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The Rt Hon DAVID BLUNKETT MP

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Dear Richard

NATIONAL COLLEGE FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Leadership and vision are crucial to raising standards and aspirations across all our schools. The Government is establishing the National College for School Leadership as a major new partner on the national education stage. The College will play a key role in the Government's strategy to transform our schools, drive up standards and ensure that every school is excellent or improving or both. Heads and other school leaders are critical to their school's success in creating a sense of purpose and direction, setting high expectations for pupils and staff, improving teaching and learning and demonstrating commitment to their own and their colleagues' continuing professional development. The College will offer them high quality professional development, the opportunity to network effectively with their peers and time and space for professional reflection, refreshment and inspiration.

I am very pleased to be writing to you today to mark the first meeting of the College Governing Council under your chairmanship. The attachment to this letter, which I am publishing, sets out the general aims of the College and the specific tasks to which I expect the College and the Council to give particular priority. I expect the College to have a real and immediate impact on the ground during the next twelve months. The College will be launched formally later this year and I hope you will be in a position to set out your initial plans at that stage.

This is a challenging agenda - but crucial to the success of our schools and of the pupils and parents they serve. I and my Ministerial colleagues look forward greatly to working closely with the College and I wish you, your members, and Heather and the College staff every success in this major task.

Best wishes

DAVID BLUNKETT



NATIONAL COLLEGE FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The main aims of the College are:

- to provide a single national focus for school leadership development and research;
- to be a driving force for world class leadership in our schools and the wider education service; and
- to be a provider and promoter of excellence; a major resource for schools; a catalyst for innovation; and a focus for national and international debate on leadership issues.

2. I intend to involve the College fully in the development and delivery of Government policy on all relevant aspects of school improvement and will look to the College for expert advice on developing targeted leadership strategies in key national priority areas.

3. The College's main responsibility will be to develop and oversee a coherent national training and development framework for heads, deputies and others in leadership positions in our schools, giving them high quality, practical and professional support at all stages of their careers. I look to the College to develop a clear route map of professional development opportunities for school leaders - some provided directly by the College and some provided in partnership with or by other high quality providers - so that existing or aspiring school leaders can find the provision which best meets their own professional development needs and see clearly how that contributes to their future progression through the new professional structure. Over time, I would expect all institutions which currently offer development activities aimed at school leaders, to work in partnership with the College so that their programmes can be presented as part of a coherent national framework.

4. Responsibility for the three national headship training programmes -

- the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) - for aspiring heads;
- the Headteachers Leadership and Management Programme (HEADLAMP) - for newly appointed heads; and
- the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (LPSH) - for existing heads;

- currently rests with the DfEE. NPQH has recently been significantly reshaped in response to wide-ranging consultation with the profession and recruitment to the new programme has just opened. I intend to transfer responsibility for administering the three national headship training programmes to the College at an appropriate point during its first year of operation.

5. I look to the College to develop proposals for my consideration for training and development events and programmes for school leaders designed to address the major challenges facing schools today. The nature of the leadership role in schools and the job of the headteacher are changing rapidly and even the best headteachers need help and support to cope with those changing demands. I expect the College to focus initially on developing new offerings designed to address the following:

- developing the skills, competence and capacity to deliver change and school improvement of whole school leadership teams;
- supporting heads of schools in challenging circumstances;
- supporting heads of Fresh Start schools and the lowest performing schools;
- supporting heads of schools in EAZs and Ei Care areas;
- working with heads of Beacon Schools and Training Schools to distil particular lessons on successful practice and disseminate those more widely.

I would like the College to work closely with my official to reach agreement on an initial programme of pilot activities to take place over the next twelve months which can be announced at the College launch.

6. I expect the College to develop and use the most effective, accessible and innovative approaches to teaching and learning in its own programmes, including on-line activities using the virtual college. Delivery mechanisms and funding arrangements should be diverse and varied reflecting the various needs of the target audience and the most appropriate medium for delivery. There should be equality of opportunity to access programmes, and all training providers should be high quality, well-qualified and should comply with the Department's Code of Practice for training providers when it is published.

7. I expect the College's work to be informed not only by excellent practice in our schools but also by the best leadership development elsewhere in the public sector and in the private sector and also internationally. I look to the College to build effective partnerships with other high quality training providers and to look for opportunities to work in collaboration with them, for example through the provision of joint programmes.

8. The College will be formally launched at this year's national conference for new headteachers in November. These conferences have proved very popular with new heads in welcoming them to their major new responsibilities. I am clear the conferences should continue as a major annual fixture in the education calendar and would like the College to assume responsibility for the planning and administration of the new heads conference from 2001 onwards.

9. A major role of the College will be to establish and maintain a strong interactive network of all heads and other school leaders in this country through realising the potential of the virtual arm of the College. Here I expect the College to draw on the successful experience of the "Talking Heads" pilot network of new heads which was established last autumn. I expect the virtual college to provide access to best practice world-wide and to help school leaders find practical guidance on how to tackle the real school challenges they face, as well as having opportunities to debate professional issues with their peers and with national and international experts. The virtual college will also play a wider and significant role in helping to build the confidence and competence of all school leaders in using ICT effectively to deliver real improvement in their schools.

10. The College will have a major role to play in successfully attracting and growing the next generation of school leaders. I am confident that the establishment of the College will of itself make the job of school leaders and heads more attractive and fulfilling by offering them the high quality support available to other senior professionals. I look to the College to develop strategies specifically designed to bring more potential leaders into the profession, to encourage more able teachers to aspire to leadership and headship roles and to ensure that the best are fast tracked to senior positions. I would also welcome advice on the development of new career paths into and out of headship. I expect the College to be rigorously committed to ensuring that all teachers have an equal opportunity to secure leadership roles in schools and look to the College to develop innovative ways of tapping into new talent and encouraging those from under-represented groups to take up leadership positions in our schools. I will consider in due course whether to invite the College to assume responsibility for the administration of the Government's national fast track arrangements for the teaching profession. I look to the College to develop proposals for awarding Associate, Fellowship and Companion status to heads and other school leaders as set out in the Government's original prospectus for the College.

11. I expect the College to develop its role as a powerhouse for high quality research on leadership issues directly related to actual practice in schools. I expect the College actively to encourage the involvement of school leaders in research and the development of an evidence-based profession. The College will have a key role in disseminating research findings to school leaders in readily accessible and practical ways, in particular through the virtual college, to ensure that we develop policy and practice which is firmly rooted in evidence of what works. I

look to the College to map out the current state of leadership research and draw up for my agreement its initial priorities for investigation.

12. In all that the College does, I expect the College to work in close partnership with the key stakeholders concerned with leadership in our schools and to look for ways of involving excellent serving practitioners from schools and elsewhere in its debates and in the design and delivery of College activities. In particular I expect the College to establish and maintain a direct and open dialogue with the profession to ensure that its activities remain fresh and relevant to the real school challenges of teaching, learning and leadership. It will be important for the College to recognise the diverse nature of the leadership group in our schools and that the programmes it develops reflect the differing challenges of different contexts: inner city and rural schools; the distinctive position of church schools; mainstream and special schools; and successful schools and schools in crisis. I expect the College to forge a good working relationship with the General Teaching Council, the Teacher Training Agency, BECTa, the QCA and Ofsted.

13. The Government's plans for the College have attracted great enthusiasm and interest internationally and I am pleased I have been able to appoint two Council members from overseas who will be able to bring their wider experience and insight to bear directly on the College's work. I believe the College has the potential to set the pace for future rethinking worldwide on leadership development and I look to the College to build effective strategic alliances with international partners and to seek opportunities to learn from and involve excellent practitioners from other countries in its activities. I also expect the College to showcase the outstanding achievements of our best school leaders to this wider audience.

14. The terms and conditions which the Department attaches to the funding of the College will be set out in a Financial Memorandum. The College will receive grant-in-aid from the Department to support its activities and programmes. An annual grant letter with the details and any specific conditions will be issued shortly. Overall I expect the College to ensure that the highest standards of probity and value for money are adhered to in pursuit of its objectives. Each year the College will also be expected to submit a Corporate Plan setting out its strategic objectives and its plan for achieving them. Officials will be in touch shortly about the timing of this document.

15. In carrying out its functions and meeting its objectives, I expect the College to be committed to applying the provision of the Disability Discrimination Act to all its activities to ensure that school leaders with disabilities are able to take full advantage of all the opportunities offered by the College; and acting in a way which does not infringe the human rights and freedoms set out in the European Convention on Human Rights, and from 2 October 2000 enforceable under the Human Rights Act 1998.