

## Inspired for headship

**School leaders were invited to describe their experiences and celebrate the inspiration they have taken from fellow professionals in a discussion opened by Professor Tim Brighouse, a lifelong educationalist and most recently London Schools Commissioner.**

About to embark on NPQH, one school leader, admitted to not knowing how it felt to be a head but said she knew a lot about how a good headteacher can make others feel.

"Having a clear vision, understanding and compassion, noticing, listening to and sharing with others, *encouraging, pushing, supporting and appreciating teams* are all qualities in a headteacher that help individual members of staff feel valued," she said.

Lorraine Mitchell from a middle school in Suffolk described working as a deputy to a much-admired head.

"The thing that truly set him apart from all others was his ability to recognise the inner strength and ability that we all had within us and make us feel as though we could have a go at anything. And at the centre of everything, was the learning for the children. Everyone within that school felt important and valued."

Ciaran Clerkin, formerly a primary headteacher, agreed, saying that a genuine involvement with students' learning was the secret to being a leader who would be remembered "well beyond the next Ofsted".

He added: "Personal experience clearly indicates that in order to raise standards, headteachers benefit greatly from spending planned classroom time alongside children and staff promoting and celebrating at least one aspect of the curriculum which they especially enjoy themselves. This could be poetry or creative writing or art or music."

A great headteacher was someone who trusts, inspires and motivates others with *a passion and enthusiasm for life as well as learning*, said Nicola Wilkinson, an acting headteacher at a Lincolnshire primary. "It's someone who creates a warm, friendly environment where everyone cares about everyone else and wakes up in the morning feeling excited that it is a school day."



Another school leader felt that a good leader "should care and show they care".

"My first headteacher noticed if you weren't around in the staffroom, if you looked stressed or if you did something well," she said. "Then he commented or happened to walk into your room – just touched base. I'm lucky I now have a headteacher with similar traits."

One contributor described how an excellent headteacher he knew captivated the whole school with inspirational assemblies, staff meetings and briefings.

"Something about his conviction was truly unique. He was a man of faith and he was humane. He was the first headteacher that I worked with that broke the mould of the manager/administrator I had seen previously. He was *tireless and driven by his love for the school.*"

For Michele Knight, a primary headteacher in Surrey, a great headteacher was someone who ensured everyone was able to do their jobs and reach their full potential.

"They should feel a sense of making a difference to children and have the 'guts' to simply say NO to yet more outside pressure, allowing staff the freedom and time to think creatively."

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