

# ambitious, excellent schools

leadership – a discussion paper



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leadership – a discussion paper

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# good leadership is critical to a successful school

## Current Thinking on the Leadership Agenda

This paper provides an update on the Executive's thinking on the leadership agenda set out in *Ambitious, Excellent Schools*. It reflects the current stage of development of a significant initiative that will progress over 2005 and beyond. It provides some context, offers some guiding ideas and a framework for action over the next several months which the Executive hopes will encourage dialogue and discussion in the educational community. **A series of discussion forums will be set up to provide an opportunity for contributions from the educational community. Although no formal response is expected from recipients of the paper, the Executive welcomes comments on it which should be submitted to Kathryn Beattie at the Scottish Executive Education Department.**

The approach the Executive intends to take on the leadership agenda has developed considerably since the publication of *Ambitious, Excellent Schools* which proposed the formation of a leadership academy. The work of developing leadership broadly across the Scottish educational system involves many people, managing a variety of projects, harnessing resources and expertise nationally and internationally. It involves extending the good work that is underway in schools, local authorities and in collaboration with other partners as well as accessing new thinking and approaches.

This leads the Executive to think it is more appropriate now to describe the leadership agenda set out in *Ambitious, Excellent Schools* in terms of building a broad programme of leadership development within Scottish education rather than establishing a single institution such as many people imagined a "leadership academy" might be. This broad programme will aim to bring coherence and connection to the many projects and initiatives already underway as well as provide a context for future innovation such as the recently announced initiative with the Hunter Foundation to establish an expert team to develop leadership excellence.

## Putting the Programme of Leadership Development in Context

The opening quote from *Ambitious, Excellent Schools* reflects a consensus view among educationalists in the UK and beyond that effective leadership makes for an effective school and this is the position we begin from in Scotland.

The importance the Executive attaches to school leadership and the development of leadership capacity is reflected in a series of documents and frameworks for guidance that have been developed in recent years from HMI's *Improving Leadership in Scottish Schools* to *CPD for Educational Leaders*. These sit within the broader context of an ongoing dialogue about our ambitions for Scottish education instigated in the National Debate and the significant educational developments, initiatives and reforms set out in *A Curriculum for Excellence* and *Ambitious, Excellent Schools*.



The Executive sees the role of leadership in schools and the wider educational community growing in importance. Increasingly effective leadership is understood as being about more than the actions, beliefs or qualities of a single individual and includes the contribution many people make to leadership. This raises important questions of how to identify and develop the leadership capacities which contribute to successful schools and which are needed for the future and these are not always easy questions to answer. The interest the Executive has in developing leadership is to help achieve the aspiration that all children and young people develop their capacities as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society (A Curriculum for Excellence) and to assist schools in their leadership work, not add to their workload.

## Creating a Focus for the Programme of Leadership Development

These are the guiding ideas which the Executive thinks can help focus this work:

- Developing leadership capacity that serves young people in Scottish schools and the wider educational community
- Connecting people and projects with a focus on leadership development
- Developing expertise among educators, leaders, teachers, coaches, consultants and academics to support the ongoing work of leadership development and grow the resource available to the wider educational community
- Developing a practical and critical understanding of the educational leadership challenges we face and developing abilities to deal with these
- Growing skills, developing expertise and resources, investing in methods and approaches that support the development of leadership practice
- Collaborating with others who contribute to the development of leadership more widely within Scottish society

These guiding ideas could form the basis for increased collaboration, developing excellence and capacity building across the educational system and in the communities which are served by our schools. None of this work is starting from scratch – expertise and insight is developing continuously across the Scottish educational scene which we can increasingly tap into. The key role the Executive can play is to promote and support this work together with other key groups who play an influencing and leadership role in Scottish education and who are committed to delivering the aspiration described in A Curriculum for Excellence and Ambitious, Excellent Schools.

## Focusing on Leadership Priorities

A key aim of the broad programme should be to identify leadership development priorities, generate innovation and the introduction of new approaches. This is likely to be the key role for the recently announced expert team. Currently the Executive sees priorities in these areas:

- Developing for Headship and other key leadership roles
- Leading school transformation and improvement (perhaps with other community partners)
- Leading and managing in an integrated children's services context
- Leading teaching and learning as the "leading learner" or "leading professional"
- Leading broader educational communities

Leadership is important in every school and every school offers a unique context for leadership development whether or not it faces these specific issues and challenges.

## Strengthening and Extending Leadership Development Activity

There is a growing consensus about the methods and approaches which contribute to effective educational leadership development. The broad programme should promote, support and further develop approaches which contribute to a general strengthening of leadership development such as:

- collaborative networks which focus on the development of practice, problem solving and shared learning
- coaching and mentoring opportunities
- opportunities to step back, review, reflect and develop personal leadership practice and learn from practice in other educational systems and in other organisational contexts
- formal programmes and frameworks designed to support progression and career development for education professionals
- research projects which contribute new learning
- seminars, master classes, conference and speaker programmes which provide access to thought leadership and leading practice

This is work to do in conjunction with the expert team, local authorities, the national CPD network and other partners.



## Enriching the Potential for Development

As these approaches and practices develop, the Executive would hope to see:

- Educational leaders, teachers and others with leadership roles extending the contribution they make to professional development and leadership practice
- Teachers and other professionals increasingly working in coaching and mentoring roles in which they provide support and challenge for colleagues
- A growing collaboration between schools, authorities and other educational partners that contributes to developing leadership capacity in Scottish education

## Organising and Developing Resources to Support the Programme

The Executive's aim is to extend collaboration among the key groups who contribute to the development of leadership capacity in Scottish education and to create a shared agenda for action. The precise way in which we can harness our resources and take advantage of new initiatives such as the expert team will be worked out in discussion with key partners in the weeks ahead. At this stage it will make sense to concentrate on:

- minimising formal structure or central resource to only what is necessary
- fostering communication, creating connection and learning transfer
- promoting, supporting and contributing to the forming of professional networks

There are significant leadership development projects underway across Scottish education currently which are generating increased leadership capacity for schools. The Ambitious, Excellent Schools agenda creates new opportunities and raises fresh challenges which have a critical learning requirement. One aim of the programme of leadership development will be to identify and transfer this learning and ensure it contributes to strategies for developing educational leadership for the future.

## Moving Forward

The ideas described here and the framework for action form the basis for further discussion and development with the educational community in the months ahead. The Executive expects this framework for action will grow and our ideas will continue to develop as the discussion progresses. We look forward to a broad dialogue with the educational community.

## Actions on the Ambitious, Excellent Schools Leadership Agenda



The actions described here represent ongoing areas of work. In addition to these there is a significant amount of activity at local authority level involving other groups with an interest in leadership development which is consistent with the thinking and approaches described here. Identifying and connecting this pattern of activity and creating new connections across this work is a priority in the coming months.

Areas for action and potential development of approaches. (Confirmed and Potential)

- **Developing Coaching and Mentoring Opportunities**

- coaching and mentoring workshop to review practice, share experience and develop approaches (SEED/local authorities/others)
- pilot projects in specific areas such as development for Headship (SEED and local authority sponsorship with other partners)
- specific coaching interventions to support Schools of Ambition projects (SEED and other partners)
- coaching pilot to support Determined to Succeed enterprise in education initiative (DtS/Leadership Trust)
- engage Columba1400 HTLA graduates in extending coaching practice (SEED and Columba1400)
- wider extension of mentoring programmes such as Scottish Business in the Community (SBC) Partners for Leadership and Scottish Leadership Foundation (SLF) plus investigation of alternatives (SEED with ADES and local authorities)

- **Enhancing Leadership Development Opportunities and Developing Leadership Practice**

- next phase of Columba1400: HTLA, Ambassador programmes and support for Schools of Ambition (SEED/local authorities/Hunter Foundation/DtS team)
- pilot HT leadership development programme (Leadership for an Enterprising School with Leadership Trust /DtS)
- development programme for senior educational leaders (SEED/local authorities/the Hunter Foundation)
- review current leadership development programmes and offerings and identify scope to further develop these (SEED/CPD team/local authorities)
- identify leadership development priorities and scope for collaborative programmes or projects with local authorities
- review leadership development programmes offered by NCSL (and international equivalents) and identify potential for adaptation to Scottish requirements
- identify potential to collaborate with other public service leadership development activity in Scotland (SEED)



- **Developing Collaborative Networks**
  - introduce a model of collaborative learning and problem solving based around the US School District Superintendent’s model of school-based support to Scottish education (SEED/local authorities/the Hunter Foundation)
  - pilot an equivalent model at HT/school cluster level/QIO and schools/or with groups working on shared children’s services agenda
  - pilot dialogue project for review and development of leadership practice with HTs (SEED/local authorities)
  
- **Developing Expertise and Resources for the Wider Educational Community**
  - identify and enrol thought leaders/academics/educational consultants with international reputation to support specific activities and contribute to the formation, development and ongoing work of leadership development (SEED with the Hunter Foundation and other partners)
  - develop relationships with organisations such as NCSL to harness their expertise
  - develop discussion across the Scottish educational community to identify the thought and practice leaders, consultants and academics who can contribute to the ongoing work of leadership development (SEED/local authorities/other partners)
  
- **Promoting Dialogue and Discussion**
  - establish forum to consider the proposition and discuss with key groups (SEED)
  - networking the idea and generating feedback in focus and discussion group (SEED/Leadership CPD team)
  - communication process to inform and involve the educational community (SEED)
  
- **Growing Skills, Developing Resources, Investing in Development Methods and Practice**
  - support the ongoing work of the CPD network, identify and develop opportunities to grow expertise
  - consider a Development for Developers programme to grow the skills and knowledge base of all the professionals who support development activity

An explanation of some of the terms and descriptions used in the Framework for Action and Collaboration:

Schools of Ambition – the Executive’s programme for delivering a step change in the approach to transforming educational outcomes by providing resources and support for ideas from schools that will help them transform the experience of their pupils.

The Hunter Foundation – a venture philanthropy that invests in enterprise and educational initiatives aimed largely at children with the aim of supporting the development of a more enterprising and ultimately entrepreneurial society in Scotland.

Determined to Succeed (DtS) – the Scottish Executive’s strategy for Enterprise in Education which seeks to help Scotland’s young people develop self-confidence, self-reliance and ambition to achieve their goals – in work and in life.

Leadership Trust – a provider of leadership development programmes which aim to encourage people to discover, experientially, more about themselves and how best to apply their natural leadership talents and skills. Leadership for an Enterprising School is a specific project developed by a group of education managers who participated in a pilot leadership development programme as part of the Determined to Succeed initiative.

Columba1400 – a charitable organisation dedicated to community leadership and personal development training who pioneered a leadership development programme – the Head Teacher Leadership Academy (HTLA) for Scottish Head and Assistant Heads in 2004 with the support of the Hunter Foundation and as part of the Determined to Succeed initiative. The Ambassador Programme is a programme which recognises and develops the leadership role that young people play in the school community.

SBC Partners in Leadership – a programme run by Scottish Business in the Community that brings together education and business leaders enabling them to share expertise and experience.

Scottish Leadership Foundation (SLF) – The Scottish Leadership Foundation is an independent, not-for-profit organisation focused on Scotland’s public services with a remit to develop new leaders, sustain existing leaders and support the public services so that they can grow and sustain their own leaders for the future.

National College for School Leadership (NCSL) – the DfES funded organisation that provides career-long learning and development opportunities, professional and practical support for school leaders in England.



US School District Superintendent's Model – a method of collaborative working that involves senior education managers working directly on a school level problem to identify solutions and as a stimulus to their own learning.

Leadership CPD team – the group of educators, advisers and policy officials that have a remit to focus on leadership from a continuing professional development perspective.





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