

Steve Munby's speech to the New Heads Conference 2008

Take yourselves forward quite a few years from now. Many of you may be walking the hills, or sitting in the garden – reading a book, or maybe you are writing a book, or sailing a boat or travelling the world or playing with your grandchildren. You have retired. You are no longer a headteacher.

Yet at that very same moment –even though you are retired - as a result of your work children's lives are still being improved and staff and children are being inspired and encouraged. Aspirations are being raised and dreams are being realised. As a former headteacher, you are still making a difference to the lives of children and young people, across the country and in many different contexts. Yet you are not in school. You are in your garden, you are walking in the countryside, you are in the south of France. But you are still making a difference. Because you have touched the lives of many who will never be the same again because of your leadership.

This is a strange scenario to put to a group of new headteachers at the start of their careers – retirement is far away - but it is a scenario you can, even now, be shaping.

Will your retirement be an end to your leadership? Or will your legacy live on through a new generation of school leaders - inspired and developed by your leadership - and who go on to make a difference in many schools and many contexts long after your have gone?

I'd like to ask you to consider that during the course of my speech this morning. I will come back to this at the end.

In a recent survey 97% of headteachers said they believed they have the best and most worthwhile job in the world. And that was clearly coming through as a powerful message in the video we have just seen.

Headship is tough, but it is exciting and it is rewarding in a way that is unlike any other role.

We now have the best group of school leaders that we have ever had in this country. And, you are already part of a success story of improvement in school leadership. What you have achieved as deputies and as assistant heads and, indeed, as teachers has helped to make our schools better led than they have ever been and our school leaders the envy of many other countries in terms of their quality and talent.

And now you have all achieved the pinnacle of your profession – you are in charge of the whole organisation. You are the boss.

Each year I have the privilege of visiting many schools up and down the country. And I get to see some really excellent examples of leadership. So this morning I would like to share with you some key aspects of good leadership and how leaders are managing the high expectations placed upon them, and most importantly, making a difference to the lives of children and young people in our schools every day. And I'd also like to share with you today some of my own experiences as a leader – how I've developed, how I've changed and what I've learnt from my time leading organisations.

So I'd like to begin today with this...

SLIDE 2

1. Believe in your pupils and your staff

If you believe in your staff and in the potential of your children – they are more likely to have belief in themselves. You can't fool people for long. If you don't believe in them – if you are in fact barely tolerating them; if you secretly long to be in another school with a different set of children or

in a different catchment area or with a different staff then they will soon suss you out.

The excellent leaders I have visited during the past year believe passionately in the children in their school. They give their children the confidence to push themselves further than they ever thought they could go. They work to raise aspirations, despite what are sometimes pretty poor odds.

I have seen a primary school in Rochdale and a secondary school in London operating in really tough circumstances, high deprivation, high unemployment, low family aspirations. And yet the enthusiasm for learning inside their schools was palpable.

The children demonstrated respect and they demonstrated high expectations and a strong belief in themselves – even those I met from some of the hardest, toughest backgrounds and circumstances – absolutely terrific.

But its not just about valuing the pupils, it's about valuing the staff too. It's not either or –it's both.

When I follow good heads around their school I see them speaking with staff as well as with children. What they demonstrate is a genuine faith in their staff as well as in their children. And they make sure they actively model it - they make sure they 'walk the school', connecting in the right way, setting the tone:

SLIDE 3

"Relationship building is always the foundation of effective leadership....good leaders are competent, but they are also intentionally connected to the people they lead....take time to walk slowly through the halls."

The 360 degree leader.

On a course recently I received this advice: "Small talk matters. Never eat lunch alone". Frankly, when you are a head of a school, finding time to eat lunch **at all** is a challenge but the point still has resonance. Invest in those relationships.

As a leader, I was challenged strongly a few years ago when I read Goleman's work on 6 leadership styles:

SLIDE 4

Coercive –do what I tell you

Authoritative- come with me

Affiliative. Harmony. People come first.

Democratic. Consensus through participation. What do you think?

Pacesetting. Setting high standards for performance. Do as I do, now.

Coaching. Developing people for the future. How about if you..?

The two styles that do not prove as effective are coercive and pacesetter. I am rarely accused of being coercive but I have been known to adopt a pacesetter style in the past – too challenging and too focused on delivery. Let's see what Goleman says about the pacesetter style:

SLIDE 5

“The leader sets extremely high performance standards and exemplifies them himself. He is obsessive about doing things better and faster, and he asks the same of everyone around him. He quickly pinpoints poor performers and demands more from them. If they don't rise to the occasion, he replaces them with people who can. You would think such an approach would improve results, but it doesn't. In fact, the pacesetting style destroys climate. Many employees feel overwhelmed by the pacesetter's demands for excellence, and their morale drops – guidelines for working may be clear in

the leader's head, but she does not state them clearly: she expects people to know what to do."

Goleman, D., Leadership that Gets Results, 2000

I felt really challenged by that. And I have come to realise the need to take time to ensure that people are coming with me rather than always just focussing on delivery.

As leaders we mustn't compromise or lower our standards to accommodate complacency but people need to **want** us as their leader and want to be led by us. Without followership, we won't have leadership.

Great leaders connect with their staff and show an understanding of the challenges that their staff face. They know that everyone on their team has their own personal challenges at home and at work and that few people live easy uncomplicated lives.

SLIDE 6

"Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle"

Plato

I was in another tough secondary school in Thurrock last week and the inspirational head told me that on the one hand a number of staff had left in the first two years of her leadership because she had had to have difficult conversations with them about their performance. Now we must not avoid those conversations and I will be talking later about this very issue. But she also told me that her leadership team was the best in the region. Isn't it funny that loads of heads tell me that their leadership team is the best in the region or even the country. Provided you think you have a great leadership team then I think that's good leadership. You are demonstrating and articulating your belief in them. But some heads never praise their team – even though they think it. Do you say great things to your team – do they know how much you value them?

By the way I want to say for the record that I believe that the NCSL leadership team is the best in the country.

And it's not just about valuing the staff and the pupils, it's about the community too.

We have just published some excellent research with the NUT on great leadership in schools with high percentages of white working class

children. The findings were very powerful. The research told us that connecting with the community was absolutely key to success:

SLIDE 7

“Although the leaders of these successful schools differed in style and approach they showed a profound respect for the people and areas they were working with and had often chosen to work in these kinds of communities..... They were sensitive to the emotional state of their pupils and colleagues and, as a result, were deeply admired across the staff and student body”

Respect for your children, your staff and your community.

The Rule of Reciprocity tends to work. As those school leaders know who have dramatically improved the toilets in the school and made them more humane places and have then found that the pupils take care of things and don't trash them, If you show them respect –pupils, staff, the community - they will tend to show you and the school respect. The Rule of Reciprocity.

Just as an aside, developing an effective relationship with the governing body in general and with the chair of governors in particular is absolutely

essential for new heads. In my experience, many new heads do not prioritise that crucial relationship as much as they ought to do. I suppose what I am saying is: “believe in your chair of governors too”!

SLIDE 8

2. Be an outward-facing leader

Successful leaders recognise that not all of the answers, solutions, or the opportunities can be found inside the school gates.

As a new generation of heads, the approach you will need to have will be rather different from the traditional role of headteacher.

SLIDE 9

“...school leaders now have to be much more outward looking than they used to be, and this has clear implications around the need for a range of ‘softer’ inter-personal skills around networking and communications.”

PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007

School leaders cannot ignore the external issues outside in the community that impact on a child’s life chances and those people and organisations that are also working with the same children who attend your school. They know that working effectively with other agencies and with the local

community can help to ensure the well-being and safety of young people and to transform the lives of children in their school.

As heads you also cannot ignore the school down the road which has terrific drama expertise, but could be getting more A –C grades in Maths or Science if only it benefited from the advice or support of your best middle leaders. You cannot ignore the great nurture programme that the school next door provides or the exciting curriculum that the school in the next town has developed. If you have a music specialist in your school and the school nearby has an expert business manager – there may well be a potential win-win here if you can share staffing.

I am increasingly convinced that 23,500 individual schools doing their own thing is not in the best interests of the children and young people in our country, especially the most vulnerable children. An arrangement where clusters of schools and other agencies in a local area take collective responsibility for ensuring the delivery of children's services, commissioned by the local authority, has much to commend it.

And in the current economic climate it is possible that resources in the future may become scarcer. If they do, collaboration, partnerships, federations, sharing staff, purchasing products to scale across a group of

schools and having access to high quality school business management support will be even more important. We need to put the children first rather than our own or our governors' need to control everything ourselves. It is time to remodel school leadership for the 21st century.

NCSL is currently piloting an approach where schools are, between them, sharing an Advanced School Business Manager to provide leadership on finance, HR, site management and health and safety. Many of these schools would find access to such resources unviable if they were working alone. We are testing this approach through demonstration projects across the country and it is proving to be very effective, bringing in greater financial efficiencies and creating time for more heads to focus more on the core business of the school. Our estimate is that if schools, especially small schools, can get access to high quality business management it can save up to 30% of a headteacher's time.

On the same theme of outward-facing leadership, I also know that there are heads of independent schools here today and I do believe it is time to strengthen the relationships between the state sector and the independent sector, to break down traditional boundaries and to work more effectively together in the interests of the children and young people in this country. We have much that we can learn from each other.

And I know that there is much we can learn from the leadership of children's centres, of special schools and of pupil referral units as far as effective multi-agency and outward-facing leadership is concerned.

There are four common reasons why organisations or schools struggle to collaborate with others

SLIDE 10

- i) **Done to us rather than with us.** No ownership. Collaboration wasn't our idea. We feel done to by others who are leading this work. We are seen as the junior or weaker partner.
- ii) **Hoarding.** We know better, we are successful, we have the resource so why should we share.
- iii) **Don't know where to look.** Cannot find appropriate help. Give up after one or two unsuccessful attempts. Too busy.
- iv) **Personal Chemistry.** I defy anyone to work with that so and so. We just don't get on and I don't trust them. Poor relationships

You may recognise some of these – and they can be very real. You may be dealing with resistance to collaboration or partnerships from governors or from communities or from some staff.

Some schools will also feel that an emphasis on competition for school places and individual school accountability are barriers to collaboration.

I understand that, but I do want to add how pleased I am that the government has abolished KS3 tests and how glad I am that they want to move towards a more rounded accountability system, linked to the notion of a balanced score card. Some notion of collective accountability for a group of schools would also be a great move forward.

One of the most interesting things about schools working with other schools is that we now have substantial evidence that schools working with other schools **is mutually** beneficial.

Our National Leaders of Education and Local Leaders of Education - good and outstanding leaders - are supporting struggling schools in different parts of the country. These leaders are not working on their own as “hero headteachers”, instead, they are using the expertise of their staff to share the best practice and resources they have developed in their schools. As a result, not only are they helping to deliver well above average improvements in the schools they are supporting, they are experiencing above average improvements in their own schools too. By supporting

others, we improve ourselves. By reaching out we bring back learning to our own organisation. By developing others we provide development opportunities for our own staff.

Today we are also launching a book which tells the story of our National Leaders of Education and the power of schools working together. 50,000 pupils in struggling schools have benefited from the NLEs scheme since it was launched just over two years ago. These headteachers, along with their school teams, could be the best chance the country has of ensuring that **every** school is a good school. I genuinely believe this is possible because I believe in the community of school leaders. The profession leading itself.

But outward-facing leadership, leading alongside other heads and other leaders of organisations and agencies - lateral leadership - does require a slightly different skill set from the traditional Headteacher role. It requires negotiation skills in a non-hierarchical setting, the ability to learn from others and the ability to build alliances around a common purpose.

I'm convinced that twenty first century school leadership is about having a spirit of generosity, openness and collaboration and a deep moral purpose

that believes that every child has a right to be a powerful learner
whichever school they happen to attend.

SLIDE 11

3. Build effective teams

I believe that leading a school is more complex and more challenging than
it has ever been.

What I don't think we can expect under any government is for the pace of
change to slow down. In an increasingly globalised world that is just not
realistic. As the PWC report on school leadership stated:

SLIDE 12

*“longing for that mythical period of calm and stability is to misunderstand
the nature of the world and of leadership”*

We have to get better at managing that change and in doing so I think we
have to challenge our fundamental concept of the head teacher as the
person who is accountable for everything.

As a new head, the relationship with your deputy or deputies will be crucial.

The role of Deputy head is a critical one and an honourable one. Good head teachers know that they owe their success and indeed, their ability to lead their schools' effectively to their deputy heads.

Deputies are very often the communicators & problem solvers– they ensure heads stay in tune with their schools and school community.

Deputies are integral to making sure that heads know their contexts, make the right decisions and gain the confidence of others in what they do.

This was reflected in a recent visit I made to a Secondary School in Southampton. A senior person in the school said to me that the head was the brains of the school and the deputy was the heart of the school. All schools need hearts as well as brains and no single person – whether the head or the deputy - can always be both.

I always think that the relationship between a head and deputy is a bit like a finger and thumb. On their own they can do some things but as a pair they can do great things.

You will know from your time as middle and senior leaders that the best head teachers build strong, supportive and effective teams.

The most exciting and refreshing schools I have visited this year haven't appeared to revolve around the head but seem to have leaders everywhere. In a secondary school in Plymouth and in a primary school in Edmonton there were leaders throughout the school – the school was bursting at the seams with them.

Colleagues our own **leadership literature and research** encourages participation and distributed leadership but our **culture** still continues to glorify the charismatic leader who everyone admires. And many of those around the school - staff, parents, governors, local authorities, NCSL, DCSF, still seem to insist on having dealings with the head teacher. Sometimes we are our own worst enemies. No one person could possibly stay on top of everything but the fear of appearing incompetent makes many of us try to cling on to the model and exhaust ourselves in the process. The argument goes something like this – and it is an easy trap to fall into - I am accountable for everything in the organisation and if anything goes wrong it will be my responsibility. Therefore I cannot afford to let anything slip therefore I must attempt to make all the decisions. Moreover

my staff already work too hard and have enough on their plates –it will be quicker if I take responsibility myself.

SLIDE 13

As Pfeffer and Sutton say:

“The mindset...entails being willing to let go and let other people perform, develop, learn and make mistakes. It is hard to build a system where others can succeed if the leader believes he or she needs to make every important decision, and knows better than anyone else what to do and how to do it. It is in finding the balance between guidance and listening, between directing and learning, that those in leadership roles can make their most useful contributions to organisation performance” Pfeffer and Sutton

Distributing responsibility and accountability is tough, – for example, your deputy may not do the task as well as you might do it. But he or she can learn and you can coach them. The other possibility of course can be equally hard for some leaders- your deputy may do it **better** than you can and people may wonder why they need you as head when they have such an excellent deputy!

In small schools trying to distribute leadership is particularly challenging but I do believe that however small the team happens to be, they still need to share in the leadership.

The best leaders are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and don't try to be perfect at everything – they understand what they are good at and what they are not good at. They look for people who will compensate for their weaknesses so that they can play to their strengths, they look to create a perfect and complete **team** rather than to be the perfect and complete individual leader. They admit their weaknesses and are honest about who they are.

Let me be even more blunt and honest:

My name is Steve Munby and I am an imperfect leader and that's OK because at NCSL we have a great team.

When John F Kennedy became president he recognised that there was a need for better leadership in the Pentagon. For years the department had seen leaders come and go. In the lead up to his presidency, he set about preparing his team, and was impressed by the financial management abilities of a man called Robert McNamara. McNamara had achieved great

success in turning the Ford motor company around after world war II. As soon as he became president, JFK wasted no time in offering McNamara the Pentagon job. McNamara was intrigued by the offer and delighted that the President had made it, but was minded to decline telling JFK – “I don’t know anything about government”. Kennedy however, knew McNamara’s skills were crucial for an effective administration and replied with great honesty “I don’t know how to be President yet either, let’s learn together.”

What that shows is that any leader – even the president of the United States – can admit their own limits and focus on building a great team.

Today almost every school has a leadership team, what we need to consider is whether the one you are leading is a high performing team. One of the key skills for heads is recruiting and developing effective teams.

SLIDE 14

4. Be a learner and a sustainable leader

Becoming the boss can really go to your head, especially if you start to experience some success. You can start to believe in yourself a little too much. To be frank, a room full of head teachers is not normally short of egos. As a leader, people can begin to tell you not the truth but what they think you want to hear. In fact some leaders begin to preside over a

culture where people only point out the positives and what is going well and ignore the issues.

SLIDE 15

As Khurana, the Harvard professor said: *“If you hear how great you are, you begin to believe it- you start drinking your own bathwater.”*

We will soon stop being effective as leaders if we stop challenging ourselves and others stop challenging us too. Surround yourself with caring and genuine critics – people who care enough to be honest with you and help you to become a better leader.

So be a learner and ask for help. I worry about those heads who think they know it all or who think that asking for help is some form of weakness.

I have four mentors. I value the support of each one of them considerably, even nearly four years into the role. I cannot tell you how much I benefit from their advice and support.

As you probably know at NCSL we have already reviewed and improved NPQH. We are now reviewing much of our other provision and we will

soon be making recommendations to the Secretary of State on the future of school leadership development in England. New heads have told us that they want “on-the-job” learning and support. Our proposals will therefore recommend providing more support for new heads from experienced heads – people who will be there at your behest not to monitor you or to set targets but to provide advice and support on the issues that matter to you.

Heads who are good at learning tend also to be good at networking. Networks help you to be a learner and they also increase your ability to influence what happens. At today’s event you will have an opportunity to join NCSL’s leadership network. A network of over 15,000 people and growing. It is one opportunity to share and learn from other leaders and build supportive networks. Don’t think your job is too challenging for you to find the time to network. You network **because** you have a challenging job.

We know that in your first year or two of headship it is particularly relentless and it is hard to get any space and time to step back. But we also know that good leaders tend to build in time for reflection and development. As Heifetz and Linsky say, good leaders spend time on the balcony as well as on the dance floor.

We all need time to reflect and develop and in July I was a participant myself on an intense leadership development programme for chief executives and managing directors of organisations. It was like being 11 years old again and starting big school. Would I make any friends? Would I know the answers to the questions in class? Would I be bullied?

And I learnt much about who I was as a leader and how I could improve as a leader. I had time to put things into perspective. Interestingly we were all asked to spend time reflecting on our health and well-being and the need to stay fit and healthy. Since then I've been using a pedometer and aiming to do 10,000 steps each day. My colleagues are now, three months on, becoming used to sitting in meetings whilst I do walking laps of the office.

Frankly head teachers who don't look after themselves set a poor example. Those who overwork and can get overly tired set an example which can spread to other members of staff....not only will you be an unsustainable leader, you will soon have an unsustainable organisation

SLIDE 16

"See that man over there, see that woman over there... she never goes to bed before two and she's up before seven. How impressive is that"

Hearing such talk, you want to prove that you can take it....You admit considerable pressure is on you but ...it's exciting, it's demanding, it's necessary if you and the team are to succeed. If you look as if you are going to buckle, you are weak and should never be invited into the kitchen.

The trouble with all this is that you start off doing the job, and the job ends up doing you. Your private life, if you ever had one, goes to pieces. Your interior, your other life, atrophies. You can't relax....You can't possibly read a book, and if you go to the theatre to see the latest Stoppard you are asleep well before the interval..

You have lost your creative hinterland, and you didn't even realise it had gone."

The Learning Game

You are talented people, you have the potential to become great school leaders....but do not lose your creative hinterland or create an environment where your leaders or teachers do. Everyone has their own personal definition of work-life balance. What would be very balanced for one person might be very unbalanced for another. Only **you** know what works for you. But when you retire and look back over both your work life

and your personal life during your career, it helps greatly if you can feel good about both –not just one of them.

SLIDE 17

5. Have a deep understanding of your context.

Why is it that some heads are great in one school but prove to be unsuccessful in another? Often because they have not thought themselves carefully enough into their new context. They have assumed that what works in one school will work in another.

As I have visited school leaders around the country they have spoken passionately to me about the importance of understanding the context in which they found themselves and how rather than going in with all guns blazing, they have thought carefully about the context before assuming that what worked elsewhere would work here.

A good leader tunes into the context.

SLIDE 18

“.. we have been witness to countless uncomfortable examples of executives who feel that the art of leadership is to give unfettered expression to their true selves in bold, take it or leave it fashion. They typically find that others choose to leave it.

Leadership is not achieved by riding into town – cowboy fashion - and shooting it up. Skilful leaders, to continue the analogy, need to get a sense of the town and to conform enough so that they are seen to be acting in the best interests of the townspeople, so they can lead change without being shot early in the proceedings.”

“Why should anyone be led by you” Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones

You may already have found that going on and on about what you did in your last school does not go down well in your new school and with your new colleagues. The same may be true of strategies and techniques that worked elsewhere. If you have techniques that worked in your previous school they may be great but beware of context. It is not always a like for like exchange. Even very good strategies tend to need sensitive introduction and careful adaptation. As Michael Fullan says, strategies and techniques that travel well are laced with nuance.

SLIDE 19

6. Be courageous and confront the brutal facts

My wife and I bought a house 5 years ago and we immediately made a list of all the things that needed to be improved. We set about doing it all and

in the first year we got about three quarters of the way down the list. After that we just stopped. Not because we ran out of money –though that was relevant – but also because we stopped noticing that it needed to change. We just got used to things the way they were. The effective leaders maintain the high expectations even after the first 6 months or year or two years. They carry on challenging and carry on wanting the best. They understand the culture but they don't go native. Many of the school leaders I have visited this year have consistently for many years absolutely driven a culture of excellence, even in one case in Redbridge, when the head had been in the same school for 22 years!

The second law of thermodynamics says: “when you put a hot property next to a cold property they soon become a uniform heat” The effective leader remains a “hot property” and carries on challenging.

Great leaders are honest and realistic about what the organisation's strengths and weaknesses are. They use the data. They are good at developing and using monitoring systems and they tend to be very good at holding people to account. They compare their school with the best performing schools in similar circumstances and ask themselves why aren't we doing that? How can we get to be as good as that? They look hard at

variation **within** their school and ask the same question. They know that if every child was taught by the best teacher in the school the learning in the school would be transformed so they set about ensuring that everyone learns from best practice within the same school. They also confront the hard issues in their own school.

Most of the leaders I have visited in their schools this year have had to do very hard things. They have had to hold very difficult conversations with staff. Good leaders show kindness and sensitivity but they will confront the tough issues head on if they need to. They avoid “slow nos”- if they mean no, they say no and they make it clear that it is unacceptable.

The hard issues don't go away if you ignore them. The poor performer, the person who is always late, the person who behaves badly towards somebody else, the person who doesn't prepare lessons properly, the person who takes too many days off work.

I have two rules on this:

1. Never react to bad situations hastily, especially if you are cross. Always wait at least 24 hours.

2. Don't put them off because early intervention is usually the best strategy.

When giving challenging or negative feedback, make it very soon after the incident. If you trust the person, ask them to come up with a solution to the negative feedback. If you don't trust the person and have good reason not to trust the person then tell them the response that you expect and check that it happens.

Do your staff know that you mean business and does everyone have confidence that you won't give up half-way through. Are you up for managing the turbulence that always comes with change or do you reverse the decision when some staff are finding the change difficult?

There is an ancient Chinese proverb that says:

SLIDE 20

If you are going to stand then stand, if you are going to sit then sit but don't wobble"

As leaders, once we have thought carefully and made our decision, we need to see through some of the tough implications of that decision rather than changing our mind again when there are complaints from some staff.

One of the biggest weaknesses in otherwise good leaders is that they don't do the hard things, they won't confront colleagues or take strong action even if it is needed.

If I may say so, this is especially true of heads in their first headship. I don't know any head in their first headship who regrets confronting difficult issues early on. I know hundreds of heads who wish they had confronted issues earlier and more directly than they did – and if they have a second headship they nearly always confront issues earlier.

Now I know that demonstrating belief and courage won't always be easy, there will be tough days when it will be hard....when you as a leader feel you are up against it and can't see an easy way out... you will have what some might call the dark night of the soul.

When I went to Knowsley near Merseyside as Director of Education we had the second worst GCSE results in the country. After a year of my leadership we had the worst GCSE results in the country. I had a bad time. There were calls for my resignation in the local press. I went live on Radio Merseyside and the broadcaster said to me "Why don't you give up, it's hopeless". It was a dark night of the soul. Many of you as leaders will

experience moments like that in your leadership. When you have done what you think is right but it hasn't yet worked and you are facing fierce criticism and perhaps self-doubt too, as I was.

I called all the heads together and I told them that in 3 years time people would be coming from all over the country to find out how we have been so successful. I was pretty confident that we could do it and as it happened that proved to be the case. But most of all, people needed to experience optimistic leadership. They needed those in a leadership position to demonstrate confidence that it would be achieved, and that it can be done and that we will be successful.

If we do not have inspired, optimistic leaders how can you hope to have inspired, optimistic teachers and students?

I visited a school in North Tyneside a while ago where the head was an absolute inspiration. The job that she had inherited was almost undoable. The building she inherited was more like a toilet than a school. The quality of the teaching was very poor, aspirations were low. It was about as bad as a school can be. Through absolute sheer resilience, determination and optimism that school has now become an outstanding

school. It was her indomitable spirit, her passionate leadership, her ability to bounce back after every bad day that made the difference.

So let's be clear, good leadership is not about never having a bad day – we are human and we all have bad days – it is about when you have a bad day, getting up again and starting all over - Because that's what leaders do!

SLIDE 21

7. Grow leaders

We have a generation of school leaders retiring. You are probably stepping into the place of one.

The best leaders don't just distribute leadership and empower others, they develop and coach them too.

Being a teacher is about helping students to learn. Being a headteacher is about helping students and adults to learn.

SLIDE 22

“Talent isn’t fixed – unless you believe it is.....talent depends on how a person is managed or led” (Pfeffer and Sutton 2007)

Our research into head’s Life Histories has been very enlightening. We surveyed 500 headteachers and interviewed many of them. They say again and again that one of the biggest factors influencing them in their career was their exposure to role models –either good ones that inspired them to become heads or bad ones that made them determined to become leaders so that they could show that leadership didn’t have to look like that.

In many, many schools that I have visited this year I have seen leaders who are doing fantastic work in growing future leaders. They regard it as one of their core responsibilities to develop others and they take a sense of pride in the number of people in their school who have been promoted internally to senior leadership or who have gone on to be leaders in other schools.

Sometimes I hear heads say that it is a waste of time developing leaders. Why should the school invest in them? They will only go on to leave and work in another school. My response is what kind of school do you wish to lead? One that traps people, that de-motivates people through lack of

opportunity to develop? Or do you want a culture where people grow as leaders and as professionals?

The irony is that many schools that focus on developing their leaders do tend to hold on to them, because these people are given opportunities and challenge , and these schools also tend to be better at recruiting talent too.

This was reflected in our recent survey of NQTs – 85% said that they regarded leadership development opportunities as a key factor in their choice of school.

But you have a duty as leaders to develop good leadership, not just for your own school but for the wider system. I like this quote:

SLIDE 23

“Growing leaders is like growing fruit trees. Other owners may one day have the benefit of your trees, but maybe you will also benefit from other unknown owners of orchards. The best organisations take pride in the fact that they grow more leaders than they need; they are net exporters of leaders.”

John Adair

Which brings me back to what I asked you at the beginning of the speech - I asked about legacy and how your leadership can continue to make a real difference once you have left.

We are all in leadership roles because someone believed in us and encouraged us to be leaders. That is certainly true of me. What we need are “legacy heads” - heads that spot potential for headship in others – who will ensure that the succession problem isn’t cyclical. We need a system that is sustainable and that – to use a topical analogy - will end boom and bust as far as talent management is concerned.

Whenever someone leaves a role in order to go into a different role, they are usually leaving something they are very good at in order to do something that they don’t know if they are going to be good at. For that you need confidence. That is why the good leaders build confidence in others to enable them to step up to leadership.

When you are retired and you are sitting in your garden and looking back over your professional life your legacy can be to have developed other leaders - leaders who have gone on to transform the lives of many, many children and young people in other schools and other communities and who regard you as their inspiration and their coach and their role model.

Which leads me on to my final point today,

SLIDE 24

Moral Purpose

In my experience the most successful leaders have moral purpose at the very core of their being. This is true for us too at the National College for School Leadership.

The power of a moral endeavour cannot be underestimated and I am certain that each one of us in the room today is united by a common desire to achieve the very best for children and young people.

At NCSL our core priority to improve the lives of children and young people will remain, it is non-negotiable and is at the very heart of what we do.

We are here to serve – full stop and end of story.

For those entrusted to lead in our schools moral purpose is and should remain the driver of success. As heads you will need to encourage it as much as you can...let it be at the centre of every decision and action you make. When things are tough, trust your instincts, your values and your

moral purpose. Make sure that through the inevitable distractions, the pressures and the day to day challenges, it is always your focus to help every child and young person achieve their full potential. That is the fuel of success, and the defeater of alibis

As heads you are part of a great profession. There have been outstanding heads in the past. Now they have passed the torch to you. I am asking you to keep the torch burning; and to become the truly great school leader that you can be. It's a torch worth bearing.