

This is a Joint Programme by
Derbyshire LEA and The University of Nottingham
Centre for Research on Teacher and School Development (CRTSD)

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Foreword

Within the current context there is increased pressure upon schools to improve and to raise achievement. Schools facing circumstances have a particularly difficult task, but improvements within this context are possible and achievable. Effective leadership is acknowledged to be of central importance in the pursuit of even higher standards. For schools that are improving, effective leadership has been shown to be a central and important component. However, it is also evident that effective leadership extends beyond the senior management team to other levels within the organisation.

One important source of leadership resides at the subject leadership level. In both primary and secondary schools, subject leaders are uniquely placed to influence the quality of teaching and learning within their subject areas. As team leaders they have a powerful influence over classroom practices and are important gatekeepers to change and development within their subject areas. The Subject Leader Standards acknowledge the centrality of the subject leader in contributing to whole school policy and development.

While the headteacher and governors carry overall responsibility for school improvement, a subject leader has responsibility for the subject curriculum and for establishing high standards of teaching and learning in their subject as well as playing a major role in the development of school policy (TTA 1998:3)

The overall purpose of the subject leader's role is to contribute to school improvement and increased standards of performance through the provision of high quality teaching within the subject area. In order to achieve this, the subject leader has to lead and manage the curriculum and to respond to the internal and external demands for accountability and quality. All of these demands have to be met in the particular context of the individual school and the community it serves.

Within a school the skills, abilities and expertise of subject leaders will inevitably vary. Differences exist between departments in terms of performance and effectiveness. However, it is possible to develop and improve leadership at this level through the provision of structured support. It has been shown that an optimum source of support resides in other subject leaders within the school. By drawing upon the expertise

and knowledge of subject leaders working in the same context the possibility of improvement across departments is significantly enhanced.

These materials have been designed to assist schools in building the capacity for improvement by extending the skills and abilities of subject leaders. The materials are designed to prepare those in subject leader roles to mentor and support other subject leaders within their school. There is substantial evidence to demonstrate to the potency of coaching or mentoring as an approach to professional development. Consequently, it is hoped that these materials will be used within the school not only to extend the capabilities of subject leaders but also to enable teachers to learn from each other. For it is only through building learning communities within schools that sustainable school improvement is possible.

Alma Harris and Sue James

Raising Attainment in Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances

A National Programme for Subject Leader Mentors

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Further Reading

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