

Shropshire Children and Young People's Services Succession Planning Strategy (Schools)

Context

As at September 2007 there are 57 primary headteachers (40% of all primary headteachers) in post aged between 50 and 60. Of these 22 are aged between 55 and 60 and 35 between 50 and 54. These figures confirm the need both for short and longer term action to support recruitment and retention to the primary phase. There is a parallel need in the secondary phase where it is anticipated that between September 2007 and September 2009 there will be a minimum of 7 headteacher vacancies (from 22 secondary schools).

Succession planning is embedded within the local authority's overall approach to the training and development of all staff in schools.

Aims of the Strategy

- To secure the ongoing professional development of existing headteachers who, due to restructuring may need to apply for alternative posts within (or outside) the local authority.
- To develop future leaders in the short and longer term, identifying potential and providing relevant leadership training based on needs analysis.
- To sustain the current high quality of leadership across Shropshire schools.
- To promote school leadership, including small school headship, as a realistic, sustainable and satisfying career choice.
- To maintain a balance of leaders who reflect the diversity of the school workforce.

Success Criteria

- Increase in number of current NPQH graduates employed in Shropshire schools applying for local headships.
- Increase in number of teachers engaged in leadership development, prepared for and focused on applying for senior posts within Shropshire schools.
- Maintaining and improving high quality leadership in Shropshire schools, evidenced in continuing high levels of achievement across all key stages.
- Existing headteachers motivated to remain in the role either in current or new post.
- Stronger shortlists of suitable high quality candidates for headteacher vacancies.
- Reduction in re-advertised headteacher vacancies.
- Effective use of a relevant range of data to establish and underpin development planning for succession.

Strategy

The strategy has three strands:

- recruitment
- retention
- research.

Recruitment

1. Continue to provide Human Resource Team and Education Advisory Service support to schools from notification of resignation through to the appointment and induction of a new headteacher.
2. Continue termly succession planning meetings/updates with Diocesan Directors using outcomes to inform practice and to secure appropriate faith based training and development activities for the potential leaders of both CE (controlled and aided) and RC (aided) schools.
3. Continue to promote Shropshire as a leading county in which to live and work – 4*, high achieving, innovative etc.
4. Actively promote leadership development from post NQT to experienced headteacher. Include returning teachers within target groups.

Shropshire County Council and Edge Hill University are working in partnership with HTI (an independent not for profit organisation) to introduce HTI's recently developed, innovative leadership development programme, called the 'Leadership Journey' as a key component of leadership development and succession planning across all Shropshire schools.

The Leadership Journey provides a clear and robust framework for both aspiring and existing school leaders at all levels and career stages. It seeks to support participants in developing/embedding the right strategies and processes to support school improvement activity, in making incisive and well informed decisions, in motivational skills – motivating colleagues towards organisational clarity – and achieving the vision, and in ensuring that change and development is sustainable. It looks at development at three levels – that of self, team and organisation and uses experiences that involve innovation, creativity and future thinking.

The programme is built on three core principles:

- leadership development should be a series of well connected activities, both in school and off site.
- leadership development combines a common core of the personal competencies of leadership with customisation according to role and context.
- leadership development is clearly focused upon developing the characteristics of exceptional leaders.

The Leadership Journey has four stages, three of which, Developing Exceptional Practice, Learning about Exceptional Leadership and Developing the Skills of Exceptional Leadership are part of the LA's Recruitment Strategy. The final stage, Embedding Exceptional Leadership within institutions and across networks is part of the local authority's Retention Strategy.

The Leadership Journey complements existing NCSL programmes and is locally based – an important consideration given the geography of the county in relation to key regional leadership development centres.

Funding provided to the local authority to support succession planning, together with additional funding secured through bids to the TDA to support innovative practice in CPD is being used to pump prime the introduction of the Leadership Journey to four key groups:

- aspiring leaders in the early stages of their careers, talent spotted by their headteachers and/or members of the local authority's Advisory Service (Group 1)
- more experienced teachers who have taken a career break and want to accelerate their progress back towards leadership (Group 2)

- existing middle leaders including those who already aspire to senior leadership posts and those for whom barriers need to be broken - members of the latter group would be recommended by their headteacher (Group 3)
- existing senior leaders who are NPQH graduates but who have either not yet applied for headship or who have applied but not yet been appointed to headship. (Group 4)

Group 1 - Aspiring leaders in the early stages of their career

This group will be talent spotted and recommended for funding (as available) towards Stage 1 of the Leadership Journey by their respective headteachers. Group members will have demonstrated the characteristics of exceptional leaders. They will be drawn from the full range of schools represented in Shropshire. *

Provision will include:

- a full day's supported training needs analysis and action planning for leadership development
- attendance at selected day training courses covering relevant Stage 1 Leadership Journey modules
- follow up school based individual and collaborative activity/action research
- Trading Places - an opportunity for a short term job swap with a colleague aspiring leader so as to broaden experience within a contrasting school environment and observe/learn from a different style of leadership
- ongoing access to career advice and support.

Groups 2 and 3 - More experienced teachers who have taken a career break and want to accelerate their progress back towards leadership and, existing middle leaders aspiring to senior leadership posts

Provision will be as for Group 1 except modules for study and follow up school based activity/action research will be taken either from Stage 2 or 3 of the Leadership Journey according to outcomes of the supported training needs analysis.

Additionally:

- there will be built in opportunities for shadowing activity as well as Trading Places
- there will be built in opportunities for focused visits to a range of type and size of school with lead inputs from the current headteacher who could be experienced or recently appointed.

Group 4 - Existing senior leaders who are NPQH graduates but who have either not yet applied for headship or who have applied but not yet been appointed to headship

Provision will include:

- initial meeting to identify and action plan, according to need, to rectify
 - i. reasons for not applying for headship or
 - ii. reasons for non appointment.
- attendance on up to three modules, again according to need, of Stage 3 of the Leadership Journey
- opportunities for focused visits to a range of type and size of school with lead inputs from the current headteacher
- shadowing an experienced headteacher
- trading places with a colleague NPQH graduate
- access to support for the application and interview process.

* Recruitment to all stages of the Leadership Journey will take account of the need to recruit leaders to the full range of Shropshire schools, small rural, large urban, community, controlled and aided. Posts designated hard to fill fall within each of these categories.

Retention

Headteacher Workload Workshops

A rolling programme of Headteacher Workload Workshops has been established. Headteachers diary all activity in which they engage over the course of a week. They share their diaries at the workshop and, together with colleagues, discuss ways in which the recorded workload could have been reduced. Headteachers are very positive about the workshops, reporting that they leave with a range of practical strategies for reducing /rationalising workload.

Workshops are designed to provide for headteachers at all stages of headship from the end of their first year in post to pre-retirement.

Provide appropriate CPD opportunities for longer serving headteachers

- Part fund access to relevant modules of Stage 4 of the Leadership Journey
- Work with NCSL West Midlands to provide taster sessions for Head for the Future.

Maintain strength of current local authority induction programme for newly appointed headteachers – both for those new to headship and more experienced headteachers new to Shropshire

The provision includes:

- half day orientation programme at the Shirehall
- full day conference focusing on leadership and management
- four half day sessions focusing on human resources issues
- enhanced school based support based on individual need
- support in the training needs analysis and action planning process required for accessing relevant training and development activity though NCSL funding for Early Headship
- a mentor identified through the local authority's Headteacher Support Group
- regular contact with an adviser with lead responsibility for the induction process.

Increase the number of trained headteacher mentors to match the increasing number of new headteachers and to secure the availability of mentors to more experienced colleagues in need of short or longer term support

- East Midlands Leadership Centre to lead mentor training planned for January 2008
- Letter to all headteachers reminding them of this service and including contact details of all trained mentors.

Strengthen membership of Headteacher Support Group to include all trained mentors

The Headteacher Support Group, previously the Headteacher Wellbeing Group, was established to work in partnership with the local authority both to identify ways in which headteachers could be better supported in their posts and, as needed, to provide practical, confidential support to colleagues. Group members are all experienced headteachers who have been trained in mentorship. All are regarded highly by the local authority and by headteacher colleagues. The group is representative of schools across Shropshire.

The group meets termly to match mentors with newly appointed headteachers and to identify issues of concern, or potential concern to all, or some, headteachers. If these issues cannot be resolved by the group they are taken back to the local authority for action. Most recently the group has taken responsibility for planning the local authority's annual Management Conference for Senior Leaders and Managers with a focus on promoting the desirability and sustainability of headship.

In order for the group to sustain current levels of activity membership needs to be increased. All trained mentors will therefore be invited to join the group with effect from the end of January 2008.

Pilot THE KEY, an online helpline for headteachers

From January 2008 Shropshire will be one of eight local authorities from across the country to pilot this new service to schools. The pilot will be evaluated and decisions about its longer term future made in August 2008.

Provide support to the headteachers of schools identified for closure should proposals for the restructuring of primary education in Shropshire be confirmed

Provision to be agreed with Senior Management team subject to decision making process.

Research

NCSL National Leader in Education to lead members of the Headteacher Support Group in research

A research project, led by an NCSL Leader in Education and linking with work already carried out in the local authority (outcomes of Headteacher Workload Workshops, Masters dissertation on the challenges facing today's headteachers) will focus on how, within the local context, headship can be made more attractive and sustainable. The outcomes of research will be used to inform both medium and longer term strategy in succession planning. Issues to be researched will include:

- i. What attracts teachers to and deters them from headship in Shropshire
- ii. Alternative, viable models of headship/leadership/staffing structure
- iii. The characteristics needed to lead a school into the future and the provision required to support the development of these characteristics in future leaders.
- iv. Governor perceptions of characteristics as above.
- v. Why, when (albeit unusually) a post attracts a lot of interest, approximately 60% of those who have sent for further information subsequently fail to submit an application
- vi. Governor's perceptions of the appointment process and ways in which it might be improved.

Three members of the Headteacher Support Group, working to an NCSL National Leader in Education (Ian Nurser – St. Peter's CE Primary School in Wem) will between them visit a cross section of Shropshire schools in order to carry out face to face interviews with headteachers, those leaving headship and potential future leaders including NPQH graduates who have yet to apply for/be appointed to headship. Working to a set of agreed questions they will produce a report on i, ii, iii and v, the outcomes of which, together with iv, will inform future planning.

The Senior School Improvement Adviser (CPD)/SWA will liaise with the Human Resources Team and report on iv.

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