

Exploring Teacher Leadership

Teacher leaders are passionate about caring for children and young people. Through informed and innovative practice, close scrutiny of pupils' learning needs and high expectations they play a fundamental role in improving outcomes for children and young people. Teacher leaders are effective communicators who collaborate with colleagues, demonstrate integrity and have a positive impact on their school community. They model career-long professional learning.

Skills, qualities and professional actions demonstrated by teacher leaders can be identified under four main areas:

- Values and commitment
- Learning and teaching
- High expectations and ambition
- Communication and collaboration

Values and commitment

Teacher leaders are committed to the lives of their schools, are involved widely and impact significantly on their school's culture and climate.

Teacher leaders model high standards of conduct and ensure the vision and values of their school are supported through their work. They demonstrate sound 'professional values and personal commitment core to being a teacher' (General Teaching Council for Scotland, 2012: 7). This enhances the culture and climate which is generated in their learning environments and schools. Teacher leaders value diversity and promote equality; 'moral concerns' (Boylan, 2013: 2) are recognised as something which motivates teacher leaders.

Teacher leaders value career-long professional learning; recognising its role in developing their professional growth. They appreciate that their on-going commitment to professional learning impacts positively upon the learning of children and young people.

Teacher leaders self-evaluate regularly and instinctively, and they demonstrate accomplished and developing skills in critical reflection, inquiry, the use of research, pedagogy, and leadership.

Teachers leaders engage in and welcome dialogue as part of effective Professional Review and Development and Professional Update processes.

Teacher leaders are aware of the importance of their own health and wellbeing and strive to maintain a healthy work/life balance.

Learning and Teaching

Teacher leaders have high quality learning and teaching and enhanced learner outcomes as their primary concerns. Teacher leaders are passionate about learning and teaching and aim

to create, maintain and develop safe, caring and extremely purposeful learning environments.

Teacher leaders lead learning and teaching successfully in their environments and contribute to, engage with and deliver well-planned curricula using a range of inspiring pedagogy, including practitioner inquiry. Teacher leaders understand the need to be flexible in their approach to learning and teaching and aim to meet the needs of all learners at all times. Teacher leaders encourage learners to self-evaluate and critically reflect and they value the importance of promoting and supporting learning and teaching within their departments and faculties, and across their school.

High expectations and ambition

Teacher leaders have and set high expectations. They are ambitious for the success of children and young people and in their pursuit and delivery of diverse and creative pedagogy. Building and promoting a culture which encourages and celebrates pupil attainment, pupil achievement and pupil leadership, teacher leaders drive improvements which have measurable impact. They strive for, expect and celebrate successful outcomes.

They are accomplished practitioners who inspire confidence in their colleagues and young people.

Communication and collaboration

Teacher leaders are effective communicators who are able to develop and sustain high-quality relationships with children and young people, parents and carers, colleagues and external partners.

They recognise the importance of participating in professional discussions which relate to young people's learning and welcome being able to engage in dialogue about their own development. They ensure that they are 'key actors in shaping and leading educational change' (Donaldson, 2011: 4).

Teacher leaders take responsibility for leading and developing aspects of their work and their team's wider work, as identified in department and school improvement plans. Frost (2013) recognises teacher-led development work to be key in terms of enhancing professional knowledge.

This vision of teacher leadership was explored extensively through our engagement with the profession in 2015/16. There were significant overlaps between what teachers told us teacher leadership means to them and the definition outlined here, however a number of changes were suggested and made. For more about our teacher leadership engagement read our [Developing Teacher Leadership report](#).