

NCSL's *Leading Coaching in Schools* - summary

Developing coaching helps team leaders address many of the issues facing schools today: This NCSL publication is grounded in evidence from research and provides you with a practical guide to the implications of the new National Framework for Mentoring and Coaching.

Whilst it takes many different forms, coaching is a *joint enterprise* in which one person supports another to develop their understanding and practice in an area *defined by their own needs and interests*. The coach helps the learner to identify a clearly focused aspect of practice upon which to work. They will secure a positive rapport with their colleague, listen to their needs and concerns, ask probing questions that help clarify the development area and ask challenging questions that stretch their awareness and perspective of the issue. The coach will help the learner identify new behaviours and help them embed enhanced practice. Coaching interactions of this nature can be short, informal, learning conversations, as well as longer, sustained and formally structured CPD opportunities. Although informal, such conversations are most effective when driven by clear principles that are linked to action. School leaders have an important role to play in promoting everyone's desire to make a difference to student learning and demonstrating their commitment to their own and others' professional learning. It proposes that really professional learners are committed to:

- understanding their own learning needs
- reflecting on their own practice
- taking an increasingly active role in their own learning
- acting on what is learned to improve pupil learning

The document sets out **six propositions** about the role of school leaders.

- Leaders have a moral responsibility to promote everyone's learning, both adults and pupils
- Leaders have a moral imperative to develop the next generation of school leaders
- High-quality coaching in schools supports professional development, leadership sustainability and school improvement
- Leaders therefore have a responsibility for providing the processes, structures and resources to support coaching
- Central to these propositions is the role of learning conversations, which make tacit knowledge explicit and engages staff in open and honest feedback
- Leaders should model the dialogue and personal approaches that create a culture of high-quality coaching interactions across the school.

It offers **seven action implications** for school leaders that respond to these propositions.

- To develop a system, first develop yourself
- Make sense of the whole
- Create systems – that emphasise learner entitlement and responsibilities
- Focus on principles
- Equip staff with coaching skills
- Review and reward good coaching practice
- Use and build external links and networks

It suggests that good coaching practice in schools is built on **four essential qualities**:

- a desire to make a difference to student learning
- a commitment to professional learning
- a belief in the abilities of colleagues
- a commitment to developing emotional intelligence

and is grounded in **five key skills**:

- establishing rapport and trust
- listening for meaning
- questioning for understanding
- prompting action, reflection and learning
- developing confidence and celebrating success

Further details about the National Framework for Mentoring and Coaching and a variety of tools, case studies and links can be found at www.ncsl.org.uk/coaching