

National New Heads Conference 2008

Highlights from Steve Munby's speech – video transcript

Now you've achieved the pinnacle. You're in charge of your own organisation. You are the boss. If you believe in your staff and in the potential of your children, they are more likely to have belief in themselves. You know that working effectively with other agencies and with the local community, can help to ensure the wellbeing and security of young people and help to transform the lives of the children in your school.

Now NCSL is currently piloting an approach where schools are between them sharing an advanced school business manager and we're testing this approach through demonstration projects across the country and it's proving to be very effective. It's bringing in greater financial efficiencies. It's creating time for more heads to focus on the core business of the school. And I'm convinced that 21st century school leadership is about having a spirit of generosity, openness and collaboration, and a deep moral purpose that believes that every child has the right to be a powerful learner whichever school they happen to go to.

In small schools trying to distribute leadership is particularly challenging, but I do believe however small the team happens to be, they still need to share the leadership. They still need to share the leadership. Now the best leaders are aware of their strengths and of their weaknesses. They understand what they're good at and what they're not good at. And they look for people who will compensate for their weaknesses so that they can play to their strengths. We'll soon stop being effective as leaders if we stop challenging ourselves and if others stop challenging us too. So surround yourself with caring and genuine critics. People who are enough to be honest with you and help you to become a better leader.

Now when I talk to headteachers and I ask them what they've done in the past year, most of them tell me they've had to do some very hard things. They've had to hold a very difficult conversation with at least one member

of staff. Now good leaders show kindness and sensitivity as I said earlier, but they do confront the tough issues head on if they need to. And sometimes though, I've heard it said at conferences, it's a waste of time spending money from the school budget on developing leaders cos they go off to be a headteacher or a leader somewhere else. My response is what kind of school do you wish to lead? Do you want one that traps people? That demotivates people through lack of opportunity? Or do you want a culture where people grow as leaders and as professionals? In my experience the most successful leaders have moral purpose at the very core of their being. As heads you'll need to encourage it as much as you can. Let it be at the centre of every decision you make.

Colleagues you are part of a great profession. There have been outstanding headteachers before you, and now they've passed the torch on to you. And I'm asking you to keep the torch burning and to become the great school leader that you can be.