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A Model of School Leadership in Challenging Urban Environments

Foreword

In a bygone, deferential age when urban schools knew their place, they turned out hundreds of thousands of young people prepared to make a career in one of the plentiful supply of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs. In those days the role of headteacher was an easier one than it is today.

That world has gone. Now to be a leader in most urban schools – especially those serving youngsters from families facing socio-economic challenge – requires character and a range of qualities including indomitable will and a passion for success that brooks no denial.

Above all, such headteachers require serious professional knowledge and experience backed by a belief that all youngsters can succeed. They need to believe in the ‘transformability’ of youngsters and to be able to communicate it with conviction to their staff, their pupils and their community. They need to inspire.

This document – and the move towards acknowledging and accrediting the uniqueness of the urban school leader – affirms the characteristics of existing successful urban school leaders and increases the likelihood of finding more potential leaders with the same character qualities and abilities.

The document provides an insight into what such leaders do, and what is special about it. It’s true to say that what leaders do, the time they spend on the task and especially how they do it, has a huge influence on the climate and culture of the school.

It has always seemed to me that urban school leaders are perpetually carrying out, often simultaneously, six activities.

First they create energy by talking with, not about staff; by asking ‘what if’, speculative questions; by being fussy about appointments and ensuring that they don’t inadvertently appoint ‘energy consumers’. They look for optimists – those who say ‘How could we’ rather than ‘Why we can’t’.

Secondly they build capacity, for example, by teaching a lesson when observed by other staff, by taking somebody’s class to enable them to see another’s practice, by rotating the chair of meetings to grow the skill of colleagues.

Thirdly they always extend the vision – by listening to others and adding their ideas to the vision, by asking ‘why not’, by circulating articles to read and above all, by telling stories and speculating about possibilities.

Fourthly they seek and chart improvement by encouraging benchmarking, by extending horizontal links and by using critical review, systematically involving all the staff. They celebrate real success.

Fifthly they secure the environment by ensuring classroom teaching and learning materials are plentiful, up-to-date and

well-organised, by reviewing meetings schedules so that staff are not overwhelmed by transactional business and by getting the details right.

Finally they minimise risk for others by taking the blame when something goes wrong, by reminding people of all the good things, by talking of the future as well as the present, by ensuring that people feel appreciated whenever they do things well and by acting as a mediator and ambassador with the external world.

We are in the middle of an exciting journey of discovery about the possibilities of urban schooling and what urban school leaders can achieve. The journey started in the 1990s and has been given a focus by the Excellence in Cities programme introduced in 1999 and sustained and extended since then. We are now showing that there is no necessary correlation between socio-economic disadvantage and educational failure. We have the statistics and the real stories to show we are making a difference.

This venture is designed to ensure that those leading this adventure are recognised and in doing so we hope attract others with the same personal qualities and character to join an educational expedition which is pushing back the frontiers of what’s possible.

By Tim Brighouse, Chief Adviser to London Schools

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1. Introduction

This document describes some of the attributes that distinguish highly effective headteachers in challenging urban environments.

It doesn't describe all that they do. It doesn't describe the things they have in common with all headteachers, successful or unsuccessful, urban, rural or suburban. Neither does it capture the unique and individual ways they go about their work.

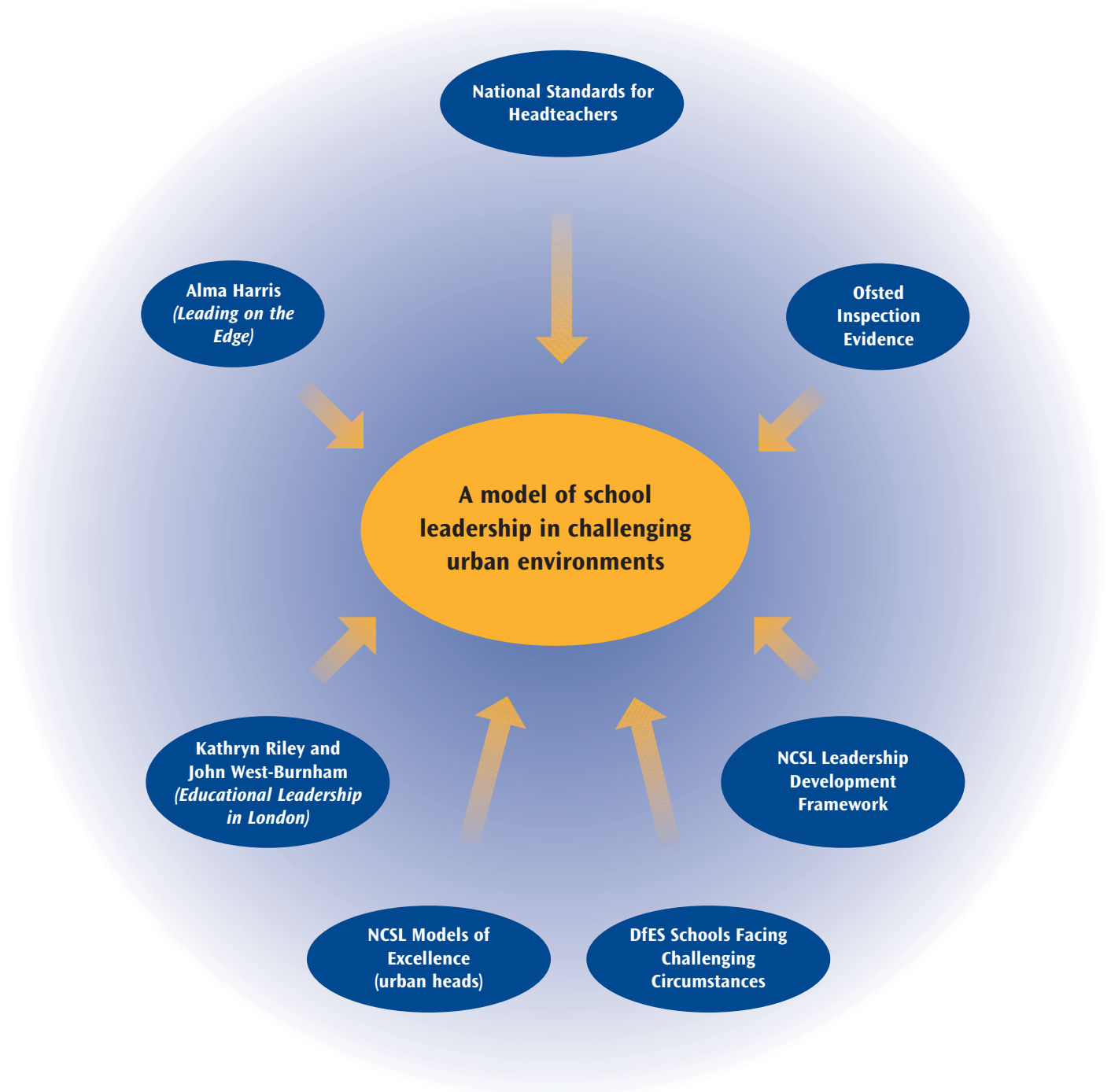
Instead, it tries to describe the common core of values and behaviours required to succeed in these specific environments. These are the sort of attributes we need to spot during recruitment and support through development programmes. There are nine such attributes in this document, ranging from conviction through resilience to judgement.

The findings in this document are based on many sources of research and evidence – both dedicated interviews with successful urban headteachers, and existing materials, including the LPSH models of excellence, *Leading on the Edge* by Alma Harris, *Educational Leadership in London* by Kathryn Riley and John West-Burnham, Ofsted inspection evidence and the National Standards for Headteachers.

The framework is intended to:

- contribute to the discussion about leadership and school improvement in challenging urban schools
- provide a clear framework and set of criteria for the selection and recruitment of headteachers for urban schools
- improve career choices
- inform the provision of training and development for current and aspiring headteachers

Summary of sources of evidence



2. Why do we need this model?

Schools are one of the most powerful tools we possess to raise the aspirations, confidence and prosperity of communities. As envisaged in the debate on extended schools and the new Children's Bill, schools create social capital. They provide employment directly as well as contributing to a more employable workforce. They can widen horizons and improve understanding among different groups. They can integrate and house a wide range of local services, helping them to become accessible and responsive to the local community.

Almost uniquely among local government services, schools focus on the future rather than dealing with past incidents or the 'problems' of society.

The relationship between school and community works both ways, of course. It is impossible to isolate the classroom from the influence of home and community, to create an oasis of learning inside a desert of ambition. Teachers' ability to do their job – and their satisfaction from the job – depends on the engagement of families with the school.

Urban schools, therefore, can be victims of a wider legacy of the neglect and alienation of whole communities, making them front line targets of crime, vandalism and aggression. Schools have also, at times, contributed to this legacy by forging relationships of authority, hierarchy and dependency with communities. Schools can be forbidding institutions to some parents, conditioned by their own schooling experience.

In some urban environments children and their families may be switched off from the whole concept of education, finding it hard to see how it can make a difference to their lives. This is compounded if local schools are underperforming – struggling to enforce standards of behaviour and achievement, troubled by poor facilities, high staff turnover and absence rates.

Yet such disenchantment is not universally true, and even where it does exist it is not inevitable. With passion and dedication, talented teachers readily awaken the belief in education as a creator of opportunity. It is not surprising therefore that "many headteachers and teachers actively choose to work in schools in difficult contexts and would not wish to work in another type of school."¹

This is when we start to notice the other challenges of the urban environment, however. Ofsted evidence indicates difficulties with high pupil mobility, poor health, unemployment and poverty, falling rolls, violent historical associations and difficulties in recruiting staff. Ethnic diversity can be a source of richness and strength if nurtured, or a source of conflict and tension if neglected. By contrast, excessive homogeneity can be an equal problem in some areas.

Schools in neighbourhood renewal areas (NRAs), for example, have three times as many children in poverty as the national average. On average their communities have 30 per cent higher mortality rates and three times as much burglary. Schools in NRAs often face very low attainment on entry and may have high numbers of pupils on the at-risk register.

There are limits to the power of government to solve these problems from the centre. Central reform efforts find it hard to respond to local circumstances and can diminish the motivation of professionals by reducing their freedom to act. Sustained improvement in schools must be led by schools themselves. "The role of central and local government is not to run schools but instead to help them build capacity."²

In seeking to describe some of the common problems and trends, it is easy to fall into the trap of presenting a single urban environment for schools, and of imagining that all schools face the same challenges, demanding the same responses. This is far from the truth. Compare the issues facing a school in a predominantly white ex-mining town, facing high levels of long-term unemployment and the destruction of their traditional sources of community with a vibrant, ethnically diverse, highly mobile inner city neighbourhood. Some urban schools are amongst the most successful in the country, some have a long history of underperformance. Other schools may have experienced a recent trauma, disrupting otherwise steady progress.

The differences between urban schools may be as interesting as their similarities. It raises the question: would the same style of leadership work for all of these schools?

There will be a common core – a need for a certain robustness in the face of pressures and the ability to focus on the key tasks for raising or maintaining standards. Perhaps most important is an ability to read the community itself, adapting the style and content of provision to local needs and opening up appropriate channels of communication. The capacity to recognise and respond to differences is perhaps the common factor.

This makes the leadership of schools in the more challenging urban environments one of the most important delivery roles in government. In the words of the DfES, "We know that without strong leadership, schools are destined to struggle."³ Alma Harris also points out that: "Evidence shows that schools in challenging circumstances can improve levels of student performance and achievement...and that the quality of leadership is a major contributory factor."⁴ The long-term fortunes of a generation may rest upon their stewardship. For this reason, we need the best headteachers in these schools. We need them to join, to remain energised by the challenge and to stay to see the job through.

¹ Alma Harris, *Leading on the Edge: Successful Leadership in Schools in Challenging Circumstances* (2004).

² David Miliband, *Personalised Learning* (2004).

³ Education and Skills: Investment for Reform, DfES (2002).

⁴ Alma Harris, *ibid.*

To spot the best heads, and those middle and senior leaders with the potential to become outstanding urban headteachers, we should start with a clear definition of what they do. What are the essential attributes and qualities that lead to success? How can the challenges we have sketched out be met?

We can't demand perfection in every sphere – no such headteacher exists – but we can expect the highest standards where it matters most. Nor should we demand conformity or appear to provide a generic recipe for success. Rather than saying 'This is what you must do' we must instead ask 'How will you meet these challenges?'

We should move away from evaluating performance as generically 'good' or 'bad' but rather as 'currently effective or ineffective in a specific context'.

As well as ensuring a better fit between the existing pool of candidates and the roles available, this framework can also help to increase the pool of candidates – both by creating targeted development opportunities for the next generation and also by laying down a challenge.

High standards attract the best, rising to the challenge and the status. A common definition of the role celebrates achievement, aids dialogue, reinforces commitment and permits reflection, helping more people to thrive in the job for longer.

Thus, the four key applications of the framework in this document are:

- recruitment
- talent management and succession planning
- professional development
- celebration

Similar models have already been used successfully to support headteachers and raise standards in other contexts, most notably the models of excellence used by NCSL in programmes like LPSH. These, too, describe the characteristics and approaches that tend to distinguish the effective performers among heads across the country.

Do we actually need another model? What is so different about urban leadership that it demands such attention? The fact that the job is difficult – perhaps more difficult than leading a school in more favoured contexts – is not a sufficient answer. This may only imply that urban heads need more of the same. Surely schools, whatever the context, are not so different as to demand utterly incompatible types of leadership?

The evidence drawn upon in the production of this framework suggests that, although the challenges in urban schools are of the same kind as in other schools, their

intensity, volatility, frequency and variety create a distinct leadership challenge, which demands characteristics and qualities that may not be so crucial in other roles, and changes the emphasis or combination of others.

All successful headteachers are guided by a moral purpose, for example, and yet urban heads are often distinguished by a burning desire to build opportunities for the most disadvantaged, even in the face of opposition and despair. All successful heads communicate a compelling vision for the future of their school; urban heads must ensure this vision remains tightly focused on key priorities despite daily disruption. All heads must reach out to their communities; urban heads must often read and reconcile multiple agendas.

Schools, like the students within them, are not helpless victims of socio-economic circumstances. Some of the most vibrant and successful schools in the country exist within so-called challenging environments. They succeed not by ignoring the 'urban difference' or by copying the tactics of more favoured locations but by building on their unique strengths, whether they be diversity in the community or dedication among staff. There is a strong body of evidence that schools in challenging circumstances can raise standards, and that this occurs when initiatives take account of their unique circumstances and take a people-centred approach to change – distributing leadership across the school community.

3. Using the framework

Section five contains nine qualities or characteristics that distinguish highly effective headteachers of schools in neighbourhood renewal areas and other challenging urban environments. This list does not capture everything these heads do, nor attempt to provide a one-size-fits-all recipe for success. Rather it presents the minimum number of qualities which we believe:

- are essential to success in the majority of urban environments
- differentiate the most effective heads

Within this framework, different heads will develop different styles and unique approaches. Different schools in different contexts will emphasise and prioritise the qualities in different ways; or even demand unique skills. It is therefore essential that this model is used with the appropriate amount of reflection. We suggest that it is a starting point rather than an end point.

We have focused on the minimum number of qualities in order to create a framework which can be rapidly understood, internalised and used on a day-to-day basis by role holders. It is also essential that any form of assessment or selection focuses on a manageable number of attributes.

There is a strong correlation between this model of urban school leadership and both the NCSL models of excellence and the National Standards for Headteachers. To demonstrate this we have cross-referenced these qualities with their equivalents in the models and standards.

An annex to the main document contains further information on the connections. This framework differs from the others, however, both in the intensity of some characteristics, the way they are combined and in a small number of entirely new characteristics.

In section five we present each quality or characteristic on a single page with the following information:

Title	The name of the characteristic
Description	A summary of what it looks like, including important nuances.
How will you know it?	Positive and negative behavioural indicators – what you might expect to see and what you would hope not to see in a headteacher who exhibited this characteristic.
Models of excellence	A cross reference to the relevant characteristics (with their level) in the NCSL models of excellence.
The urban difference	What is it about this characteristic or the way it is applied that distinguishes successful heads in NRAs from heads in other contexts?
Sowing the seeds	The way the characteristic develops over time; what you might look for in someone with potential; and how you can support people's development. This section is also accompanied by some proposed levels for each characteristic.
Connections	The connections between this characteristic and the other characteristics in the framework.
Core assessment question	If you were recruiting a headteacher for a school in an NRA, what evidence are you looking for that they possess the characteristic?

On the next page, we present a graphical key to the framework, indicating where each of the above sections is placed.

Key to the Layout

Title Description Summarising the essence of the characteristics and how they relate to the urban context

How will you know it?	
Positive indicators	Negative indicators
This section describes a range of specific behaviours that will indicate the presence or absence of the characteristic. As well as 'positive indicators' of success, the 'negative indicators' can be helpful in showing what the characteristic is not. In particular they give examples of common mistakes and also instances of when the characteristic can be taken too far, or become too unbalanced.	This section cross references the characteristic to the appropriate entry in the models of excellence.
<p>Sowing the seeds</p> <p>Characteristics like these are not on/off attributes that you've either got or you haven't. They develop in complex ways over time. This section describes how the characteristics emerge, combine and mature. This can be used to spot potential talent at an early stage and to aid personal reflection and development. In addition, to the immediate right, we summarise the growth of the characteristic in four straight-forward levels. These can help with profiling and planning development.</p>	<p>Summary levels of development</p> <p>This section shows the levels at which the competency is displayed, getting more complex and effective as you go down the list.</p>
<p>The urban difference</p> <p>What is it about urban school leadership that is different from other leadership roles? Where might people need to take a different approach?</p>	<p>Connections</p> <p>This section shows how the particular characteristic works with other characteristics in the framework.</p>
<p>Core question for assessment: If you were recruiting a new headteacher, what specific evidence would you look for to assure yourself they possessed this characteristic? This section takes the information above and condenses it into one or two questions to ask.</p>	

4. The story of urban leadership

We have suggested that leadership in schools in challenging urban environments is characterised by its intensity. It is not that the challenges are unique or the experiences alien to other schools, but that they come with relentless pace, variety and complexity. This poses a risk of drowning under a sea of incidents, of distraction by ‘fire-fighting’, of missing the wood for the trees.

It is not just the head, of course, who suffers this risk. They must help sustain the focus and maintain the energy of staff and pupils – greatly multiplying their burden.

No wonder we ask, ‘What exactly does it take to survive and to thrive in this environment?’

The **foundation** of successful urban leadership is a robust sense of purpose.

We can split this into two characteristics. Firstly, the successful urban head has a **mission**. He or she is driven by the **courage and conviction** to create opportunities for each of their students. This can be spiritual or materialistic in origin but is often seen as a desire for social justice, for helping the most disadvantaged in society. Such headteachers are unwilling to compromise principles or to accept excuses for neglect. They are willing to stick their necks out.

“I lead through making my values explicit to others and motivating them to believe in the same vision.”⁵

Despite the far reaching implications of their personal beliefs, successful heads are tightly focused on teaching and learning, seeing this as the process through which opportunity is created and their core accountability to society. They combine this expertise with their ‘no excuses’ attitude – a sense of urgency in targeting and applying appropriate pedagogies to create opportunity.

“The predominant culture in this school was one where teachers discussed issues of teaching and learning very rarely...The head has changed that. He has positively encouraged debate and discussion on classroom issues.”

This is not a brittle, fair weather passion; there will be many obstacles along the way. Second, therefore, in the foundations of leadership is an **enduring personal resilience**. This is characterised by a sense of optimism – that change can and will happen, and by flexibility in tactics – sticking to the goal but trying new and creative approaches until something

succeeds. These heads are determined but not stubborn. They maintain their energy by creating balance in their lives and through understanding their flashpoints and triggers. This doesn’t imply coldness. They know when to let the passion shine through – in praise, in persuasion, even in anger.

These two attributes get you into the game. Next, come two further attributes which seem to capture the distinctiveness of the challenge – the **urban difference**.

First, is an ability to **read and engage with the shifting currents of the external environment**; to spot the agendas, aspirations and tensions, to recognise and relish the diversity of these needs. The outstanding urban head brings this understanding into the school, acting as a **champion** for the community – helping others to see it and value it as well. They connect the school’s processes, structures and activities to these agendas. Their school is not an island and, in reaching out, they must be part politician, part sociologist and part activist.

“The biggest problem we had was getting the community to see us as a resource rather than the enemy.”

The second part of the urban difference is an **open and connected style of leadership**. Successful urban heads not only listen to staff, pupils and parents, they actively seek their views and build them into plans – creating a vision that belongs to everyone and speaks to everyone. They do so because they believe in the power of people to change and to take responsibility. In the headteacher’s eyes, they are not a lone agent, struggling against ignorance and apathy, but are charged with creating the climate in which the natural potential for leadership will blossom at all levels. Critically, however, the distribution of leadership is matched by an investment in the **development** of staff and in clear accountability.

“With the formulation of teams with clear targets, I’ve been able to distribute leadership and to energise teachers to take responsibility for change and development.”

The previous four attributes form the heart of successful urban leadership. The foundations set the intent for other behaviours, the urban differences address the unique challenge of their environment. The remaining four competencies have more in common with successful leadership in every school. They concern **sustaining** the intent.

⁵ All the quotes in this section are from *Leading on the Edge* by Alma Harris.

Despite their high expectations and determination, successful urban heads do not have an unbridled ambition; they are not consumed with a hundred entrepreneurial schemes. Rather, they excel at creating a **focus** on teaching and learning – identifying the core of things that have to be got right, and sticking to those goals despite distractions and incidents. They prioritise, and they help others to prioritise by **distilling the big picture** into simple, memorable principles for action in the school.

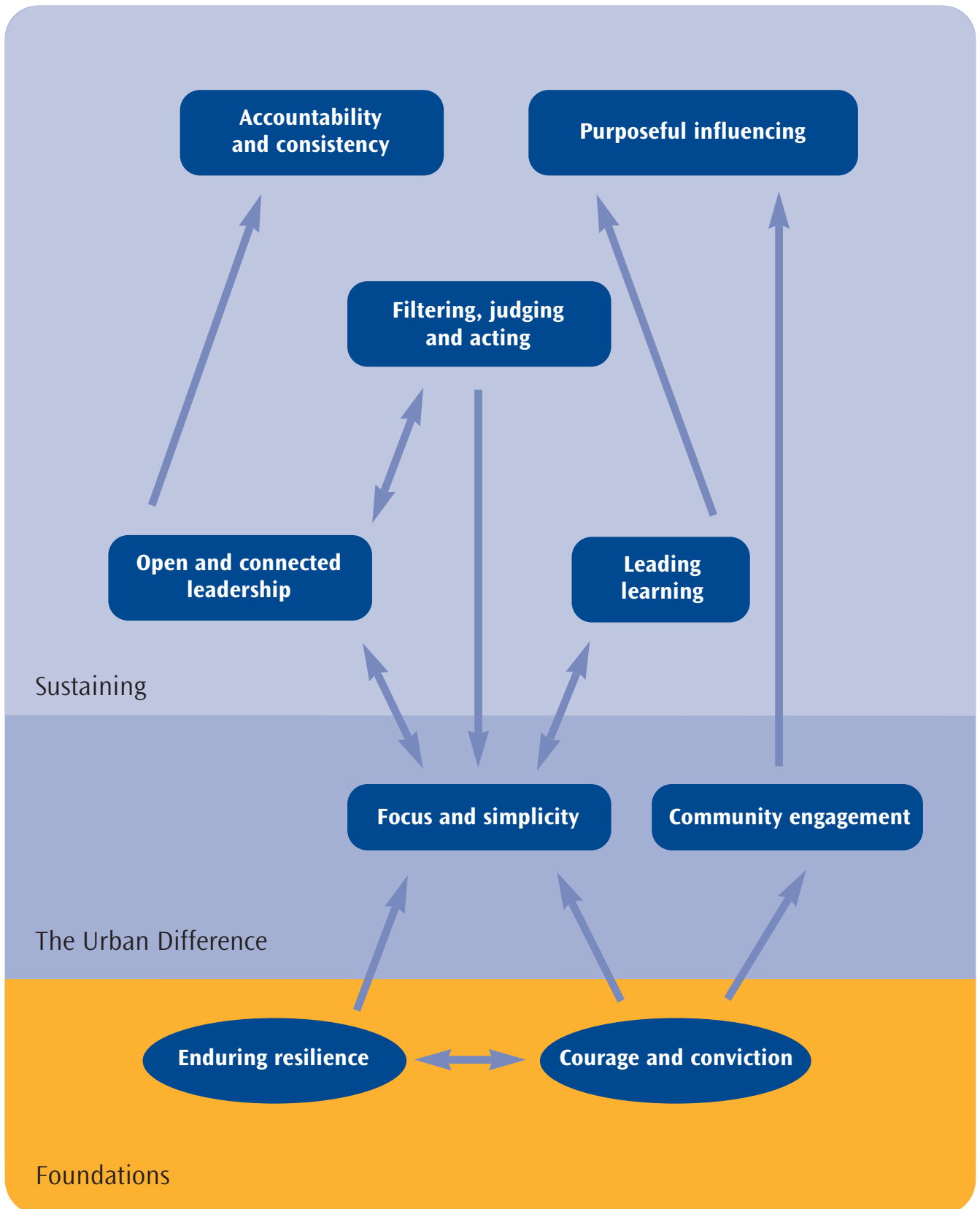
They can certainly **hold people accountable** and have the courage to confront poor performance where necessary, but this is balanced by the ability to recognise and **celebrate others' achievement**. It is their passionate belief in the importance of educational opportunities that provides the courage to hold others accountable.

The most successful urban heads are **sophisticated and purposeful influencers** – tailoring their style and approach to the many audiences they face inside and outside the school. They also take a long-term approach – building alliances, investing in relationships, working through others. This attribute is founded on their ability to read the communities around them. It is also rooted in **empathy**, an ability to understand and connect to the aspirations of diverse groups of people.

If heads are to improve standards, a deep knowledge of strategies for **teaching and learning** is only the start. This expertise must be combined with judgement for what will work in their school with particular groups of students; with the ability to convey these insights to others through **coaching**; and a willingness to refresh their own expertise through networks and partnerships.

Finally, a headteacher's day constantly teeters on the edge of chaos. There are any number of urgent claims on their time and attention. Involving others in leadership helps, as does the sense of focus on priorities, but a successful head is also talented at **filtering information and making quick decisions** – at spotting the vital incident that needs their attention, at looking for just the data they need to make decisions and no more. It is not that there is too little information, quite the reverse, it is knowing what's important.

5. The framework



Courage and Conviction

Spend any amount of time with a successful urban headteacher and you know what makes them tick. Their actions, choices and language demonstrate an **urgent and uncompromising belief** in the difference their school can make to children's futures. It is an infectious passion, evident to all.

They are determined to **create opportunities** despite the obstacles, believing that all students have a right to the best and most appropriate teaching and care, whatever their background. This often means taking a pioneering approach or **personal risks** – putting their head above the parapet for what they believe in.

How will you know it?		NCSL models of excellence								
Positive indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges the status quo inside the school, proposing and instigating action for change Takes responsibility for the school and recognises that the 'buck stops with them' Stands up for beliefs and defends them in the face of opposition and entrenched interests Articulates a coherent and compelling sense of justice and urgency Takes calculated risks, where appropriate, to improve the provision for students Communicates their sense of moral purpose to inspire others, with their convictions and by example Does the right thing rather than the easy choice, despite possible risks and complications 	<p>Challenge and support, Level 3</p> <p>New competency – Courage to create opportunities</p>								
Negative indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too often takes the easy route – making decisions for expediency or comfort rather than according to values Does not walk the talk – makes requests of staff that they would not do themselves Goes beyond the calculated risk to break the rules Risk taking no longer carefully calculated for the benefit of students Goes too far and becomes consumed by the cause, losing sight of their work-life balance and that of others Accepts excuses for neglect and under-provision Focuses on attainment targets and the external reputation of the school at the expense of fair provision for all students 	<p>The urban difference</p> <p>All successful school leaders are animated by a moral purpose. The difference in the more challenging urban environments is the emphasis on social justice, on creating opportunities for the most disadvantaged despite the obstacles. The passion can often be more urgent.</p>								
Sowing the seeds	<p>The foundations of moral purpose and the courage to make a difference begin at the earliest stages of a teaching career. The ethics and values do not change. As leaders grow, their confidence to speak out and to live their beliefs often increases, as does their willingness to take on challenges. Some develop a relish for the challenge, others remain uncomfortable but are still ready to act. A more mature calculation of risks and benefits is also evident in the veteran leader – they know when to make a stand. Therefore this dimension increases through the stakes involved and maturity of judgement.</p>	<p>Connections</p> <p>Of all the qualities in this framework, courage and conviction run through every other.</p> <p>The connection to enduring resilience (to maintain balance) and to focus and simplicity (to inspire others) are perhaps most obvious.</p>								
Summary levels of development	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Wants to do good</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>Articulates a clear and compelling set of principles</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>Acts on principles even when it is hard to do so</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>Makes a stand for what they believe in, if the risks are justified</td> </tr> </table>	1	Wants to do good	2	Articulates a clear and compelling set of principles	3	Acts on principles even when it is hard to do so	4	Makes a stand for what they believe in, if the risks are justified	
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Core question for assessment: Are the candidate's actions consistently motivated by an urgent and compelling need to improve opportunities for children – especially the most disadvantaged – whatever the obstacles?

Enduring Resilience

The role of a headteacher in the urban environment can be demanding and lonely. The pressure is relentless – problem after challenge after setback after distraction – coming from different directions and creating painful conflicts.

To succeed and survive, headteachers need **stamina**. They must be able to keep going despite obstacles and distractions, maintaining a sense of **realistic optimism** and confidence without becoming arrogant or dogged. To sustain this requires a knowledge of one’s inner resources, one’s triggers and limitations – to know when to maintain control and when to express emotion.

How will you know it?		NCSL models of excellence								
<p>Positive indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is aware of own emotions and stress levels; is aware of the circumstances, people and events which trigger stress and emotional reactions • Takes action to channel emotions productively – seeking space or support, changing the circumstances, communicating needs • Although ambitious and hard working, has realistic expectations of what is humanly possible for themselves and others • Remains calm under pressure, knowing how to relieve their tension appropriately • Consistent and realistic belief in own effectiveness and ability to make a difference 	<p>Negative indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily deflated when dealing with conflict or feeling isolated • Takes criticism and threats personally, becoming aggrieved or discouraged • Intimidated by the high profile or isolation of the role • Takes on too much to do well, becoming consumed by events in the school • Unable to switch off or unwind • Becomes reactive or withdrawn as the pressure mounts • Pessimistic and defeatist • Brittle, defensive, subject to swings of elation and despair, energy and lethargy • An unrealistic or unjustified optimism leading to inappropriate risks or under-preparation 	<p>Personal conviction, Level 4 New competency – Self awareness/ Self control</p>								
<p>Sowing the seeds</p> <p>Resilience is founded on our beliefs and our emotional intelligence. Our beliefs about the way the world works and about our personal efficacy determine our optimism and reactions to events – Is this my fault? Can I do anything about this? Will it always be like this? These beliefs are often influenced by our environments and the cultures we work within – our career history will provide lessons which we interpret more or less positively. Emotional intelligence helps us spot and manage our initial reactions. Early stages of development are evidence by self awareness, leading to reactive self management (counting to 10), and on to proactive self management – creating the sort of environment where we can thrive.</p>		<p>The urban difference</p> <p>An urban school faces the same challenges and opportunities as any other school. They just come faster and more frequently; they are more varied and often more complicated. For these reasons, the intensity of the role is greater and resilience an essential attribute.</p>								
<p>Summary levels of development</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Generally optimistic about events</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>Confident in own agency and ability</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>Aware of own needs and triggers</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>Actively manages emotions and energy</td> </tr> </table>		1	Generally optimistic about events	2	Confident in own agency and ability	3	Aware of own needs and triggers	4	Actively manages emotions and energy	<p>Connections</p> <p>The courage to create opportunities informs and energises resilience – justifying it and sustaining commitment when reserves are lowest. Resilience itself is vital to maintaining focus and simplicity; the resilience of the whole school rests upon the resilience of the headteacher.</p>
1	Generally optimistic about events									
2	Confident in own agency and ability									
3	Aware of own needs and triggers									
4	Actively manages emotions and energy									

Core question for assessment: Has the candidate been able to sustain their energy, optimism and motivation in face of pressure and setbacks?

Community Engagement

Urban schools have many different communities but one theme is consistent – successful urban headteachers understand their community, articulate its concerns and lead every level of their school to engage with it. Of course, communities are rarely homogenous. Successful heads **respond flexibly** to different backgrounds and agendas relishing diversity and understanding sub-cultures. In being responsive, however, they retain their standards and expectations. Successful headteachers also communicate their insights to staff and partner agencies, **creating connections**, clarity and mutual respect.

How will you know it?

Positive indicators	Negative indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands the difficulties and concerns of pupils as individuals and groups, tailoring communications to meet their needs Mediates and negotiates effectively between different groups of stakeholders, finding common ground, reducing tension. Actively champions the school, using press and other channels to gain the support needed and build a positive profile Is publicly ambitious for the school and confident about addressing barriers to achievement Identifies different community groups, engaging with and articulating their concerns and aspirations Is professional and credible with external stakeholders, maintaining regular contact and dealing effectively with multiple agencies Develops contacts and networks, participating in broader forums to gain insight and promote the school's perspective Works proactively to develop the skills and understanding of the governing body Takes steps to keep parents informed and engaged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Becomes drawn into conflict and disputes Lacks confidence in own position and values in the face of disagreements Has inconsistent standards for and expectations of people from different social and ethnic backgrounds Gets too involved in the community and professional networks so they lose sight of what's happening in the classroom Gets too involved in internal school issues so they do not make time to represent the school in the community Perceives self as a victim of circumstances – demographics, economics, politics – unable to make a difference Fails to prepare and plan for multi-agency meetings, reducing credibility Is unable to perceive or reconcile multiple conflicting interests – sees the community in black and white; cannot empathise with different cultures

NCSL models of excellence

- Respect for others, level 4
- Understanding others, Level 3
- Understanding the environment, Level 3
- Challenge and support, Level 3

The urban difference

The diversity and mobility of the community – often combined with alienation and low educational aspirations – are not universal features of urban schools but are common enough to make the role stand out. Internal, operational effectiveness is nothing if a school cannot win the respect of parents and partners and build a wider culture of learning – as so much of what happens inside the classroom is affected by what happens in the home and on the streets.

Sowing the seeds

A sensitivity to the varied needs and aspirations of individuals lies at the core of this quality and is evident at an early stage in someone's career. However, the ability to bundle this up into the big picture – reading trends and emotions across community groups and confidently articulating a response – is a skill learned relatively late in a career. This quality grows according to scale of application, therefore – from individuals to groups to complicated and conflicting political economic and social trends. It requires a sense of perspective gained from exposure to different environments and the confidence, sometimes, to understand but not to agree – to listen but to also state one's own case. These require judgement, diplomacy and conviction (evidenced through other qualities in this model).

Summary levels of development

1	Sensitive to individuals' aspirations and responses
2	Sensitive to group needs and dynamics
3	Communicates and connects own vision to that of others'
4	Reconciles diverse and conflicting agendas

Connections

The ability to read and champion one's community requires influencing skills and strategies to create change. This is an outward facing quality – internal to the school, an open and connected style of leadership rests on similar foundations.

Core question for assessment: Does the candidate engage with the aspirations and needs of groups in varied circumstances, understanding their position whilst persuasively communicating their vision for the school?

Open and Connected Leadership

Urban schools can be volatile and pressured environments, demanding high levels of commitment from those who work there. A headteacher cannot sustain success without drawing out and using the innate leadership and talent of all members of staff. Anything less creates a culture of dependency.

Successful headteachers **listen** to staff, pupils and parents, actively seeking out their views and building them into the vision for the school. They **share ownership and responsibility** by distributing leadership when the time is right, delegating authority while still holding staff accountable. Delegation is matched by **development**: successful heads ensure staff have the skills to meet their responsibilities. Beyond delegation, successful urban heads hold and act upon a **positive opinion** of pupils and staff. People can change, they want to change and can become a force for good if the conditions are right. It is the head's job to create those conditions.

How will you know it?	
Positive indicators	Negative indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approachable around the school, knows staff and engages in dialogue with pupils and parents Seeks and listens to the views of others, able to put self in their position even if they disagree Provides clear and consistent expectations and establishes ground rules for relationships Is an astute judgement of individual capabilities and aspirations, and others' readiness for extra responsibility Ensures the right staff are in the right roles in a management structure which supports mutual accountability Acts as a coach rather than an assessor, encouraging staff to take responsibility for their own improvement and development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spends more time on the paperwork than talking to and getting to know people Appears aloof, impersonal and disinterested in other perspectives Constantly puts forward own viewpoint without listening to the other party Blames others when things go wrong or permits teachers to blame pupils, fostering a blame culture Cannot find the balance between hands on and delegation, veering between micro-management and abdication of responsibility Fails to clarify roles, accountabilities and management structures Allows the school to become dependent upon self

NCSL models of excellence

- Teamworking, Level 3
- Transformational leadership, Level 4
- Information seeking, Level 4
- Developing potential, Level 2

The urban difference

Some urban schools are thriving, confident and robust communities, others are more troubled. Knowing when to take control and when to let go becomes a vital skill. It is particularly hard to back off and delegate more authority after a sustained turn-around period – hard both on the leader, in the habit of authority, and the school, in the habit of dependency. This is, therefore, the difference between temporary turnaround and sustained success in urban environments.

Sowing the seeds

Empowering, rather than authoritarian, leadership requires considerable maturity – an ability to do without the trapping and prerequisites of power to take a more humble, yet still forceful, role. Developing leaders go through stages of flexing their authority, developing skills to influence and direct. Judgement is required for when it is right to be directive and when it is right to listen. The opportunity to reflect upon and articulate one's values and purpose in being a leader is a critical development opportunity.

Summary levels of development	
1	Listens to others' views and expertise
2	Articulates others' perspectives and builds into plans
3	Delegates accountable authority to those who are ready
4	Acts upon belief that people are agents of change

Connections

A connected style of leadership is similar to championing the community and shares a common foundation in empathy. It is a vital counterpart to providing focus and simplicity (breathing in against breathing out).

Core questions for assessment: Does the candidate listen to others and incorporate their views into plans? Does the candidate delegate responsibility appropriately and effectively, while creating the conditions for people to succeed?

Focused Vision and Simplicity

Focus and simplicity distinguish the vision for improvement in the successful urban school. Volatility and complexity are the norm, and when combined with the scale of the task required to raise achievement to equal more socially advantaged areas, they raise the spectres of distraction, instability and initiative overload – sapping the resilience of pupils and staff alike.

The effective urban head **cuts through the complexity** to reveal the real priorities for the school, articulating a clear, compelling and realistic vision of success. This clarity of vision underpins a relentless focus on the actions needed to deliver – protecting staff from distraction, by day-to-day incidents or by the myriad of initiatives and opportunities arising from or imposed by agencies outside the school.

How will you know it?		NCSL models of excellence
Positive indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asks the right questions, constantly probing to find out why things happen as they do Develops a shared vision of what the school will look like in five to 10 years Explains clearly and convincingly what he/she is doing and why, illustrating the benefits of the proposals in order to gain support Gets specific about desired outcomes; breaks down the strategic vision into concrete and practical plans and actions. Regularly talks about and discusses the vision, reinforcing the principles, checking progress and taking feedback Blends own priorities with externally imposed targets to create coherency Tackles unanticipated events and incidents in a structured fashion, dealing with emerging issues before they escalate while remaining focused on the long-term strategy 	Drive for improvement, Level 3 Initiative, Level 3 Strategic thinking, Level 3
Negative indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imports a vision from previous experience without gaining a real understanding of the school's specific context Vision remains abstract and conceptual. It is not translated into concrete daily experiences Although focused, the vision lacks appropriate ambition and challenge Focuses on the 'what' rather than the 'how' Focuses on attainment targets at the expense of holistic outcomes Allows other agencies and initiatives to intervene and distract the school from its goals Allows unplanned incidents to dominate Dragged down into detail and fire-fighting because robust systems have not been implemented Rarely steps back to check progress against priorities and ask 'are we still on track?' 	<p>The urban difference</p> <p>The urban head is ambitious. They expect far more of their students and staff than others believe possible. The distinction between them and their peers in more favoured environments is that their plans will face more upsets and distractions. Often, it will be critical to focus on a shared vision of the basics of teaching and learning, rather than adding ramifications and complexity. Both staff and students may crave stability and the chance to work without distraction. The difference is not the vision itself, but the ability to focus and prioritise around it.</p>

Sowing the seeds

Leaders are exposed to the techniques and rhetoric of planning from an early stage in their careers. There is a world of difference between creativity in planning, however, and the ability to isolate the three or four things that must be got right; to communicate their urgency to colleagues and to stick with them over the long term. This quality grows, therefore, not through the time horizon or complexity of the plans but through the quality of the conceptual thinking behind them – the ability to tie the threads together – and the sustained commitment to implementation.

Summary levels of development

1	Sets priorities
2	Focuses on the few things that make a difference
3	Flexible on tactics but focused on goals in the face of disruption
4	Articulates priorities into a clear vision for others

Connections

A focused vision is built on the ability to lead learning. It is put into effect through influencing skills and is sustained by resilience in the face of challenge

Core question for assessment: Is the candidate able to focus consistently on a small number of relevant and compelling goals for improving learning, and to communicate these priorities to others in order to create meaning and order out of a mass of incidents and distractions?

Consistency and Accountability

A stable learning environment is built upon a **consistent approach** to teaching and behaviour management, applied across the whole school. Effective urban heads provide stability through a balanced approach to accountability and support. These heads hold staff and pupils to account for **high standards of performance** and behaviour, but are fair in the application of these standards. They are tough on performance issues where necessary but equally provide **praise and recognition** where due, celebrating the achievement of others.

How will you know it?		NCSL models of excellence								
Positive indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remains firm when challenged or faced with difficult behaviour Challenges the behaviour rather than the person Monitors the quality and consistency of teaching throughout the school Reinforces success so that staff, pupils and parents can see the link between their contribution and the school's direction Puts systems into place to monitor performance with defined triggers for particular actions and clear procedural guidelines Sets and communicates expectations and parameters for behaviour and sticks to them 	Holding people accountable, Level 4 Developing potential, Level 2								
Negative indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lets some people get away with infringements giving rise to perceptions of inconsistency Creates systems and procedures which are too complex to understand, implement or monitor Complacent with current levels of performance, doesn't recognise when the time has come to move to the 'next curve' Says one thing, does another Neglects to praise and reinforce successful performance, focusing on what didn't go well 	<p>The urban difference</p> <p>The ability to hold people to account, productively, appropriately and fairly, is characteristic of every successful head, whatever their environment. The 'urban difference' lies particularly in the use of both accountability and praise to create stability – an oasis of order that enables students and staff to settle down to the core business of learning.</p>								
Sowing the seeds	<p>Most leaders say that holding people accountable – particularly confronting poor performance – is the task they feel least comfortable with. Yet it is impossible to raise standards in a challenging environment, let alone provide stability, without doing so. Initially, attention focuses on defining standards; it then moves to the provision of feedback and the ability to remain firm. At the highest levels, it is combined with coaching and development – performance is not merely recognised but improved. Accountability then becomes motivational rather than just confrontational.</p>	<p>Connections</p> <p>The ability to hold people to account is usually founded upon, and sustained by, strong personal convictions – yes, it's going to be unpleasant but it has to be done. Resilience is important in order to avoid inappropriate anger and respond to people with sensitivity whatever the pressures.</p>								
Summary levels of development	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Communicates high standards and expectations</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>Firmly enforces high standards and maintains a consistent approach</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>Balances accountability and praise; using standards to motivate</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>Coaches, develops people to achieve standards</td> </tr> </table>	1	Communicates high standards and expectations	2	Firmly enforces high standards and maintains a consistent approach	3	Balances accountability and praise; using standards to motivate	4	Coaches, develops people to achieve standards	
1	Communicates high standards and expectations									
2	Firmly enforces high standards and maintains a consistent approach									
3	Balances accountability and praise; using standards to motivate									
4	Coaches, develops people to achieve standards									

Core questions for assessment: Does the candidate hold people accountable for appropriately high standards of behaviour and performance? Is this carried out fairly and consistently? Is the candidate willing and able to offer praise and recognise the achievement of others?

Leading Learning Innovation

Pupils in challenging circumstances need appropriately targeted teaching methods. This may involve getting the basics right across the school. It may involve radical innovation in practice. Effective headteachers in urban environments have a **living involvement in teaching and learning**: theoretical and practical knowledge; maturity of judgement in application; the ability to convey their insights and **coach staff** to engage with best practice.

As well as personal experience, professional and academic study, these heads are connected into **networks of external expertise**, bringing in advice, support and innovation when appropriate.

How will you know it?	
Positive indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies individual and group barriers to learning, working with those affected to reach solutions Understands that diversity of cultures creates a diversity of aspirations for education; creates a curriculum which reflects this Strives to ensure children's learning is continually improving, believing this is their core role as a headteacher Acts as filter and stimulus to enriching the curriculum, seeking out and disseminating the best ideas Strives to provide resources and funding to support new initiatives in teaching and learning Seeks out mentors and coaches from inside and outside education, creating formal and informal networks Actively seeks partnerships with other headteachers to share experience and best practice in improving the learning experience of children
Negative indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commits to new initiatives before the basics are in place or without considering the broader implications for the school Implements radical new ideas without sufficient evidence or testing Gets distracted by externally prescribed issues which do not directly improve learning for children at the school Focuses internally and doesn't look outside for new ideas and best practice Does not properly monitor and evaluate the impact of initiatives, failing to prioritise resources and attention on the most effective Uses experts without finding ways to transfer their skills and experience to staff inside the school

NCSL models of excellence
 Challenge and support, Level 3
 Developing potential, Level 4

The urban difference
 The urban environment offers plenty of distractions from teaching and learning. The demands of community engagement and the often obvious injustices suffered by students offer plenty of opportunity to become a local activist rather than a leader of learning. High mobility of students and staff, crime and behavioural problems again create barriers. The successful urban head is no less innovative than others – often they may try new ideas to reach disaffected groups. The difference lies in their ability to critically evaluate best practice and judge its suitability, and to relentlessly focus on their goals for learning despite distractions – constantly monitoring progress.

Sowing the seeds
 The ability to lead and innovate learning obviously rests on personal knowledge of good practice and its applicability to different circumstances and challenges. As a leader develops, however, the ability to convey this knowledge to others – to coach, observe, provide feedback, filter and connect – becomes more important. It is not enough to be an outstanding teacher, you have to help others become the same. Thus, abilities to observe situations and analyse them effectively, to capture and communicate the essence of strategies, to 'get out there' and watch, listen and partner, are critical. Additionally, as experience builds and management responsibilities predominate, leaders must find ways of refreshing their knowledge, of staying connected to innovations and current thinking, learning from experts but always critically assessing whether new practice is right for their school

Summary levels of development	
1	Good understanding of teaching strategies
2	Judgement for what strategy is appropriate in each circumstance
3	Learns from best practice elsewhere, applying as appropriate
4	Conveys insights and transfers skills to others

Connections
 The ability to lead learning rests on content as well as behaviours, more so than the other qualities in this framework. It is a vital counterpart to courage and conviction – giving it pedagogical rather than political expression. The role is about creating opportunities through education, after all.

Core question for assessment: Does the candidate consistently help others to improve their teaching practice based on a realistic assessment of the needs of specific groups of children, their barriers to learning and the context of the school?

Purposeful and Responsive Influencing

Of course the successful urban headteacher must articulate a compelling vision and must persuade and influence others for the benefit of their school. They must also **tailor their language and tactics** to suit diverse audiences – internal and external, professional and community. They need to discern others’ concerns and agendas, **read their responses and emotions** and construct a message which connects the school’s aspirations with those of stakeholders.

This need not be, and rarely is, charismatic and glib. Although articulate and displaying real **personal presence**, the successful headteacher does not need the limelight at every opportunity. They are ready to work behind the scenes and to give the credit away.

How will you know it?	
Positive indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personally articulate and convincing Sensitive to the mood and reactions of the audience Sensitive to the long-term aspirations and agendas of different groups Connects the school’s needs to those of different groups, differentiating the message and the language appropriately Adept in using the media, local and national, to promote the school and build a reputation Aware of the reputation of the school among different groups Consistently spots the ‘angle’, statistic or story that will attract attention
Negative indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of the press and external communication channels lacks creativity, variety or insight, leading to repetitive messages which fail to inspire Communications lack discretion or awareness of their impact on the audiences Vision is not actively sold to staff, pupils and stakeholders and remains just words on a page Communications lack clarity or impact Seeks personal attention and limelight at the expense of the school’s needs Fails to recognise opportunities to align with other organisations and present a joint agenda

NCSL models of excellence

Challenge and support, Level 3
New competency – Courage to create opportunities

The urban difference

Influence has external and internal implications. Externally, many urban schools face a significant PR challenge and a hostile or apathetic community. In others, they must compete with a vibrant range of interests and activities to attract attention. The successful urban head develops a sophisticated range of long term strategies to persuade and engage; many outside the traditional remit of headship. Internally, they may have to inspire pupils from backgrounds which don’t value education, and where under-achievement is the norm.

Sowing the seeds

The growth of this characteristic is typically seen through the complexity and duration of the strategies employed – developing from the interpersonal to the organisational. At earlier stages, leaders are personally empathic and persuasive – able to make their point persuasively and subtly. At the more advanced stages they are mapping organisational and interest group agendas, crafting consistent messages (often to be used by third parties) and planning a long term strategy involving alliances, behind the scenes connections, drip feeding information and monitoring responses.

Summary levels of development

1	Personally persuasive
2	Adapts approach to audience
3	Crafts a long term approach to persuasion around a consistent goal
4	Works indirectly, through alliances and behind the scenes

Connections

The head’s influencing skills are used particularly to engage with the community (in the talking, rather than listening phase) and to communicate the vision internally. The personal conviction and courage make them more than just PR skills, but a source of genuine inspiration.

Core question for assessment: Does the candidate use a variety of tactics and strategies – both interpersonally and organisationally – to communicate their school’s vision and perspective over the long term, tailoring their approach to match their aspirations and reactions of their audience?

Filtering, Judging and Acting

Given the intensity of action in many urban schools, an ability to act decisively is crucial. It is not that there is too little information to form judgements but too much in too little time. Whether ploughing through a report, defusing a tense situation or scanning the corridors, the effective headteacher spots the critical incident and the telling detail among the mass of data.

These heads have the confidence to act in the face of uncertainty and ambiguity along with the experience to make wise choices. As well as vision and passion, successful heads are grounded in the daily choices that keep a school functioning.

How will you know it?	
Positive indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confident and timely in their decision making, even when faced with difficult choices Willing to take a trial and error approach, to learn from experience in order to hone the best solution Draws connections between past experience and the current situation to focus attention Implements and uses formal systems and processes to capture critical information and filter the irrelevant Uses informal techniques – chats, walking around, etc – to stay in touch with intangible information and moods Swiftly captures the essence of a situation – what’s really going on here? – whether interpersonal or analytical
Negative indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies the same solutions to every situation Indecisive and hesitant in the face of ambiguity or when the stakes are high Out of touch with the mood of the school Misreads situations or cues Jumps to conclusions about a situation before considering the perspectives of those involved Lacks awareness of the consequences of actions Sticks with bad decisions even when the consequence become clear, rather than learning and adapting Relies excessively on single points of advice or one adviser without seeking alternative views

NCSL models of excellence

Information filtering, Level 4 Initiative, Level 3

The urban difference

The density of information and the paucity of insight are particular problems in urban schools. If they are successful, they are deluged in initiatives and energy. The more troubled schools have a high frequency of incidents clamouring for attention. All heads are comparatively strong analytically, the urban difference lies in confident action despite ambiguity combined with a readiness to learn and adapt as more evidence arrives. Further, this is not just about dealing with information but about inter-personal insights.

Sowing the seeds

Those new to leadership positions are often overwhelmed by the number of different demands on their attention – the temptation to do too much is hard to resist. Swiftly, successful leaders learn what to pay attention to. As they mature into the role, they establish robust systems to provide the information needed. These will include both formal monitoring processes and informal techniques for ‘staying in touch’. At the highest levels, leaders have the experience and confidence to take action despite ambiguity and conflicting advice. They may not always make the right choice, but they keep monitoring and learn quickly.

Summary levels of development

	Focuses on what matters
1	Develops formal systems to obtain insights
2	Develops informal routines for taking the pulse
3	Acts decisively and appropriately on information to hand
4	

Connections

The ability to filter and judge information and situations draws partly upon an open and connected style of leadership, providing the head with a constant sense of what’s happening. It is also closely connected with an ability to maintain focus and simplicity.

Core questions for assessment: Does the candidate consistently spot what’s important in a situation or incident and act decisively and appropriately on these insights? Do they stay in touch with the situation and adapt their decisions as new evidence emerges?

6. Developing leadership

Although oriented towards selection, this framework is also intended to underpin development, and both these requirements need to take account of the stage someone is at in their career. We should have different expectations, and provide different support, to someone new to headship than to someone five years in – and, again, to a head with 15 years' experience in their third school.

There are a number of ways this framework can help with this task.

Firstly, the 'Sowing the seeds' section for each attribute describes how that attribute develops over time and with experience. Often, particular aspects of the mature competency appear first, before becoming integrated into the mature whole. For example, influencing skills begin with the interpersonal – the empathy to respond to individual needs and expectations. But this is not sufficient for long-term success in the most challenging schools. They must develop into the ability to structure school-wide strategies of influence and engagement, guiding the activities of many people around consistent messages without losing that individual empathy.

Different attributes develop in different ways. It is not always a matter of 'more of the same' but often the integration of different facets of the skills to work together more effectively.

Each attribute also contains a number of levels, tracing this development in summary form. These levels can help with self assessment and personal problem-solving: 'I've got some talent here but can't make the breakthrough. What's missing?'

While the framework can help, in this way, to spot early talent, it also has applications at the other end of the spectrum. It is easy for highly experienced heads to over-develop particular attributes at the expense of others, to use an attribute without balance. So, for example, risk-taking crosses the line into rule breaking, or dedication into tunnel vision. This framework is not just for new heads, but can help experienced heads maintain their freshness. Of particular use in this regard are the negative indicators in the 'How will you know it?' section of each attribute. As well as obvious errors, and behaviours which people often incorrectly think are hitting the mark, this also contains examples of going too far.

7. Connecting up

This framework has many possible applications but is specifically designed to support the recruitment of headteachers for challenging urban environments. A number of additional resources support this.

A **Leadership Evaluation Toolkit** to enable governing bodies recruiting a new head to engage with the framework and determine their own priorities. This encourages structured reflection on how their school's culture, history, context and aspirations affect the sort of leadership they need. The outcome of this exercise is a unique 'person specification'.

An **Assessment Centre** to enable evidence to be gathered against the framework, producing a candidate profile which can be used by schools to improve their selection process, and by candidates themselves to plan their career.

A mapping of the framework against current and potential **development opportunities** for headteachers.

Annex 1: Summary of core assessment questions

How would you spot a headteacher or potential headteacher who could fit the model? The questions below connect to each of the nine characteristics identified.

Are the candidate's actions consistently motivated by an urgent and compelling need to improve opportunities for children – especially the most disadvantaged – whatever the obstacles?

Has the candidate been able to sustain their energy, optimism and motivation in face of pressure and setbacks?

Does the candidate engage with the aspirations and needs of groups in varied circumstances, understanding their position while persuasively communicating their vision for the school?

Does the candidate listen to others and incorporate their views into plans? Does the candidate delegate responsibility appropriately and effectively, while creating the conditions for people to succeed?

Is the candidate able to focus consistently on a small number of relevant and compelling goals for improving learning, communicating these priorities to others to create meaning and order out of a mass of incidents and distractions?

Does the candidate hold people accountable for appropriately high standards of behaviour and performance? Do they do so fairly and consistently? Are they also able to offer praise and recognise the achievement of others?

Does the candidate consistently help others to improve their teaching practice based on a realistic assessment of the needs of specific groups of children, their barriers to learning and the context of the school?

Does the candidate use a variety of tactics and strategies – both interpersonally and organisationally – to communicate their school's vision and perspective over the long term, tailoring their approach to match their aspirations and reactions of their audience?

Does the candidate consistently spot what's important in a situation or incident and act decisively and appropriately on these insights? Do they stay in touch with the situation and adapt their decisions as new evidence emerges?

Annex 2: NCSL models of excellence

The current framework has grown partly out of the NCSL models of excellence for leadership in schools generally – demonstrating the essential similarities. Obviously there are differences in emphasis, intensity and priority, but all the core characteristics of urban leaders can be mapped across to the original models of excellence. There are more striking differences in the manner of presentation, but this should not prevent coherence among development programmes, standards and expectations. This annex summarises the cross-references, which are also available in the description for each characteristic.

Possible Benchmark Levels in Models of Excellence

Driven by a sense of social justice for children

Challenge and support, Level 3: “Strives for best possible provision”

*Driven to make a difference, Level 3: “Acts to create opportunities”

Resilient

Personal conviction, Level 4: “Relishes challenge”

*Self awareness/Self control, Level 3: “Takes steps to manage motivation”

Reads and engages with the community

Respect for others, Level 4: “Creates a community of mutual respect”

Understanding others, Level 3: “Understands ongoing behaviour”

Understanding the environment, Level 3:

“Understands different agendas”

Challenge and support, Level 3: “Strives for best possible provision”

Open and connected

Teamworking, Level 3: “Gets input from others”

Transformational leadership, Level 4: “Gains commitment to vision”

Information seeking, Level 4: “Uses own systems”

Creates focus and simplicity

Drive for improvement, Level 3: “Focuses effort”

Initiative, Level 3: “Prepares for future opportunities”

Strategic thinking, Level 3: “Makes the complex simple”

Balances accountability and development

Holding people accountable, Level 4: “Confronts poor performance”

Developing potential, Level 2: “Provides tangible support”

Purposeful influencing

Impact and influence, Level 4: “Influences over an extended period”

Understanding others, Level 3: “Understands ongoing behaviour”

Filters information

Information seeking, Level 4: “Uses own systems”

*Filters information, Level 4: “Articulates underlying principles for action”

This list contains three new tentative competencies (marked with a *). These are:

Self awareness/Self control

The ability to read and manage one’s own emotions and responses to maintain energy and focus and respond as the situation demands.

1. Takes into account own likely reactions to situations and people
2. Makes a realistic assessment of own strengths and weakness before taking action
3. Takes active steps to manage own energy and motivation
4. Adjusts tone and style to suit the mood of the audience and the needs of occasion

Information filtering

The ability to see the wood for the trees, to spot the information, incident or event that really matters while tuning out distractions.

1. Able to ignore insignificant or irrelevant information and incidents
2. Spots the relevant information to address current priorities
3. Reads the pattern of events to spot trends before they are obvious
4. Articulates underlying principles for action so that colleagues can also focus and prioritise appropriately

Driven to make a difference

A driving passion for the role of the school in creating opportunities and making a difference in the lives of those who need it most.

1. Wants to make a difference and to do good
2. Possesses a keenly felt sense of justice and principles, articulated convincingly to colleagues and stakeholders
3. Acts to create opportunities for those judged to need it most
4. Takes long term actions to build an environment of opportunity in the face, if necessary, of personal/organisational cost, controversy and entrenched interest

Annex 3: Reference with national standards for headteachers

The following table shows the relationship between the attributes described in this framework and the National Standards for Headteachers, together with some supporting commentary. In many cases there is a direct read across, but there is often a change in emphasis or combination. Note, the national standards provide a valuable description of the associated knowledge and activities, which are not covered in this document.

National Standards	Urban Schools Characteristics
<p>3.1 Creating the Future “Critical to the role of headship is working with the governing body and others to create a shared, strategic vision and plan which inspires and motivates pupils, staff and all other members of the school community.”</p>	<p>The national standards directly relate the vision to the moral purpose of the headteacher, and the inclusivity of strategic planning. In this framework, we also highlight the need for focus and consistency.</p> <p>Focus and simplicity Courage and conviction Open and connected leadership</p>
<p>3.2 Leading Learning and Teaching “Headteachers therefore have a central responsibility for the quality of learning and teaching and for pupils’ achievement. This implies setting high expectations and monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of learning outcomes.”</p>	<p>The national standards emphasise expectations and monitoring. The balance in this framework is also towards a critical attitude, tailoring to school circumstances and implementation through coaching.</p> <p>Leading learning innovation Accountability and consistency</p>
<p>3.3 Developing Self and Working with Others “Effective headteachers manage themselves and their relationships well... Through performance management and effective continuous professional development, the headteacher supports all staff to achieve high standards.”</p>	<p>The standards connect resilience with relationships, self development with the development of others; particularly focusing on CPD.</p> <p>Enduring resilience Purposeful influencing Accountability and consistency</p>
<p>3.4 Managing the Organisation “Headteachers should ensure that the school and the people and resources within it are organised and managed to provide an efficient, effective and safe learning environment.”</p>	<p>Both these elements relate directly to each other; this framework draws attention to blending management with the ability to filter and prioritise.</p> <p>Filtering, acting, judging</p>
<p>3.5 Securing Accountability “Headteachers are responsible for ensuring collective responsibility in order that all members of the school community accept they are accountable for the contribution they make to school outcomes.”</p>	<p>The standards draw attention to the statutory accountabilities and blend accountability with values.</p> <p>Accountability and consistency Courage and conviction</p>
<p>3.6 Strengthening Community through Collaboration “Schools exist in an individual social context, which has a direct impact on what happens inside the school. School leadership should commit to engaging with the internal and external school community, thus modelling the principles of equity and entitlement.”</p>	<p>In the standards there is a clear connection between the ability to read the social context and the values of equity and opportunity.</p> <p>Community engagement Courage and conviction</p>

**National College for
School Leadership**

Triumph Road
Nottingham NG8 1DH

T: 0870 001 1155
F: 0115 872 2001
E: nsl-office@nsl.org.uk
W: www.nsl.org.uk

Ref: PB13