpose identified within this standard.

Knows about:

- the development of a personalised learning culture within the school
- models of learning and teaching
- principles of effective teaching and assessment for learning

- strategies for developing effective teachers.

Is committed to:

- raising standards for all in the pursuit of excellence
- the continuing learning of all members of the school community
- the entitlement of all pupils to effective teaching and learning
- choice and flexibility in learning to meet the personalised learning needs of every child.

Is able to:

- demonstrate personal enthusiasm for and commitment to the learning process
- demonstrate the principles and practice of effective teaching and learning
- initiate and support research and debate about effective learning and teaching and develop relevant strategies for performance improvement.

Actions:

- establishes creative, responsive and effective approaches to learning and teaching
- ensures a culture and ethos of challenge and support where all pupils can achieve success and become engaged in their own learning.

Example 3: Achieving common approaches to bench marking among diverse pre-school provisions

A rural primary school was not large enough to have a nursery attached and pupils were admitted from a range of pre-school provisions in the local area. Information received about the children varied from playgroup to playgroup and the headteacher and reception class teacher felt there was a case for seeking some common form of bench marking.

They invited playgroup providers to a meeting two weeks after the beginning of the autumn term, when they provided feedback on the children newly admitted to the school – how well they had settled in, the areas of strengths that had emerged and any concerns they had about individuals. This provided the opportunity for those from the playgroups to share their different assessment practices. They agreed on a foundation-style profile that would provide basic information to the school in a common format. They plan to meet again in the summer term when they will share information about the following year's intake, including information about special needs, gifts and talents, friendships, starting points and so on. In addition, there are plans for staff from the school to visit each playgroup and observe the children.

This example illustrates the following knowledge requirements, professional qualities and actions needed by the headteacher to achieve the core purpose identified within this standard.

Knows about:

- strategies for raising achievement and achieving excellence
- strategies for ensuring inclusion, diversity and access
- tools for data collection and analysis
- monitoring and evaluating performance.

Is committed to:

- raising standards for all in the pursuit of excellence
- the continuing learning of all members of the school community
- the entitlement of all pupils to effective teaching and learning.

Is able to:

- access, analyse and interpret information.

Actions:

- ensures a consistent and continuous school-wide focus on pupils' achievement, using data and benchmarks to monitor progress in every child's learning
- ensures that learning is at the centre of strategic planning
- implements an effective assessment framework.

Developing self and working with others

Effective relationships and communication are important in headship as headteachers work with and through others. Effective headteachers manage themselves and their relationships well. Headship is about building a professional learning community which enables others to achieve. Through performance management and effective continuing professional development practice, the headteacher supports all staff to achieve high standards. To equip themselves with the capacity to deal with the complexity of the role and the range of leadership skills and actions required of them, headteachers should be committed to their own continuing professional development. (National Standards for Headteachers, DfES 2004: 8)

Example 1: Developing 'emotional literacy'

In the day-to-day life of the school a headteacher can exemplify the need to keep learning by continually seeking to understand new situations. His role in this respect is significant because other members of the community watch the way he behaves. In a small, rural school this is particularly so. One headteacher, newly appointed to a second headship, recognised the need to address low-level disruptive behaviour within the school. By engaging in discussion with children he learned more about the factors that contributed to their behaviour.

At the same time, he encouraged self-reflection by asking questions such as:

- "What did you do?"
- "What led up to this event?"
- "What was the result?"
- "What choices did you have?"
- "How might you behave differently next time?"

By this means, he avoided confrontational situations, while acknowledging that memories from the past meant that current events were "tagged with emotion". He began to establish an expectation "of social reform, rather than revenge and punishment". He was motivated by a desire to establish a context that facilitated rather than hindered learning, a calm and ordered environment within each classroom.

His commitment to addressing this issue within the school is costly in terms of time. He has now established an agreed process by which he supports staff members in dealing with poor behaviour. There are clearly stated expectations of behaviour. If children do not conform to these they are given a verbal warning. If they continue to misbehave, they are sent to spend five minutes with the headteacher during which their behaviour is discussed, after which they return to the class. If they misbehave again then they are sent to work with the headteacher for the remainder of the lesson. He hopes that, in time, he will be able to adopt a more passive role.

As this headteacher learns to manage unacceptable school-wide behaviours among the children, so, gradually, this is having an effect across the school as a whole, changing attitudes and behaviour among children and staff.

This approach was supported by a focus in a series of assemblies on emotions and their effects on relationships. A vocabulary of 'emotional wisdom' is developing within the school.

This example illustrates the following knowledge requirements, professional qualities and actions needed by the headteacher to achieve the core purpose identified within this standard.

Knows about:

- the significance of interpersonal relationships
- building and sustaining a learning community.

Is able to:

- foster an open, fair, equitable culture and manage conflict
- develop, empower and sustain individuals
- challenge, influence and motivate others to attain high goals
- give and receive effective feedback and act to improve personal performance
- think creatively to anticipate and solve problems.

Actions:

- treats people fairly, equitably and with dignity and respect to create and maintain a positive school culture
- develops and maintains a culture of high expectations for self and for others and takes appropriate action when performance is unsatisfactory.

Example 2: Building a team

While the focus of learning among a staff group is inevitably professional, establishing a learning approach may be facilitated by informal social events. At one school, when staff were feeling "tired and niggly" at the end of term, the idea emerged of doing something together that none of them had done before.

Since then, they have been sailing, go-karting and to Bingo. These activities have been both fun and challenging – "something to look forward to". Sharing memories of, for example, falling into the water when sailing, have helped them to bond as a group and morale has improved. Their times together are now characterised by laughter.

The positive staff relationships engendered by these group activities enable them to work together and learn from one another more effectively within their professional

context. That everyone is included is an important factor in bringing this about and is more likely to be the case in a small, rural school.

This example illustrates the following knowledge requirements, professional qualities and actions needed by the headteacher to achieve the core purpose identified within this standard.

Knows about:

- the significance of interpersonal relationships
- strategies to promote individual and team development
- building and sustaining a learning community.

Is committed to:

- effective working relationships
- effective team working.

Is able to:

- foster an open, fair, equitable culture
- develop, empower and sustain individuals.

Actions:

- treats people fairly, equitably and with dignity and respect to create and maintain a positive school culture
- builds a collaborative learning culture within the school
- manages own workload and that of others to allow an appropriate work/life balance.

Example 3: Working and learning together

Curriculum planning in rural schools can prove a lonely experience. Often there is no one else teaching the same age group within the school, and distance curtails opportunities to meet with colleagues elsewhere.

One headteacher sought to overcome this sense of isolation by inviting the staff group to discuss each child in the school together before holding parents' evenings. There were immediate benefits to this approach. Each child's current teacher was able to access the knowledge and understanding of colleagues who had taught that child in the past. At the same time, those who would teach him or her in the future were building up their own knowledge of that child and his or her progress.

The 200-years worth of teaching experience held within the staff group enabled improved understandings of the child's strengths and weaknesses. Together they were able to determine whether children's needs were being met through the planned curriculum or whether special provision needed to be made for them.

An increasingly personalised approach to meeting individual needs is developing and there is a new focus on learning among the staff group. Staff members now approach their interviews with parents with greater confidence. They have already rehearsed what they want to say and have given thought to the ways in which they plan to meet children's needs in the future. In addition, working together and learning from one another in this way makes a significant contribution to their professional development, both as individuals and exponentially as a group.

This example illustrates the following knowledge requirements, professional qualities and actions needed by the headteacher to achieve the core purpose identified within this standard.

Knows about:

- the significance of interpersonal relationships, adult learning and models of continuing professional development
- strategies to promote individual and team development
- building and sustaining a learning community.

Is committed to:

- effective working relationships
- effective team working
- continuing professional development for self and all others within the school.

Is able to:

- foster an open, fair, equitable culture
- develop, empower and sustain individuals and teams
- collaborate and network with others within the school
- challenge, influence and motivate others to attain high goals
- accept support from others.

Actions:

- treats people fairly, equitably and with dignity and respect to create and maintain a positive school culture
- builds a collaborative learning culture within the school
- ensures effective planning, allocation, support and evaluation of work undertaken by teams and individuals
- develops and maintains a culture of high expectations for self and for others.

Managing the organisation

Headteachers need to provide effective organisation and management of the school and seek ways of improving organisational structures and functions based on rigorous self-evaluation. Headteachers should ensure that the school and the people and resources within it are organised and managed to provide an efficient, effective and safe learning environment. These management responsibilities imply the re-examination of the roles and responsibilities of those adults working in the school to build capacity across the workforce and ensure resources are deployed to achieve value for money. Headteachers should also seek to build successful organisations through effective collaborations with others. (National Standards for Headteachers, DfES/0083/2004: 9)

Example 1: Delegating responsibility for spending

In a large school there are often opportunities for allocating funds from within the budget to support a range of responsibilities and initiatives. In small, rural schools with smaller budgets this can be more difficult.

One headteacher, new to post, took the risk of 'divvying out' funds to colleagues who held particular responsibilities related to priorities identified within the school improvement plan.

"People have been prudent", she said. "They've made good choices." The Maths coordinator, for example, wanted to encourage the development of numeracy skills at home. Staff members carried out an audit of Maths games held within the school and agreed an action plan for promoting their use. A total of £600 was used to buy additional games. Parent workshops were held and a Maths games club was launched with great success.

Staff members have appreciated the autonomy they have had in decision making and the trust placed in them by the headteacher. She, encouraged by the results of this approach to the delegation of limited funds, plans to continue to allocate financial resources to particular initiatives in the future. She is exploring the possibility that Teaching and Learning Responsibility points might be used to support this approach by rewarding colleagues who, for a limited period of time, take an active leadership role in relation to school development priorities.

Such an approach helps to address a dilemma faced by many headteachers of small, rural primary schools where a large number of responsibilities are shared among a few members of staff and where the skills base is necessarily smaller than elsewhere. Staff members are encouraged to look at the needs of the school as a whole.

This example illustrates the following knowledge requirements, professional qualities and actions needed by the headteacher to achieve the core purpose identified within this standard.

Knows about:

- principles and practice of earned autonomy
- principles and strategies of school improvement
- strategic financial planning, budgetary management and principles of best value
- performance management.

Is committed to:

- distributed leadership and management
- the equitable management of staff and resources
- the sustaining of personal motivation and that of all staff.

Is able to:

- establish and sustain appropriate structures and systems
- delegate management tasks and monitor their implementation
- prioritise, plan and organise themselves and others
- make professional, managerial and organisational decisions based on informed judgements
- think creatively to anticipate and solve problems.

Actions:

- produces and implements clear, evidence-based improvement plans and policies for the development of the school and its facilities

- manages the school's financial and human resources effectively and efficiently to achieve the school's educational goals and priorities
- ensures that the range, quality and use of all available resources is monitored, evaluated and reviewed to improve the quality of education for all pupils and provide value for money.

Example 2: Making use of the skills available

Headteachers in small, rural schools have to take advantage of opportunity and think creatively, making context-specific decisions that enable them to achieve their aims. For example, one headteacher deploys a higher-level teacher assistant (HLTA) to release teachers for planning and preparation (PPA) time. She trusts in her abilities and values the continuity this arrangement provides for the children.

Another has appointed a nursery nurse to teach the reception class. In both cases the headteachers were most concerned that pupils should have access to a "good, enriched curriculum" and made the decision to "make use of the skills available" to them.

This example illustrates the following knowledge requirements, professional qualities and actions needed by the headteacher to achieve the core purpose identified within this standard.

Knows about:

- informed decision making
- performance management.

Is committed to:

- the equitable management of staff and resources
- the sustaining of personal motivation and that of all staff.

Is able to:

- manage the school efficiently and effectively on a day-to-day basis
- make professional, managerial and organisational decisions based on informed judgements
- think creatively to anticipate and solve problems.

Actions:

- manages the school's financial and human resources effectively and efficiently to achieve the school's educational goals and priorities
- recruits, retains and deploys staff appropriately and manages their workload to achieve the vision and goals of the school.

Securing accountability

With values at the heart of their leadership, headteachers have a responsibility to the whole school community. In carrying out this responsibility, headteachers are accountable to a wide range of groups, particularly pupils, parents, carers, governors and the LEA. They are accountable for ensuring that pupils enjoy and benefit from a high quality education, for promoting collective responsibility within the whole school community and for contributing to the education service more widely. Headteachers are legally and contractually accountable to the governing body for the school, its environment and all its work. (National Standards for Headteachers, DfES/0083/2004: 10)

Example 1: Involvement in the NCSL 'Leading Small Primary Schools' Programme

Willingness to engage with the wider educational community has led one headteacher, keenly aware of the need to 'step outside the bubble', to take advantage of the unexpected opportunity to be involved in developing NCSL's 'Leading Small Primary Schools' programme.

Headteachers in four schools worked together to develop their schools' capacity for self-evaluation. Of particular value was the process whereby it was possible to see 'your own school through other people's eyes' as well as to learn from observing in other schools. When such opportunities arise it would be easy to think that other demands have a greater priority. However, engaging with colleagues on such a programme provides time for reflection. This headteacher found that everything he learned valuably contributed to developments within the school where he was a head.

This example illustrates the following knowledge requirements, professional qualities and actions needed by the headteacher to achieve the core purpose identified within this standard.

Knows about:

- public services policy and accountability frameworks, including self-evaluation
- the use of a range of evidence, including performance data, to support, monitor, evaluate and improve aspects of school life, including challenging poor performance.

Is committed to:

- principles and practice of school self-evaluation
- the school working effectively and efficiently towards the academic, spiritual, moral, social, emotional and cultural development of all its pupils
- individual, team and whole school accountability for pupil learning outcomes.

Is able to:

- demonstrate political insight and anticipate trends
- engage the school community in the systematic and rigorous self-evaluation of the work of the school
- collect and use a rich set of data to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school
- combine the outcomes of regular school self-review with external evaluations in order to develop the school.

Actions:

- develops a school ethos that enables everyone to work collaboratively, share knowledge and understanding, celebrate success and accept responsibility for outcomes
- ensures individual staff accountabilities are clearly defined, understood and agreed and are subject to rigorous review and evaluation
- reflects on personal contribution to school achievements and takes account of feedback from others.

Example 2: Introducing a new approach to organising the curriculum

Two headteachers, as we saw earlier, were each pursuing, in different ways, the option of 'block teaching' the curriculum. Arranging for other staff members to visit schools elsewhere in order to see 'block teaching' in practice has been key to the success of introducing new practices into both schools. It has enabled them to review and evaluate the curriculum provision already made for their pupils and to plan changes to meet their needs more effectively in the future.

'Blocked teaching' arrangements are enabling staff members to monitor the curriculum more easily. As a result they are gaining insights into the extent to which children's interests are being pursued. Indeed, they believe that the extended time being spent on a particular curriculum area is helping colleagues to become more sharply focused in their teaching and to have more time to address issues raised by children.

Both schools are involving pupils in the process of review, inviting them to provide feedback on the success of new initiatives in teaching and learning. In one, this process has already led to the introduction of a single learning journal, recording all the children's work in one book. While this means that the work in any single area of the curriculum is interspersed with work from other areas, it also means that the classroom itself is less cluttered and pupils have only one book to manage.

This example illustrates the following knowledge requirements, professional qualities and actions needed by the headteacher to achieve the core purpose identified within this standard.

Knows about:

- stakeholder and community engagement in, and accountability for, the success and celebration of the school's performance.

Is committed to:

- principles and practice of school self-evaluation
- the school working effectively and efficiently towards the academic, spiritual, moral, social, emotional and cultural development of all its pupils
- individual, team and whole school accountability for pupil learning outcomes.

Is able to:

- engage the school community in the systematic and rigorous self-evaluation of the work of the school
- collect and use a rich set of data to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

Actions:

- develops a school ethos that enables everyone to work collaboratively, share knowledge and understanding, celebrate success and accept responsibility for outcomes
- ensures individual staff accountabilities are clearly defined, understood and agreed and are subject to rigorous review and evaluation.

Example 3: Workforce reform

Workforce reform has provided the opportunity for one headteacher to restructure the school in a way that enables her to establish a more collaborative approach to leadership within the school. Two advanced skills teachers have already taken on, between them, the responsibilities formerly attached to the role of deputy headteacher. The appointment of three HLTAs posts is already enhancing the teamwork in each of three year groups.

Two Teaching and Learning Responsibility points are proposed. Those holding them will take responsibility for the emotional and mental well-being of pupils and for life skills and enterprise. This 'flatter' management structure will promote delegation of responsibility to a wider group, enabling staff members to develop and exercise their leadership skills, while also providing more career opportunities for younger teachers, thus addressing issues of retention. Good use is being made of the complementary skills and strengths of different members of staff.

This example illustrates the following knowledge requirements, professional qualities and actions needed by the headteacher to achieve the core purpose identified within this standard.

Knows about:

- stakeholder and community engagement in, and accountability for, the success and celebration of the school's performance.

Is committed to:

- individual, team and whole school accountability for pupil learning outcomes.

Is able to:

- engage the school community in the systematic and rigorous self-evaluation of the work of the school.

Actions:

- develops a school ethos that enables everyone to work collaboratively, share knowledge and understanding, celebrate success and accept responsibility for outcomes
- ensures individual staff accountabilities are clearly defined, understood and agreed and are subject to rigorous review and evaluation.

Strengthening community

Schools exist in a distinctive social context, which has a direct impact on what happens inside the school. School leadership should commit to engaging with the internal and external school community to secure equity and entitlement. Headteachers should collaborate with other schools in order to share expertise and bring positive benefits to their own and other schools. They should work collaboratively at both strategic and operational levels with parents and carers and across multiple agencies for the well-being of all children. Headteachers share responsibility for leadership of the wider educational system and should be aware that school improvement and community development are interdependent. (National Standards for Headteachers, DfES 2004: 11)

Example 1: Local history

The local History Society was applying for a grant to support a local history project. The school was invited to take part in the bidding process. As a result £25,000 was awarded to carry out archaeological excavations within the village. Pupils from the school made regular visits and came to understand the ways in which archaeology can contribute to the story of the past.

This work complemented other means of exploring local history, including the use of written records providing information about families whose members had lived in the village for generations. In particular, a wealth of documentary and oral evidence about families living in the village during 1914–1918 and their involvement in the First World War has resulted from work with current community members.

This project began with the visit by one parent to Belgium to look at First World War sites. This stimulated staff and children to re-examine the Roll Call of Honour displayed at the school. They accessed a variety of websites in their search for information about two brothers who had been killed in the Battle of the Somme and engaged the interest of a local resident who had herself taken an interest in this period of history and its impact on the local community.

Each year now the school holds an assembly around the village war memorial when other members of the community join them to remember and celebrate the lives of those who died.

Many of the children in the school have a personal interest in such projects because they belong to families who have lived in the village for generations or live in houses once occupied by people who appear within written records. They have the opportunity to engage with first-hand evidence within their immediate community.

This example illustrates the following knowledge requirements, professional qualities and actions needed by the headteacher to achieve the core purpose identified within this standard.

Knows about:

- the rich and diverse resources within local communities – both human and physical
- the wider curriculum beyond school and the opportunities it provides for pupils and the school community
- models of school, home, community and business partnerships
- the work of other agencies and opportunities for collaboration.

Is committed to:

- work with other agencies for the well-being of all pupils
- involvement of parents and the community in supporting the learning of children.

Is able to:

- recognise and take account of the richness and diversity of the school's communities
- build and maintain effective relationships with partners and the community, that enhance the education of all pupils.

Actions:

- builds a school culture and curriculum that takes account of the richness and diversity of the school's communities
- ensures learning experiences for pupils are linked into and integrated with the wider community
- ensures a range of community-based learning experiences
- collaborates with other agencies in providing for the academic and cultural well-being of pupils
- seeks opportunities to invite community figures or other organisations into the school to enhance and enrich the school and its value to the wider community.

Example 2: Renovation of the wildlife garden

As part of the school improvement plan, a large-scale renovation of the school's wildlife garden was planned, with the intention of developing the learning potential of the school site. One parent, a garden designer, has prepared the plans. Another parent, an interior designer, has worked with the children to design murals to surround the garden. For two days the curriculum was devoted to artwork to achieve this.

In addition, each child has taken home a patio slab to paint. Local businesses, including a nursery, have pledged plants. The Parents' Association is involved in fund-raising activities. A meeting for parents has been held to describe the project and seek their involvement in working parties. Vegetable gardens for each class will be established as part of the project. Pupils will grow vegetables as part of the curriculum and use them for cooking as well as giving them away as part of the annual harvest celebrations within the local community.

The project falls within the work of the school in health promotion.

All staff members have specific responsibilities in relation to the project. The Geography coordinator, for example, has led discussions with staff and a member of the support staff has volunteered to run a gardening club to ensure that the site is maintained once it has been established.

This example illustrates the following knowledge requirements, professional qualities and actions needed by the headteacher to achieve the core purpose identified within this standard.

Knows about:

- current issues and future trends that impact on the school community
- the rich and diverse resources within local communities – both human and physical
- the wider curriculum beyond school and the opportunities it provides for pupils and the local community
- models of school, home, community and business partnerships
- the work of other agencies and opportunities for collaboration
- strategies that encourage parents and carers to support their children's learning.

Is committed to:

- effective team work within the school and with external partners
- work with other agencies for the well-being of all pupils and their families

- involvement of parents and the community in supporting the learning of children and in defining and realising the school vision.

Is able to:

- recognise and take account of the richness and diversity of the school's communities
- build and maintain effective relationships with parents, carers, partners and the community, that enhance the education of all pupils.

Actions:

- ensures learning experiences for pupils are linked into and integrated with the wider community
- ensures a range of community-based learning experiences
- collaborates with other agencies in providing for the academic, spiritual, moral, social, emotional and cultural well-being of pupils and their families
- seeks opportunities to invite community figures, businesses or other organisations into the school to enhance and enrich the school and its value to the wider community.

Example 3: Joint events

One headteacher is continually on the alert for opportunities to combine school and community events, even when this demands flexibility on the part of the school. Examples are arranging the school sports day on the same Saturday of the year as the village fair. This attracted more people to the fair and at the same time provided the children with a larger audience for their performance. "It gave a delicious highland games type feel to the whole occasion", he said.

The Christmas fair is another combined community event. When the idea was first mooted, staff and parents were concerned that the school would make less money. In fact, the reverse is true.

This example illustrates the following knowledge requirements, professional qualities and actions needed by the headteacher to achieve the core purpose identified within this standard.

Knows about:

- models of school, home, community and business partnerships
- the work of other agencies and opportunities for collaboration.

Is committed to:

- work with other agencies for the well-being of all pupils and their families.

Is able to:

- build and maintain effective relationships with parents, carers, partners and the community, that enhance the education of all pupils.

Actions:

- ensures learning experiences for pupils are linked into and integrated with the wider community
- ensures a range of community-based learning experiences.

References

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