Guidance

Headteachers' standards 2020

Updated 13 October 2020

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Introduction

Headteachers are leading professionals and role models for the communities they serve. Their leadership is a significant factor in ensuring high quality teaching and achievement in schools[footnote 12] and a positive and enriching experience of education for pupils[footnote 8]. Together with those responsible for governance[footnote 5], they are custodians of the nation's schools.

Parents[footnote 6] and the wider public rightly hold high expectations of headteachers, given their influential position leading the teaching profession and on the young people who are their responsibility. The headteachers' standards set out how headteachers meet these high expectations. The standards are an important benchmark not only for headteachers and those who hold headteachers to account, but also for those who train and develop school leaders.

These standards replace the national standards of excellence for headteachers 2015. They are non-statutory and intended as guidance to be interpreted in the context of each individual headteacher and school. They are designed to be relevant to all headteachers.

The standards can be used to:

- shape headteachers' own practice and professional development, within and beyond the school
- support the recruitment and appointment of headteachers, including the development of job descriptions and person specifications
- underpin frameworks for the training of school leaders, including current and aspiring headteachers
- inform the performance management of headteachers

Relationship to the teachers' standards

The teachers' standards (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-standards) (2011, as amended), including the personal and professional code of conduct which applies to teachers, provide a foundation upon which the standards for headteachers are built.

Headteachers, like other teachers, are expected to meet the teachers' standards. The headteachers' standards articulate how headteachers can meet both the additional responsibilities of headship and the requirements of the teachers' standards.

The first section of the headteachers' standards outlines the ethics and professional conduct expected of headteachers. This is developed from part 2 of the teachers' standards. As such, they consist of statements that define the behaviour and attitudes which should be expected of headteachers.

The second section sets out 10 headteachers' standards. The first 6 standards build on the teachers' standards, whereas the other 4 standards focus on leadership responsibilities specific to headteachers. There is no hierarchy to the standards; the numbering below is only to aid identification.

1. School culture (builds on teachers' standard 1)
2. Teaching (builds on teachers' standards 2 and 4)
3. Curriculum and assessment (builds on teachers' standards 3 and 6)
4. Behaviour (builds on teachers' standard 7)
5. Additional and special educational needs (builds on teachers' standard 5)

6. Professional development (some match to teachers' standard 4)
7. Organisational management
8. School improvement
9. Working in partnership
10. Governance and accountability

Domains

The ethics and professional conduct section is at the core of the standards. This outlines the ethics and professional conduct expected of headteachers. It consists of statements that define the behaviour and attitudes which should be expected of headteachers.

The standards in section 2 cover interlinked domains of the headteacher's role all underpinned by the governance and accountability domain.

Culture and ethos

- school culture
- behaviour
- professional development

Curriculum and teaching

- teaching
- curriculum and assessment
- additional and special educational needs

Organisational effectiveness

- organisational management
- school improvement
- working in partnership[footnote 7]

Section 1: Ethics and professional conduct

Headteachers are expected to demonstrate consistently high standards of principled and professional conduct. They are expected to meet the teachers' standards and be responsible for providing the conditions in which teachers can fulfil them.

Headteachers uphold and demonstrate the Seven Principles of Public Life (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life) at all times. Known as the Nolan principles, these form the basis of the ethical standards expected of public office holders:

- selflessness
- integrity
- objectivity
- accountability
- openness

- honesty
- leadership

Headteachers uphold public trust in school leadership and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour. Both within and outside school, headteachers:

- build relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observe proper boundaries appropriate to their professional position
- show tolerance of and respect for the rights of others, recognising differences and respecting cultural diversity within contemporary Britain
- uphold fundamental British values[footnote 3], including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- ensure that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit their position, pupils' vulnerability or might lead pupils to break the law

As leaders of their school community and profession, headteachers:

- serve in the best interests of the school's pupils
- conduct themselves in a manner compatible with their influential position in society by behaving ethically, fulfilling their professional responsibilities and modelling the behaviour of a good citizen[footnote 4]
- uphold their obligation to give account and accept responsibility
- know, understand, and act within the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities
- take responsibility for their own continued professional development, engaging critically with educational research
- make a positive contribution to the wider education system

Section 2: Headteachers' standards

1. School culture

Headteachers:

- establish and sustain the school's ethos and strategic direction in partnership with those responsible for governance and through consultation with the school community
- create a culture where pupils experience a positive and enriching school life
- uphold ambitious educational standards which prepare pupils from all backgrounds for their next phase of education and life
- promote positive and respectful relationships across the school community and a safe, orderly and inclusive environment
- ensure a culture of high staff professionalism

2. Teaching

Headteachers:

- establish and sustain high-quality, expert teaching across all subjects and phases, built on an evidence-informed understanding of effective teaching and how pupils learn
- ensure teaching is underpinned by high levels of subject expertise and approaches which respect the distinct nature of subject disciplines or specialist domains
- ensure effective use is made of formative assessment

3. Curriculum and assessment

Headteachers:

- ensure a broad, structured and coherent curriculum entitlement which sets out the knowledge, skills and values that will be taught
- establish effective curricular leadership, developing subject leaders with high levels of relevant expertise with access to professional networks and communities
- ensure that all pupils are taught to read through the provision of evidence-informed approaches to reading, particularly the use of systematic synthetic phonics in schools that teach early reading
- ensure valid, reliable and proportionate approaches are used when assessing pupils' knowledge and understanding of the curriculum

4. Behaviour

Headteachers:

- establish and sustain high expectations of behaviour for all pupils, built upon relationships, rules and routines, which are understood clearly by all staff and pupils
- ensure high standards of pupil behaviour and courteous conduct in accordance with the school's behaviour policy
- implement consistent, fair and respectful approaches to managing behaviour
- ensure that adults within the school model and teach the behaviour of a good citizen

5. Additional and special educational needs and disabilities

Headteachers:

- ensure the school holds ambitious expectations for all pupils with additional and special educational needs and disabilities
- establish and sustain culture and practices that enable pupils to access the curriculum and learn effectively
- ensure the school works effectively in partnership with parents, carers and professionals, to identify the additional needs[footnote 9] and special educational needs and disabilities[footnote 10] of pupils, providing support and adaptation where appropriate
- ensure the school fulfils its statutory duties with regard to the SEND code of practice

6. Professional development

Headteachers:

- ensure staff have access to high-quality, sustained professional development opportunities, aligned to balance the priorities of whole-school improvement, team and individual needs
- prioritise the professional development of staff, ensuring effective planning, delivery and evaluation which is consistent with the approaches laid out in the standard for teachers' professional development
- ensure that professional development opportunities draw on expert provision from beyond the school, as well as within it, including nationally recognised career and professional frameworks and programmes to build capacity and support succession planning

7. Organisational management

Headteachers:

- ensure the protection and safety of pupils and staff through effective approaches to safeguarding[footnote 11], as part of the duty of care[footnote 1]
- prioritise and allocate financial resources appropriately, ensuring efficiency, effectiveness and probity in the use of public funds
- ensure staff are deployed and managed well with due attention paid to workload
- establish and oversee systems, processes and policies that enable the school to operate effectively and efficiently
- ensure rigorous approaches to identifying, managing and mitigating risk

8. Continuous school improvement

Headteachers:

- make use of effective and proportional processes of evaluation to identify and analyse complex or persistent problems and barriers which limit school effectiveness, and identify priority areas for improvement
- develop appropriate evidence-informed strategies for improvement as part of well-targeted plans which are realistic, timely, appropriately sequenced and suited to the school's context
- ensure careful and effective implementation of improvement strategies, which lead to sustained school improvement over time

9. Working in partnership

Headteachers:

- forge constructive relationships beyond the school, working in partnership with parents, carers and the local community
- commit their school to work successfully with other schools and organisations in a climate of mutual challenge and support
- establish and maintain working relationships with fellow professionals and colleagues across other public services to improve educational outcomes for all pupils

10. Governance and accountability

Headteachers:

- understand and welcome the role of effective governance, upholding their obligation to give account and accept responsibility
- establish and sustain professional working relationship with those responsible for governance
- ensure that staff know and understand their professional responsibilities and are held to account
- ensure the school effectively and efficiently operates within the required regulatory frameworks and meets all statutory duties

How the standards apply to different leadership roles

The headteacher's standards cover the full breadth of leadership responsibilities within a single school. For most headteachers in maintained schools or academies in single academy trusts this means that all of the standards should be relevant to them, though it is anticipated that they will meet some standards through the successful leadership and management of teams and individuals within their schools.

There can be a range of job roles and titles for those leading individual schools, particularly where a school is working within a group, such as in a multi-academy trust. Job roles and titles are various, including Head of School, and Associate Head, as are the governance arrangements to which headteachers are accountable. In some settings headteachers are responsible for leading more than one school. There are also instances of shared headship through co-headship or job-shares. Employers[footnote 2], in such instances, will therefore want to decide which standards are applicable to roles in these contexts.

Resources

Appraisal

- Governance handbook (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook)
- The Education (School Teachers' Appraisal) (England) Regulations 2012 (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/115/contents/made)
- Schoolteachers' pay and conditions (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-teachers-pay-and-conditions)

Equalities issues

- Equalities and Human Rights commission (EHRC) (https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en)
- Equality Act 2010: advice for schools (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools)

Fundamental British values

- Guidance on promoting British values in schools (https://www.gov.uk/government/news/guidance-on-promoting-british-values-in-schools-published)

National Leaders of Education

- National Leaders of Education (NLE) standards (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-the-national-leaders-of-education-nle-programme)

National professional qualifications

- National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership (NPQEL) (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-professional-qualification-for-executive-leadership-npqel)
- National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-professional-qualification-for-headship-npqh)
- National Professional Qualifications for Middle Leaders (NPQML) (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-professional-qualification-for-middle-leadership-npqml)
- National Professional Qualifications for Senior Leaders (NPQSL) (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-professional-qualification-for-senior-leadership-npqsl)

Principles of public life

- The Seven Principles of Public Life (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life)

SEND code of practice

- SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25)

Standard for teachers' professional development

- Standard for teachers' professional development (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standard-for-teachers-professional-development)

Teachers' standards

- Teachers' standards (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-standards)

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1. Schools: whatever schools the standards are applied in, such as maintained schools, academies and independent schools.
2. Pupils: should be taken to include references to children of all ages who are taught by qualified teachers, including those in the early years foundation stage, and those in post-16 education.
3. Those responsible for governance: should be taken to mean the accountable body for the school or group of schools: in local authority maintained schools, this will be the governing body and in an academy trust this will be the board of trustees. (Committees to whom the board has delegated functions should take account of guidance to the board, in so far as the relevant function has been delegated to them.)
4. Parents: includes carers, guardians and other adults acting in loco parentis.
5. Partnership: includes the external relationships with people and organisations that contribute to the safeguarding, education and support of pupils; to the development of the school community; and to the education system.

6. Fundamental British values: as articulated in the prevent strategy, (June 2011), these values include democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.
7. Good citizen: someone who adheres to fundamental British values.
8. Pupils with additional needs: refers to various groups of children and young people who for a variety of reasons may face additional barriers to education and learning. This makes it more difficult for them to achieve their full potential. This may include pupils who are economically disadvantaged (attracting pupil premium); who have, or have needed a social worker, including children subject to child in need or child protection plans, as well as looked-after and previously looked-after children; and young carers.
9. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND): a child or young person has SEND if they have a learning difficulty or a disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or a disability if he or she has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions.
10. Safeguarding: the action that is taken by headteachers and all staff to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. This includes but is not limited to:
    - protecting children from maltreatment
    - preventing impairment of children's health or development
    - ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
    - taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes
11. Duty of care: to do what is reasonable in all circumstances to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils and staff.
12. Employers: for the purposes of this document we define employer as the body or person responsible for employing the headteacher. Some responsibilities of the employer may be delegated.

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