

1998

# National Standards for Subject Leaders



## Foreword

1. The key to unlocking the full potential of pupils in our schools lies in the expertise of teachers and headteachers. Research and inspection evidence demonstrate the close correlation between the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils and between the quality of leadership and the quality of teaching. It is these links which lie at the heart of the Government's drive for school improvement.
2. A principal aim of the TTA is to promote effective and efficient professional development for teachers and headteachers, targeted on improvements in the quality of teaching and leadership which will have the maximum impact on pupils' learning. The cornerstone of this work is the development of national standards for the teaching profession to define expertise in key roles.
3. National standards have been developed for:
  - the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS);
  - Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs);
  - Subject Leaders; and
  - Headteachers.
4. The main aims of the national standards are to:
  - a. set out clear expectations for teachers at key points in the profession;
  - b. help teachers at different points in the profession to plan and monitor their development, training and performance effectively, and to set clear, relevant targets for improving their effectiveness;
  - c. ensure that the focus at every point is on improving the achievement of pupils and the quality of their education;
  - d. provide a basis for the professional recognition of teachers' expertise and achievements; and
  - e. help providers of professional development to plan and provide high quality, relevant training which meets the needs of individual teachers and headteachers, makes good use of their time and has the maximum benefit for pupils.
5. The national standards set out the professional knowledge, understanding, skills and attributes necessary to carry out effectively the key tasks of that role. It is the sum of these aspects which defines the expertise demanded of the role, in order to achieve the outcomes set out in the standards.

6. The standards emphasise national priorities, particularly in support of the Government's key educational targets in relation to literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology.
7. The standards are intended to aid development rather than being barriers to progression in the profession. They provide the basis for a more structured approach to appraisal, helping teachers and headteachers to set relevant targets, to assist in the evaluation of progress, to identify further development priorities, and to confirm success.
8. The standards have been the subject of intensive consultation and were developed in close conjunction with teachers, headteachers, governors, professional and subject associations, teacher trainers in schools, local education authorities and higher education institutions, with other agencies, including OFSTED, OHMCI (Wales), QCA and ACCAC, and with others both inside and outside the profession. The standards will continue to be kept under review in the light both of their use by teachers and headteachers and of emerging national priorities.

## Introduction to the National Standards for Subject Leaders

These national standards set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and attributes which relate to the key areas of subject leadership. The standards define expertise in subject leadership and are designed to guide the professional development of teachers aiming to increase their effectiveness as subject leaders or of those aspiring to take responsibility for leading a subject.

While the standards apply to all schools, they will need to be applied and implemented differently in schools of different type, size and phase. For example, they will need to be used selectively in smaller primary schools where headteachers may retain more of the defined roles than in larger primary schools. The degree to which subject co-ordinators in primary and special schools can use the specified knowledge, understanding, skills and attributes in order to carry out the key tasks in these standards will depend on their experience and the opportunities to develop their role. The subject leader standards are based on how experienced and effective co-ordinators provide leadership in their subject(s).

Although subject leaders must have a good knowledge of the subject, these standards focus primarily on expertise in the leadership and management of a subject. While some aspects of leadership and management are generic, others are specific to the subject and type of school. Training and development for subject leadership will provide a good grounding in many of the leadership and management skills necessary to take on broader and more senior leadership and management roles.

The standards have been revised following consultation, both on the earlier drafts of these standards for subject leaders, and on the national standards for headteachers and for special educational needs co-ordinators. They also build on the considerable work already undertaken in this area by schools, LEAs, higher education institutions, OFSTED and OHMCI (Wales), and other agencies. The standards also take into account work on management standards by those outside the education profession.

The standards are in five parts:

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## 1. Core purpose of the subject leader

To provide professional leadership and management for a subject to secure high quality teaching, effective use of resources and improved standards of learning and achievement for all pupils.

A subject leader provides leadership and direction for the subject and ensures that it is managed and organised to meet the aims and objectives of the school and the subject. While the headteacher and governors carry overall responsibility for school improvement, a subject leader has responsibility for securing high standards of teaching and learning in their subject as well as playing a major role in the development of school policy and practice. Throughout their work, a subject leader ensures that practices improve the quality of education provided, meet the needs and aspirations of all pupils, and raise standards of achievement in the school.

A subject leader plays a key role in supporting, guiding and motivating teachers of the subject, and other adults. Subject leaders evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning, the subject curriculum and progress towards targets for pupils and staff, to inform future priorities and targets for the subject. The degree to which a subject leader is involved in monitoring to provide the range of information for evaluation will depend on school policy and be influenced by the size of the school. Although the subject leader will undertake a variety of monitoring activities, headteachers in smaller primary schools may retain a larger proportion of that monitoring which requires direct classroom observation of teaching and learning.

A subject leader identifies needs in their own subject and recognises that these must be considered in relation to the overall needs of the school. It is important that a subject leader has an understanding of how their subject contributes to school priorities and to the overall education and achievement of all pupils.

## 2. Key outcomes of subject leadership

Effective subject leadership results in:

### **a. pupils who**

show sustained improvement in their subject knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to prior attainment; understand the key ideas in the subject at a level appropriate to their age and stage of development; show improvement in their literacy, numeracy and information technology skills; know the purpose and sequence of activities; are well prepared for any tests and examinations in the subject; are enthusiastic about the subject and highly motivated to continue with their studies; through their attitudes and behaviour, contribute to the maintenance of a purposeful working environment;

### **b. teachers who**

work well together as a team; support the aims of the subject and understand how they relate to the school's aims; are involved in the formation of policies and plans and apply them consistently in the classroom; are dedicated to improving standards of teaching and learning; have an enthusiasm for the subject which reinforces the motivation of pupils; have high expectations for pupils and set realistic but challenging targets based on a good knowledge of their pupils and the progression of concepts in the subject; make good use of guidance, training and support to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the subject and to develop expertise in their teaching; take account of relevant research and inspection findings; make effective use of subject-specific resources; select appropriate teaching and learning approaches to meet subject-specific learning objectives and the needs of pupils;

### **c. parents who**

are well informed about their child's achievements in the subject and about targets for further improvement; know the expectations made of their child in learning the subject; know how they can support or assist their child's learning in the subject;

### **d. headteachers and other senior managers who**

understand the needs of the subject; use information about achievements and development priorities in the subject in order to make well informed decisions and to achieve greater improvements in the whole school's development and its aims;

### **e. other adults in the school and community, including technical and administrative staff, classroom assistants, external agencies and representatives of business and industry, who**

are informed of subject achievements and priorities; are able, where appropriate, to play an effective role in supporting the teaching and learning of the subject.

## 3. Professional knowledge and understanding

Subject leaders must have knowledge and understanding which is in part subject-specific and in part generic to the leadership role. The knowledge and understanding required will change over time and it is important that subject leaders recognise their responsibility to remain up to date with developments in their subject area and in other aspects of education relating to their role. The following areas of knowledge and understanding are relevant to all schools, although some aspects will need to be interpreted differently according to the size, type and phase of school. Subject leader expertise is demonstrated by the ability to apply this knowledge and understanding in each of the key areas of subject leadership.

### **Subject leaders should have knowledge and understanding of:**

- a. their school's aims, priorities, targets and action plans;
- b. the relationship of the subject to the curriculum as a whole;
- c. any statutory curriculum requirements for the subject and the requirements for assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' attainment and progress;
- d. the characteristics of high quality teaching in the subject and the main strategies for improving and sustaining high standards of teaching, learning and achievement for all pupils;
- e. how evidence from relevant research and inspection evidence and local, national and international standards of achievement in the subject can be used to inform expectations, targets and teaching approaches;
- f. how to use comparative data, together with information about pupils' prior attainment, to establish benchmarks and set targets for improvement;
- g. how to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and information technology skills through the subject;
- h. how teaching the subject can promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural, mental and physical development;
- i. management, including employment law, equal opportunities legislation, personnel, external relations, finance and change;
- j. how teaching the subject can help to prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life;
- k. the current use and future potential of information and communications technology to aid teaching and learning of the subject, and to assist with subject management;
- l. the role of school governance and how it can contribute to the work of the subject leader;
- m. the implications of information and guidance documents from LEAs, the DfEE, WOED and other national bodies and associations;
- n. the implications of the Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs for teaching and learning in their subject;
- o. health and safety requirements, including where to obtain expert advice.

## 4. Skills and attributes

Subject leaders should have expertise in the teaching of the subject. The skills and attributes which follow are essential, but not exclusive, to the subject leader's role. The headteacher should ensure that the subject leader has access to training related to the development of these necessary skills. Subject leader expertise is demonstrated by the ability to apply these skills and attributes in each of the key areas of subject leadership set out on pages 9–12.

### **a. Leadership skills, attributes and professional competence – the ability to lead and manage people to work towards common goals**

**Where other staff teach or support the subject, subject leaders should be able to:**

- i. secure commitment to a clear aim and direction for the subject;
- ii. prioritise, plan and organise;
- iii. work as part of a team;
- iv. deal sensitively with people, recognise individual needs and take account of these in securing a consistent team approach to raising achievement in the subject;
- v. acknowledge and utilise the experience, expertise and contribution of others;
- vi. set standards and provide a role model for pupils and other staff, in the teaching and learning of the subject;
- vii. devolve responsibilities and delegate tasks, as appropriate;
- viii. seek advice and support when necessary.

**Subject leaders should have the professional competence and expertise to:**

- ix. command credibility through the discharge of their duties and use their expertise to influence others in relation to their subject;
- x. make informed use of research and inspection findings;
- xi. apply good practice to and from other subjects and areas.

### **b. Decision-making skills – the ability to solve problems and make decisions**

**Subject leaders should be able to:**

- i. judge when to make decisions, when to consult with others, and when to defer to the headteacher or senior managers;
- ii. analyse, understand and interpret relevant information and data;
- iii. think creatively and imaginatively to anticipate and solve problems and identify opportunities.

## **c. Communication skills – the ability to make points clearly and understand the views of others**

### **Subject leaders should be able to:**

- i. communicate effectively, orally and in writing, with the headteacher, other staff, pupils, parents, governors, external agencies and the wider community, including business and industry;
- ii. negotiate and consult effectively;
- iii. ensure good communication with, and between, staff who teach and support the subject;
- iv. chair meetings effectively.

## **d. Self-management – the ability to plan time effectively and to organise oneself well**

### **Subject leaders should be able to:**

- i. prioritise and manage their own time effectively, particularly in relation to balancing the demands made by teaching, subject management and involvement in school development;
- ii. achieve challenging professional goals;
- iii. take responsibility for their own professional development.

## **e. Attributes**

### **Subject leaders draw upon the attributes possessed and displayed by all successful and effective teachers in the context of their leadership and management roles, including:**

- i. personal impact and presence;
- ii. adaptability to changing circumstances and new ideas;
- iii. energy, vigour and perseverance;
- iv. self-confidence;
- v. enthusiasm;
- vi. intellectual ability;
- vii. reliability and integrity;
- viii. commitment.

## 5. Key areas of subject leadership

A range of subject leadership and management tasks is set out on the following pages for each of the four key areas of subject leadership:

**A. Strategic direction and development of the subject**

**B. Teaching and learning**

**C. Leading and managing staff**

**D. Efficient and effective deployment of staff and resources**

Expertise in subject leadership is demonstrated by the ability to apply professional knowledge, understanding, skills and attributes to the identified tasks to bring about the desired outcomes.

The effectiveness of the subject leader will also depend on:

- the acknowledgement by the headteacher and governing body of both their responsibility to meet the needs of all pupils as reflected in the school's policies and practices, and their responsibility to enable the subject leader to operate effectively, including in relation to meeting these standards;
- the way in which decisions, policies and practices are communicated and implemented throughout the school;
- the assessment procedures and systems for monitoring and recording progress, for example, how subject leaders contribute to the school assessment, recording and reporting arrangements.

It is assumed that the subject leader works closely with the headteacher and senior management team in each of the four key areas, and liaises with other colleagues as appropriate. Subject leaders should also understand the roles of others in the school, including newly qualified teachers, the special educational needs co-ordinator and the headteacher, as set out in the national standards for those roles, and should support them as appropriate in fulfilling these roles. The tasks described are necessary for effective subject leadership, although there will be variation in how schools of different sizes, types and phases carry them out.

## A. Strategic direction and development of the subject

Within the context of the school's aims and policies, subject leaders develop and implement subject policies, plans, targets and practices.

### They:

- i. develop and implement policies and practices for the subject which reflect the school's commitment to high achievement, effective teaching and learning;
- ii. create a climate which enables other staff to develop and maintain positive attitudes towards the subject and confidence in teaching it;
- iii. establish a clear, shared understanding of the importance and role of the subject in contributing to pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development, and in preparing pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life;
- iv. use data effectively to identify pupils who are underachieving in the subject and, where necessary, create and implement effective plans of action to support those pupils;
- v. analyse and interpret relevant national, local and school data, plus research and inspection evidence, to inform policies, practices, expectations, targets and teaching methods;
- vi. establish, with the involvement of relevant staff, short, medium and long term plans for the development and resourcing of the subject, which:
  - contribute to whole-school aims, policies and practices, including those in relation to behaviour, discipline, bullying and racial harassment;
  - are based on a range of comparative information and evidence, including in relation to the attainment of pupils;
  - identify realistic and challenging targets for improvement in the subject;
  - are understood by all those involved in putting the plans into practice;
  - are clear about action to be taken, timescales and criteria for success;
- vii. monitor the progress made in achieving subject plans and targets, evaluate the effects on teaching and learning, and use this analysis to guide further improvement.

## B. Teaching and learning

Subject leaders secure and sustain effective teaching of the subject, evaluate the quality of teaching and standards of pupils' achievements and set targets for improvement.

### They:

- i. ensure curriculum coverage, continuity and progression in the subject for all pupils, including those of high ability and those with special educational or linguistic needs;
- ii. ensure that teachers are clear about the teaching objectives in lessons, understand the sequence of teaching and learning in the subject, and communicate such information to pupils;

- iii. provide guidance on the choice of appropriate teaching and learning methods to meet the needs of the subject and of different pupils;
- iv. ensure effective development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and information technology skills through the subject;
- v. establish and implement clear policies and practices for assessing, recording and reporting on pupil achievement, and for using this information to recognise achievement and to assist pupils in setting targets for further improvement;
- vi. ensure that information about pupils' achievements in previous classes and schools is used effectively to secure good progress in the subject;
- vii. set expectations and targets for staff and pupils in relation to standards of pupil achievement and the quality of teaching; establish clear targets for pupil achievement, and evaluate progress and achievement in the subject by all pupils, including those with special educational and linguistic needs;
- viii. evaluate the teaching of the subject in the school, use this analysis to identify effective practice and areas for improvement, and take action to improve further the quality of teaching;
- ix. ensure effective development of pupils' individual and collaborative study skills necessary for them to become increasingly independent in their work and to complete tasks independently when out of school;
- x. ensure that teachers of the subject are aware of its contribution to pupils' understanding of the duties, opportunities, responsibilities and rights of citizens;
- xi. ensure that teachers of the subject know how to recognise and deal with racial stereotyping;
- xii. establish a partnership with parents to involve them in their child's learning of the subject, as well as providing information about curriculum, attainment, progress and targets;
- xiii. develop effective links with the local community, including business and industry, in order to extend the subject curriculum, enhance teaching and to develop pupils' wider understanding.

## C. Leading and managing staff

Subject leaders provide to all those with involvement in the teaching or support of the subject, the support, challenge, information and development necessary to sustain motivation and secure improvement in teaching.

### **They:**

- i. help staff to achieve constructive working relationships with pupils;
- ii. establish clear expectations and constructive working relationships among staff involved with the subject, including through team working and mutual support; devolving responsibilities and delegating tasks, as appropriate; evaluating practice; and developing an acceptance of accountability;
- iii. sustain their own motivation and, where possible, that of other staff involved in the subject;

- iv. appraise staff as required by the school policy and use the process to develop the personal and professional effectiveness of the appraisee(s);
- v. audit training needs of subject staff;
- vi. lead professional development of subject staff through example and support, and co-ordinate the provision of high quality professional development by methods such as coaching, drawing on other sources of expertise as necessary, for example, higher education, LEAs, subject associations;
- vii. ensure that trainee and newly qualified teachers are appropriately trained, monitored, supported and assessed in relation to standards for the award of Qualified Teacher Status, the Career Entry Profiles and standards for induction;
- viii. enable teachers to achieve expertise in their subject teaching;
- ix. work with the SENCO and any other staff with special educational needs expertise, to ensure that individual education plans are used to set subject-specific targets and match work well to pupils' needs;
- x. ensure that the headteacher, senior managers and governors are well informed about subject policies, plans and priorities, the success in meeting objectives and targets, and subject-related professional development plans.

## **D. Efficient and effective deployment of staff and resources**

Subject leaders identify appropriate resources for the subject and ensure that they are used efficiently, effectively and safely.

### **They:**

- i. establish staff and resource needs for the subject and advise the headteacher and senior managers of likely priorities for expenditure, and allocate available subject resources with maximum efficiency to meet the objectives of the school and subject plans and to achieve value for money;
- ii. deploy, or advise the headteacher on the deployment of staff involved in the subject to ensure the best use of subject, technical and other expertise;
- iii. ensure the effective and efficient management and organisation of learning resources, including information and communications technology;
- iv. maintain existing resources and explore opportunities to develop or incorporate new resources from a wide range of sources inside and outside the school;
- v. use accommodation to create an effective and stimulating environment for the teaching and learning of the subject;
- vi. ensure that there is a safe working and learning environment in which risks are properly assessed.

For further copies of these and other national standards, please telephone 0845 606 0323.  
Copies of these standards are also available in Welsh.