The National Strategies' Programmes of Support for the National Challenge

Leading Core Subjects

Element 1: Developing support and challenge

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Rationale

The relationship between the senior line manager (SLM) and subject leader (SL) is central to the success of the school and, in turn, the life chances of young people. In practice, however, there are often considerable variations in the way senior leaders work with the SLs they manage. To be effective in supporting, challenging and holding SLs to account, senior leaders have to be able to extend their knowledge of practice beyond their own subject area, leading to consistency across the school, and develop dialogue that:

- sharpens the focus on and effective management of core subject-specific issues and barriers to success
- provides the insights and confidence to find effective solutions to barriers presented
- focuses on the outcomes as well as the processes of leadership and management
- supports the transfer of subject-specific pedagogy to generic high-quality teaching and learning
- gives an overview of the whole curriculum and supports the development of applied learning
- identifies how particular core subject areas contribute to pupils' experience of the whole curriculum.

This element is particularly tailored to meet the needs of senior leaders who have been recently appointed, have responsibility for subjects outside their specialist knowledge and/or need support in overcoming barriers to progress. It provides practical examples of how the SLM can lead sustainable improvement by supporting, challenging and holding to account SLs and may be particularly useful in supporting coaching by the head or another senior leader.

While the materials can be used in all core curriculum areas, they also include resources and materials linked to science and mathematics, where non-specialist senior leaders face particular issues related to the nature of the subject.

Quality standards

The quality standards for this element are those used in Stronger Management Systems Element 1 High quality and effective line-management structures and practice. Particular areas explored in this element are shown in bold:

1. The headteacher and governors have established and communicated a compelling vision and positive culture for change and improvement.
2. **Every aspect of the school's work is part of a chain of line management and accountability that leads via the leadership team to the headteacher.**
3. **There are strong and productive relationships between line managers and those they manage, permitting both support and challenge at the appropriate times.**

4. **There are regular and monitored meetings between line managers and those they manage which take place at least once a month. These are timetabled, have agendas to which each party contributes, and actions are recorded**
5. Formal and calendared performance management review meetings are carried out at least twice a year and are informed both by outcomes of monitoring by the manager and self-evaluation by the reviewee.
6. **Line-management meetings are recognised and used as an opportunity for professional development through coaching and mentoring.**
7. The senior leadership line-management role includes monitoring of whole-school policy and practice in relation to teaching and learning, behaviour and attendance, through lesson observation, work scrutiny, pupil interviews and attendance at department or team meetings.

The emphasis in this element is on describing, building and strengthening the professional relationship between SLM and SL and overcoming barriers to improvement. The Stronger Management Systems programme offers further guidance on exploring aspects of leadership and management in more detail. Element 1, in particular, offers guidance on the development of high quality and effective line-management structures and offers a detailed eight step model of change.

As a result of a six-week improvement process related to this element, there will be improved practice to ensure:

- greater impact of SLM and SL dialogue in relation to one or more of the quality standards.

We recommend that you begin by using the self-assessment tool in the User Guide. This provides an opportunity to rate performance and explore concepts underlying the relevant quality standard. For this element, it may be helpful for the SLM to prepare this work through a review with the headteacher or leadership coach, then to repeat the exercise with the relevant SL to determine a focus for action.

The same tool can then be used again later to see what progress has been made.

Exemplification

In working with a SL and team, it is important for SLMs to focus on the most effective processes and actions that have the potential to bring challenge and support to the work of the SL, other teaching and learning responsibility (TLR) holders and the department. Some examples of these are explored in **CPD Session 1 on page 8 of this document**. If modelled effectively, they will be adopted by the subject team and may have wider impact.

The focus and sequence of line-management meetings needs to be agreed and implemented consistently across the school to enable the SLT:
- to evaluate progress against priorities
- to discuss tactics in advance of each meeting, share good practice, offer peer support and/or coaching by the headteacher
- to review outcomes and implications following the meeting.

This approach can be helpful in supporting senior leaders who are new in post, particularly when linked with coaching support. In addition, schools may consider using triads where one senior leader works with two SLs or where pairs of senior leaders work together on line-management activities during an induction period. These approaches are explored in **CPD Session 2 on page 9 of this document**, which includes a case study.

SLMs need to have a clear understanding of how change occurs and plan their work accordingly. They should anticipate where barriers and obstacles will occur and be proactive in dealing with these. **CPD Session 3 on page 10 of this document** provides examples of these to stimulate discussion while **CPD Session 4 on page 11 of this document** addresses how the SLM can drive changes to teaching and learning in science.

The example of a six-week improvement cycle has been provided below as a template for planning action. It describes actions to address specific issues to make measurable progress towards the quality standards set out above. In some schools, it may be desirable to accelerate development through, for example, completion of the first three weeks of activity in a single week.

Six-weekly improvement cycle

How can I improve my effectiveness as line manager of a core department?	
	Impact on leadership
Week 1 **SLM with headteacher** Use self-assessment and CPD Session 1 to identify priorities and high impact actions. Headteacher to coach line manager in preparing for meeting	Clear priorities identified to improve leadership offered to SL
Week 2 **SLM with SL** Use line-management meeting to review effectiveness of work to date and agree agenda for next three meetings **SLM with headteacher** Meet after line-management meeting to review effectiveness and offer coaching support	Clear priorities and action agreed for SL to improve leadership
Week 3 **SLM with SL** New format line-management meeting takes place. SLM explores areas where he or she can support the SL in leading change in the department and requests an action plan. SLM to support the SL to find solutions to identified barriers	Describe strategies for SLM to help support improvement of SL leadership
Weeks 4–5: Review **SLM with SL (and LA consultant if appropriate)** Weekly review meetings to evidence, progress and find solutions to barriers as they arise	
Week 6: Where are we now? **SLM with headteacher** **Return to LCS self-assessment tool** to review progress, share evidence of impact and consider next steps **Senior leadership team (SLT)** Improvement programme shared and team asked to consider how line-management meetings can be more successful across the school through more consistent practices and agree common agenda **SLM with SL** Further planned action following review	SLM and SL have clear priorities for next steps to improve leadership. Potential for wider development of effective line management to lead into **SMS Element 1**

Self-assessment

Outcomes

The expected outcomes for each quality standard explored in this element are shown in bold below. In reviewing against these, the Raising attainment plan (RAP) management group (RMG), SLT and SL should make a judgement about how far, and in what ways the expected outcomes have been met:

After six weeks of implementation, make a judgement about the extent to which the senior leader supports and challenges departments so that:	Specify exactly who will make the judgement; choose from SLM, SL, key teachers, advanced skills teacher (AST), external consultant	Specify how this will inform the RAP and next steps
There is a chain of line management and accountability to the headteacher, **evidenced by headteacher and/or leadership team review and action in response to line-management meetings**		
Strong and productive relationships permit both support and challenge, evidenced by **a clear and consistent focus on reviewing and maximising pupils' progress through effective teaching and learning**		
Regular meetings are timetabled, and have agendas to which each party contributes. Actions are recorded **and there is evidence of positive impact on pupils and staff**		
Line-management meetings are used as an opportunity for professional development through coaching and mentoring **and enable the SL to be an effective leader and manager**		

Review

In reviewing the impact of the improvement activity, the SLM, SL and LA consultant should aim to make a judgement about **how far, and in what ways:**

The relevant department has capacity to sustain improvement processes.

Any areas of improvement needing further support are identified including next steps for development work.

Professional development

CPD Session 1 (1 hour)
Provides opportunities to consider and plan high-impact actions in working with an SL.
It can be used for:
- discussion between SLM and headteacher or leadership coach
- a wider SLT development workshop.

The session provides examples of actions to build an effective working relationship with a nominated SL.

Objectives
- To identify the focus of SLM work with nominated SL.
- To agree and plan action as part of routine line-management work.

Resources
High-impact actions sheet (Page 7) – examples of key areas for discussion between SLMs and SLs.

Activity 1 (20 mins)
Discuss 'High-impact actions' sheet and consider:
- What are the three actions with the greatest potential for impact in moving forward the department you are line managing?
- Why have you selected them?
- Are there other high-impact activities you have used that you could use again?

Activity 2 (20 mins)
In taking forward one of these, explore how you will:
- adapt it for your situation
- prepare the ground to ensure that the discussion is effective and has subsequent impact
- ensure a good balance between monitoring, accountability and support.

Activity 3 (20 mins)
Finally, plan (with specific actions and a timeline) how you will take this forward though your regular meetings with the SL.

CPD Session 2 (1 hour)
Provides opportunities to review and sharpen line management to increase impact and consistency. It is designed for flexible use. This could involve:
- SLT review
- discussion between SLT and SLs' forum/heads of department meeting.

The session provides a case study of how one school has developed consistent approaches to line-management structures across the school as a stimulus for review in your own school.

Objectives
- To explore the potential for consistent approaches to line management.
- To agree and plan action.

Resources
Case study 1(Page 11) - Quality assurance dialogue

Activity 1 (20 mins)
Review the case study and consider the strengths and weaknesses of this approach and of your school's approach. Consider how, in your school, you ensure:
- consistent, planned and shared focuses for key line-management discussions
- the process is of high quality
- there are opportunities for SLT/line managers to plan together in advance of meeting, to share intelligence gathered and act on what has been learned.

Activity 2 (30 mins)
Agree any changes, wider discussion required and/or specific actions and timeline.

CPD Session 3 (75 mins)
Provides opportunities to deal with barriers to change and improvement. It is designed for either
- discussion between SLM and headteacher/leadership coach
- a wider SLT development workshop.

The session explores barriers to change in general and in relation to science.

Objectives
- To identify and overcome barriers to change through effective SLM leadership of SL work.

Resources
The thing is, it can't be done (Page 10) – general barriers to change
Overcoming barriers in science (Page 13) – issues in the leadership and management of science

Activity 1 (15 mins)
Review the materials. Explore any barriers that you face and, for each, explore two or three ways in which you might overcome these.

Activity 2 (45 mins)
Where possible, work in triads as follows:
- Participant 1 talks about the extent to which he or she faces these issues as SLM and other barriers to effective management   (5 mins)
- Participants 2 and 3 provide feedback on:
  - what was said
  - what was not said   (5 mins)
- The triad generates some possible ways forward   (5 mins)

Roles rotate so each person has an opportunity to speak.

Activity 3 (15 mins)
Agree any changes, areas for wider discussion, specific actions and timeline.

CPD Session 4 (1 hour)
Provides opportunities to review how to overcome resistance to changes in pedagogy.
It can be used for:

- discussion between SLM and headteacher/leadership coach
- a wider SLT development workshop.

The session uses a case study from science.

Objectives
To explore further barriers to changes in pedagogy.

Resources
Case study 2 (science) (Page 12) – supporting the department to evaluate the quality
of teaching and learning in science, particularly *How science works.*

Activity 1 (15 mins)
Review the case study and agree the most significant actions taken by the school in
shifting pedagogy. Consider:

- which are most powerful
- other successful approaches you have used.

Activity 2 (45 mins)
Working in triads:

- Participant 1 talks about the extent to which he or she faces these issues as
  SLM and other barriers to effective management   (5 mins)
- Participants 2 and 3 provide feedback on:
  - what was said
  - what was not said   (5 mins)
- The triad generates some possible ways forward   (5 mins)

Roles rotate so each person has an opportunity to speak.

Resources
High impact actions – for use in CPD Session 1

The table below sets out some key areas for discussion between SLMs and SLs as part of their routine work.

Area	Approach
Setting ground rules Agree how SLM and SL work together	Set out the purpose of line-management sessions, plan and agree programme of work and its relationship with annual planning and departmental meetings/workshops.
Deep dive Focus on Wave 1, 2 and 3 intervention by detailed review of a small number of pupils	Select or ask the SL to identify a small number of named pupils who are not making the progress they should. Ask the SL to • explain why this has happened • identify the areas where each pupil's progress needs to accelerate • demonstrate how relevant teacher's planning is enabling the pupil to catch up, using the secondary frameworks as a point of reference (Wave 1) • explain what other interventions are in place (Wave 2 and 3) • explain when and how progress will be evaluated, including the involvement of parents/carers.
Progress review Use data to look for wider subject patterns	Trawl data to look at correlation between progress and/or attitude to learning data, and teaching group. Where there are issues, ask SL to explain: • approaches to monitoring group's progress (e.g. discussion with pupils and teacher) • how teacher planning is monitored, supported and challenged • the impact of this.
Teacher subject knowledge Check out and fill gaps	Ask the SL to report on any gaps in teacher subject knowledge and in particular: • the support that has been offered and its impact.
Professional learning and development Test the extent to which CPD has impact	Ask how subject meetings raise standards and improve pedagogy and in particular: • obtain an example from each member of the team of how subject CPD has helped improve their teaching • how much time is spent on administration and how this can be minimised • how regularly good practice is shared • how the impact of CPD on pupils' learning experiences is evaluated.
Risk management	Ask what arrangements the subject team has in place: • to help staff deal with workload, stress and related issues • as a contingency plan in case of staff sickness or leave of absence.
Workforce deployment	Ask for an explanation of how teachers and others are deployed to help the school address its priorities for improvement and build capacity for the future.

Problem-solving	Ask the SL and/or TLR holders to bring a difficult issue to the discussion where they believe a broader perspective would help. Ask them to generate possibilities and critique them. Involve another curriculum leader if you can.
Communication with parents/carers	Nominate an area/year group and ask the SL to talk you through: • the calendar for communication of key information • examples of materials • how the SL triggers, responds to and monitors parent contact.
Shared review	Agree a group of pupils, linked with an area for improvement. Arrange for them to talk with the two of you as a group, bringing their work in that subject, targets and planners/record of homework, together with work from other core subjects. Review this together and, at the end, agree judgements and actions.
Environment	Wherever possible, hold line-management meetings in the curriculum area, not in a central office. In an early session, ask the SL to walk round teaching spaces with you and explain: • subject rationale for teaching environment/links with whole-school policy • how environment is monitored, developed, supported and challenged • use of pupil voice in developing learning.
Learning conversations	In relation to an identified group of pupils, ask the SL to explain and bring examples of how marking, feedback and target setting are used to support learning and increase progress. In advance of the meeting, see the pupils and ask them about their experience of conversations about learning – note what they say and share it at the meeting.
Improvement planning	Ask SL to share the departmental school self-evaluation form (SEF) and improvement plan. Where necessary, focus this down to seek out evidence of impact over a short period of time.

The thing is, it can't be done. **– For use in CPD Session 3**

Think about how you will deal with the following SL perspectives.

We've done it before and it didn't work then and/or it can't be done.
We've run out of things to try. If you can tell us what to do, we'll do it.
We've done everything we can, so it's really up to you now.
I agree with everything you've said, but there just isn't the time. So, tell me what I shouldn't do.
I really haven't got time to meet this week.
If only someone would sort out the behaviour, we could really focus on teaching.

Case studies

Case study 1 – for use in CPD Session 2
A school develops a quality assurance dialogue in order to strengthen the accountability of SLs and senior leader for school improvement

Context
A school system involving triads was set up. The triads consisted of two SLs and a senior leader who had line-management responsibility for their work. The school found that this was more effective than 1:1 discussions because it:

- introduced a strong element of peer challenge
- made a separation between line-manager discussions about standards/progress and coaching
- matched SLs with different levels of experience and effectiveness
- encouraged closer working between subject teams
- focused on and aimed to reduce in-school variation.

A consistent focus was identified across the school for each meeting on a half-termly basis. SLs were expected to discuss with their departments, plan with TLR holder, bring forward evidence and carefully prepare for a session that was strictly timed to last for one hour.

The sessions were structured as follows and chaired by the SLM. The headteacher, who did not have a direct line-management role, observed sessions to ensure quality and promote consistency.

	Quality assurance – structure of dialogue session	
1	Senior leader summarises focus and structure of session	5 mins
2	SL1 offers evidence, analysis and proposed next steps without interruption	10 mins
3	SL2 and SLM reflect, without interruption, on: • what was said • what was not said • the clarity and appropriateness of future action	10 mins
4	SL1 responds to issues and the triad agrees key messages and actions	5 mins
5	SL2 offers evidence, analysis and proposed next steps without interruption	10 mins
6	SL1 and SLM reflect, without interruption on: • what was said • what was not said • the clarity and appropriateness of future action	10 mins
7	SL2 responds to issues and the triad agrees key messages and actions	5 mins
8	Triad discussion – each SL summarises changes to thinking and key actions, steered and challenged by SLM	5 mins
9	SLs produce written note of action within 24 hours for SLM and SLT/HT	

Case study 2 (science) – for use in CPD Session 4
Supporting the department to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in science, particularly *How science works*

Following a meeting with the SL, the SLM proposed a review of the science department. Data indicated a declining pattern of progress with specific concerns about the percentage of pupils making two levels of progress from Key Stage 3 to 4.

Evidence from several lesson observations showed that teachers had detailed plans in place that drew heavily on the specification content from the (modular) courses. The timing was determined by the schedule of summative assessments and the teachers were keen to ensure that the subject material was covered. There were a number of demonstrations and practical activities that were used to reinforce the material from the teacher input. In an ensuing discussion, the SL presented the view that progress was limited because the pupils experienced difficulties with assimilating the amount of material. She felt that effort needed to be focused on pupils being able to recall key ideas but admitted that the opportunities to review and consolidate learning were limited in the current scheme of work.

The senior leader decided to approach the local authority National Strategies science consultant to support the science department. During an initial meeting the consultant explained about the changing nature of the science curriculum and the development of *How science works.* 'Developing ideas and theories to explain the world' is at the heart of science. It is more than 'practical work' because it requires pupils to experience:

- critical analysis and linking of evidence to support or refute ideas and theories
- enquiry work that explores questions through the gathering and evaluation of evidence that is both reliable and valid
- how evidence comes from the collection and critical interpretation of both primary and secondary data
- how evidence may be influenced by contexts such as culture, politics or ethics and how scientific communities function to strengthen the quality of explanations.

The senior leader worked with the consultant to identify a short list of key characteristics that would help him to decide how well *How science works* underpins the work of the science department. The consultant supported the senior leader and SL in using this list during the lesson observations across the department. The list of characteristics and the findings from these observations were presented to the department and used to identify professional development needs. This is reproduced below.

Checklist for *How science works*

In science lessons where *How science works* is embedded:

Teachers:
- identify learning objectives and outcomes that clearly identify how pupils are developing and applying the skills of *How science works* to become critical and creative thinkers
- plan purposeful practical work (i.e. not following a 'recipe')
- give accurate, well-paced explanations that help pupils make links to previous work, methodology or other scientific ideas
- question and challenge pupils' assumptions, misconceptions, working methods and understanding of the nature of science
- create opportunities for pupils to discuss and explore their ideas and arguments
- make it clear how and why scientists use models
- use contemporary contexts (e.g. science in the media).

Teachers **require pupils** to:
- pose problems or suggest a line of enquiry
- design an appropriate approach to answer a scientific question
- identify, explain and evaluate results
- use models and analogies in their explanations and also question the appropriateness of those models
- explain and apply their reasoning to a scientific problem
- challenge each other's misconceptions.

Overcoming barriers in science – for CPD Session 3

Possible barriers	Guidance – What SLM should do	Support
Teachers are not confident in planning safe and engaging practical activities	Set up coaching triads using good practice within the department and also from other areas such as design and technology. SLM leads with the SL to identify barriers, both general and individual. From this identification they must use support to explore and agree solutions	CLEAPSS will give support for health and safety and also risk assessments LA science consultants to support CPD focusing on the planning of interactive activities for all groups
Concerns relating to behaviour management limits practical activities within the department	Make better use of other adults during lessons – plan to involve as many technicians, HLTAs, TAs as possible Use a confident practitioner to work together to develop techniques to manage behaviour in a practical context and team teach to share expertise	Use SLDM materials autumn 2007 LA consultants
Learning outcomes from practical activities are either not clear or learning is not evidenced	The SLM and SL work with the department collectively to develop learning outcomes and success criteria for a Year 11 unit. Trial, and use lead practitioners to evaluate and develop practice through coaching dialogues SLM and SL consider a variety of pupil groupings and how they can be managed to support pupil learning	LA consultants
Group talk is underdeveloped and as a result pupils make more limited progress within practical activities	Plan a six-week cycle to develop group talk and argument	See Core Plus element 3 LA consultants

Resources and web links (science)

- *Creating a progress culture* DCSF ref 00762-2007BKT-EN
- *Going for gold: Securing attainment* DCSF ref 00760-2007BKT-EN
- CLEAPPSS www.cleapss.org.uk
- *Developing our future scientists* – including interactive teaching resources and getting more pupils to level 6 and beyond DCSF ref 00097-2008PCK-EN
- *Strengthening teaching and learning in science through using different pedagogies* DCSF ref 0703-2004G
- *Enhancing teaching and learning in secondary science* DVD-ROM DCSF ref 0349-2006DVD-EN
- Subject leader development materials – spring 2006, autumn 2007 www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/secondary/keystage3/downloads
- National Strategies Framework for Secondary Science www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies/secondary/framework/