

National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers (2015)

Purpose

The National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers (2014) define high standards which are applicable to all Headteacher roles within a self-improving school system. These standards are designed to inspire public confidence in Headteachers, raise aspirations, secure high academic standards in the nation's schools, and empower the teaching profession.

The context for Headteachers changes constantly. In most contexts, a Headteacher has led one school; in some settings Headteachers are responsible for leading more than one school. Job titles are various - including principal, executive, associate and co-Headteacher – as are the governance arrangements to which Headteachers are accountable. These standards are intended as guidance to underpin best practice, whatever the particular job description of the Headteacher. They are to be interpreted in the context of each individual Headteacher and school, and designed to be relevant to all Headteachers, irrespective of length of service in post.

The standards can be used to:

- shape Headteachers' own practice and professional development, within and beyond the school
- inform the appraisal of Headteachers
- support the recruitment and appointment of Headteachers
- provide a framework for training middle and senior leaders, aspiring to headship.

The Teachers' Standards (2011, as amended), including the Personal and Professional Code of Conduct which applies to all teachers, provide a foundation upon which the standards for Headteachers are built

Preamble:

The role of the Headteacher

Headteachers occupy an influential position in society and shape the teaching profession. They are lead professionals and significant role models within the communities they serve. The values and ambitions of Headteachers determine the achievements of schools. They are accountable for the education of current and future generations of children. Their leadership has a decisive impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements in the nation's classrooms.

Headteachers lead by example the professional conduct and practice of teachers in a way that minimises unnecessary teacher workload and leaves room for high quality continuous professional development for staff. They secure a climate for the exemplary behaviour of pupils.

They set standards and expectations for high academic standards within and beyond their own schools, recognising differences and respecting cultural diversity within contemporary Britain. Headteachers, together with those responsible for governance, are guardians of the nation's schools.

The Four Domains

The National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers are set out in four domains, beginning with a Preamble. There are four 'Excellence As Standard' domains:

- Qualities and knowledge
- Pupils and staff
- Systems and process
- The self-improving school system

Within each domain there are six key characteristics expected of the nation's Headteachers.

Domain One

Excellent Headteachers: qualities and knowledge

Headteachers:

1. Hold and articulate clear values and moral purpose, focused on providing a world-class education for the pupils they serve.
2. Demonstrate optimistic personal behaviour, positive relationships and attitudes towards their pupils and staff, and towards parents, governors and members of the local community.
3. Lead by example - with integrity, creativity, resilience, and clarity - drawing on their own scholarship, expertise and skills, and that of those around them.
4. Sustain wide, current knowledge and understanding of education and school systems locally, nationally and globally, and pursue continuous professional development.
5. Work with political and financial astuteness, within a clear set of principles centred on the school's vision, ably translating local and national policy into the school's context.
6. Communicate compellingly the school's vision and drive the strategic leadership, empowering all pupils and staff to excel.

Domain Two

Excellent Headteachers: pupils and staff

Headteachers:

1. Demand ambitious standards for all pupils, overcoming disadvantage and advancing equality, instilling a strong sense of accountability in staff for the impact of their work on pupils' outcomes.
2. Secure excellent teaching through an analytical understanding of how pupils learn and of the core features of successful classroom practice and curriculum design, leading to rich curriculum opportunities and pupils' well-being.
3. Establish an educational culture of 'open classrooms' as a basis for sharing best practice within and between schools, drawing on and conducting relevant research and robust data analysis.
4. Create an ethos within which all staff are motivated and supported to develop their own skills and subject knowledge, and to support each other.
5. Identify emerging talents, coaching current and aspiring leaders in a climate where excellence is the standard, leading to clear succession planning.
6. Hold all staff to account for their professional conduct and practice.

Domain Three

Excellent Headteachers: systems and process

Headteachers:

1. Ensure that the school's systems, organisation and processes are well considered, efficient and fit for purpose, upholding the principles of transparency, integrity and probity.
2. Provide a safe, calm and well-ordered environment for all pupils and staff, focused on safeguarding pupils and developing their exemplary behaviour in school and in the wider society.
3. Establish rigorous, fair and transparent systems and measures for managing the performance of all staff, addressing any under-performance, supporting staff to improve and valuing excellent practice
4. Welcome strong governance and actively support the governing board to understand its role and deliver its functions effectively – in particular its functions to set school strategy and hold the Headteacher to account for pupil, staff and financial performance.
5. Exercise strategic, curriculum-led financial planning to ensure the equitable deployment of budgets and resources, in the best interests of pupils' achievements and the school's sustainability.
6. Distribute leadership throughout the organisation, forging teams of colleagues who have distinct roles and responsibilities and hold each other to account for their decision making.

Domain Four

Excellent Headteachers: the self-improving school system

Headteachers:

1. Create outward-facing schools which work with other schools and organisations - in a climate of mutual challenge - to champion best practice and secure excellent achievements for all pupils.
2. Develop effective relationships with fellow professionals and colleagues in other public services to improve academic and social outcomes for all pupils.
3. Challenge educational orthodoxies in the best interests of achieving excellence, harnessing the findings of well evidenced research to frame self-regulating and self-improving schools.
4. Shape the current and future quality of the teaching profession through high quality training and sustained professional development for all staff.
5. Model entrepreneurial and innovative approaches to school improvement, leadership and governance, confident of the vital contribution of internal and external accountability.
6. Inspire and influence others - within and beyond schools - to believe in the fundamental importance of education in young people's lives and to promote the value of education.