

ECM Premium Project

School leadership, Every Child Matters
and school standards

Levers for Leaders and
Learning: a toolkit for
leadership development
in extended schools

Inspiring leaders;
improving children's lives

SCHOOL LEADERS

Toolkit

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About this toolkit

Who is it for?

This is a resource drawn from the outcomes of research into the identification of the evidence base for a link between *Every Child Matters* (ECM) and improvements in school standards, and to identify the nature of the leadership underpinning it. We hope this will promote discussion within senior leadership teams and extend to colleagues both within the school and with partner agencies in the local community. Its primary focus is on the core values and purposes of extended schools, how these are realised in practice and how they may become integral to improvement planning. The central theme is learning and the role of leaders at every level to keep that priority in the foreground of all school activity.

These materials may also prove useful in bringing the governing body into discussions of purpose, values and leverage strategies.

What is in it?

Questions of purpose and values



Who are the leaders and who are the learners?



What kinds of 'leverage' promote effective learning?



How can different leverage strategies help to close the gap between what we do and what we aspire to?



How do these questions feed into planning for improvement?

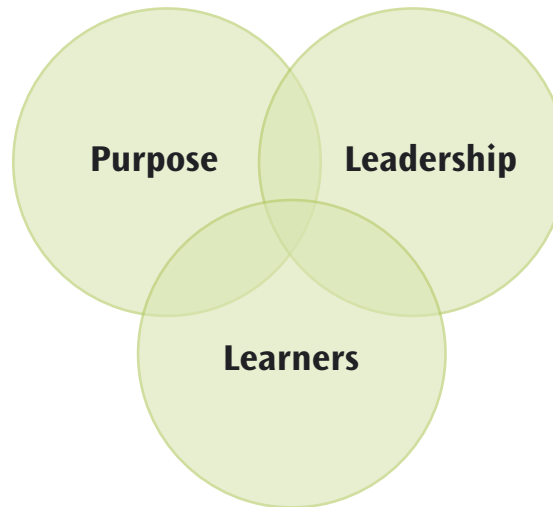
How can it be used?

We see this as a resource to be used flexibly, as relevant to issues as they arise in the course of ongoing practice and planning. Specific activities may be integrated into a senior leadership team or governors' meeting or as part of a professional development day. While there is a developmental sequence running through the various activities, a senior leadership team, or one of its members, will find it helpful to be conversant with the materials, their underpinning principles, their potential and adaptability to the school's circumstances and stage of development and to use them accordingly. This resource focuses on the underpinning value and purposes that drive the leadership of learning in extended schools. As such it can be used as a precursor to, and in conjunction with, the Training and Development Agency (TDA) School Improvement Planning Framework.

Leading for learning in extended schools: the findings of the ECM Premium Project

Effective leadership in extended schools calls for a range of skills that exceed the lists of familiar competences described in much of the education literature. Many of these are relevant to a changing social and policy world and therefore need rethinking in relation to extended schools, the ECM agenda and continually developing insights into the *where* and *how* of children and young people's learning.

This is a key finding of NSCL's study undertaken by a joint team from Canterbury Christ Church and Cambridge universities. Extended schools, by definition, face outwards to their communities and leadership is measured by its capacity to engage with the community, with its formal and informal agencies, with self-appointed bodies, pressure groups and individuals whose voices need to be heard. All of these may contribute to, or inhibit, the headline success indicators by which schools are judged, that is, the achievements of their pupils.



Research in 14 schools (selected on the basis of their improvement trajectories and positive Ofsted reports) pointed to three areas of focus:

Each of these three areas of focus raises a key question:

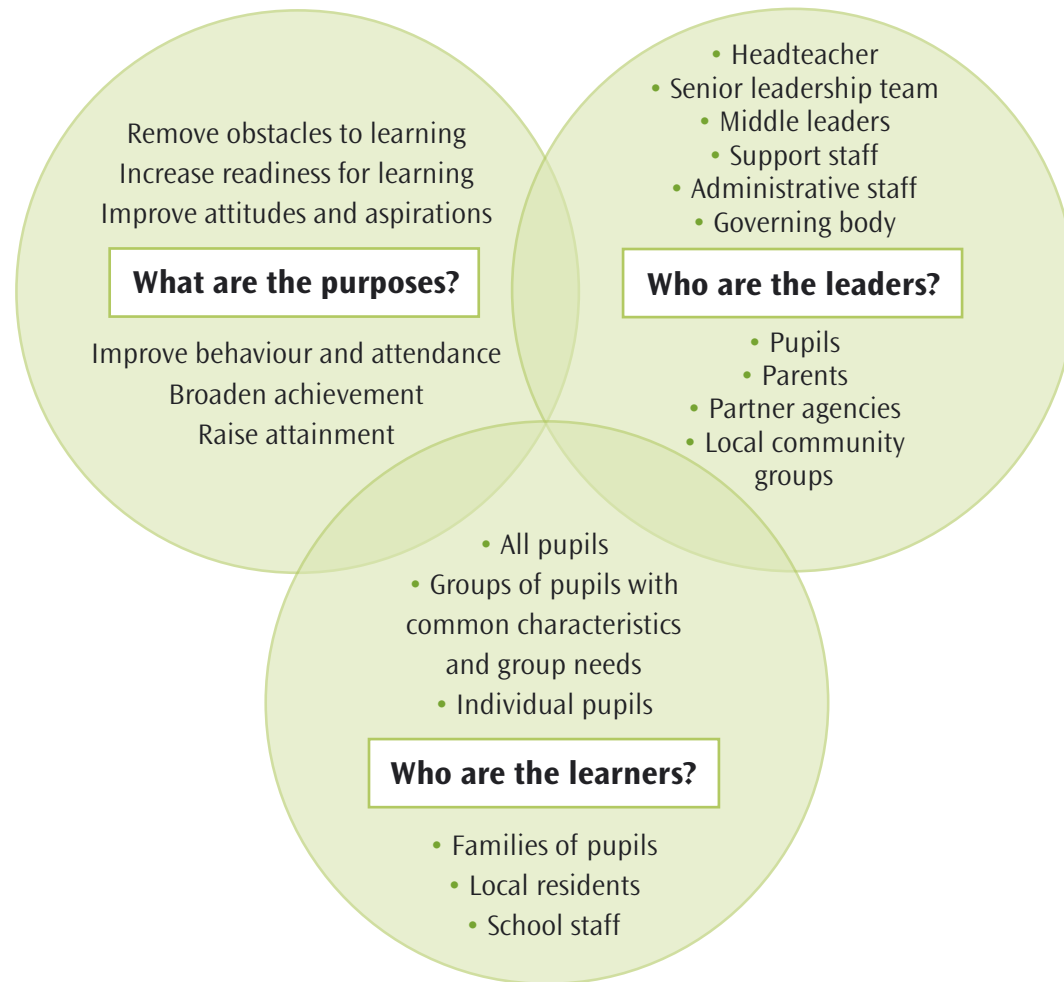
- Who are the leaders?
- Who are the learners?
- What are the driving purposes?

Levering change and improvement relies on clarity and consensus in answering these questions. There are three possible starting points for the discussion – with the range of priority purposes, with a focus on the range of learners or with the locus of leadership.

Purpose, learners and leaders

Clarifying and agreeing on clarity of purpose is the most logical first step in addressing the moral and education priorities of the school and how these link with the ECM agenda. The second and third questions – who are the ‘actors’ and who are the beneficiaries – cannot be easily separated as learners may also be leaders and leaders may also be learners.

As a starting point for discussion, whether as a leadership team or as a group of staff, a question for discussion is then: ‘In order to achieve each, or all, of the purposes suggested by the research schools – *Who leads?* and *Who learns?*’



Leadership leverage

Leadership implies a will and an ability to influence others and to effect change. This is often described in terms of 'leverage', that is, finding the means by which priorities can be shared, needs can be addressed most effectively and practice can be enhanced.

What leverage means in practice was a focus of the work with the 14 extended schools that took part in the NCSL study. Eight key levers were identified and their actions are illustrated (see box opposite) in words such as navigating, engaging, shaping, creating, managing, ensuring.

The questions they raise are of ownership and agency. That is, who exercises leverage? Who leads and who follows? How can the eight levers be used as in a systematic way by a leadership team, by a school staff or an extended inter-agency working group to address the ECM agenda and raise standards?

The eight levers

1. Navigating national, local authority and community politics.
2. Engaging the commitment of staff, students and partners in a vision of the purposes and ethos of the school.
3. Shaping school culture and ethos proactively around children's needs.
4. Creating structures that distribute leadership, spread responsibility and foster trusting relationships.
5. Managing workforce remodelling with a clear understanding of, and sensitivity to, professional expertise and capacity.
6. Placing high priority on the professional development of the whole staff.
7. Managing external relationships and the permeable boundaries between school and community.
8. Ensuring sustainability of commitment, finance and resourcing.

Leadership and learning in extended schools: the eight levers

The eight levers are broad statements of principle and purpose. Work with the 14 schools in the NCSL study developed these broad statements into sets of more specific ‘prompts’, so described to indicate that they are intended to prompt thinking which in turn should prompt action. In order to structure discussion the eight levers, each

with 8-10 prompts, have been put into a questionnaire format, each prompt requiring two responses: *How true is this of our school?* *How important should this be for our school?* The resulting data will identify where there is close consonance between practice and aspiration and where gaps between them point to priorities for action.

The range of potential users and uses is wide and opens up a host of possibilities for a school in reflecting, evaluating, planning and innovating. Whoever the users and whatever the use the essential purpose is to set in train a continuing commitment to lead learning and well being both in and out of school.

Potential users	Examples of Potential uses
Headteacher and deputies	School self evaluation An agenda for discussion with a School Improvement Partner (SIP)
All Senior leadership team	School improvement planning Review of staff development needs and recruitment
Middle leaders	Professional development
All staff	Governing body review Part of major re-culturing restructuring process
Governors	Discussion with external partners
Pupils	Involvement in teaching and learning review
Parents	Evaluation of initial steps in becoming an extended school

The eight levers and their sets of prompts: how to use them

The important thing about the prompts is to see them as tools to aid a process of dialogue (reflection, discussion, disagreement clarification, search for consensus) and not as a quick fix to solve short-term leadership or management issues. Their usefulness will be to:

- promote discussion about values, leadership, learning, policy and relationships with the world beyond the school;
- bring into the open differing viewpoints;
- feed into improvement planning and lay the foundations for a better, more informed, implementation of planning.

The levers and the sets of prompts are a resource that may be used when it is appropriate to a particular purpose and its place in the school's planning or development cycle. It is important to take time to think creatively and discuss with others about how the prompt lists might be adapted, customised or translated, giving consideration to context (the where) timescale (the when), target group (the who) and the elements most fit for purpose (the what).

It is important that the origin of the prompts, and the statements within them, are explained to staff or governors. These are statements of good practice based on the findings of the study into leadership of extended schools. The two response categories (*How true and How important*) are a well researched technique for identifying the meeting point of espoused values and values in action.

The eight levers and their sets of prompts: getting started

Introduce the notion of a dialogue about the eight levers (this may be an item at the beginning or end of a routine meeting).

1. Ask members to respond to one of the prompts that you have selected beforehand. (Each person will need their own copy of that prompt.)
2. Do a simple analysis on a flip chart, identifying statements where there is high consensus and high discrepancy (ie, there is a balance between those who said strongly agree or high priority and those who said the opposite).
3. Ask members to suggest explanations for statements on which there is high consensus.
4. Do the same for an item, or items, where there is high discrepancy.
5. Open the discussion as to the possible causes, the nature of the evidence and grounds for optimism.
6. Summarise by considering the ways in which you may take this forward.

The next stage of the process may be to:

- select one or more of the issues for further discussion and planning;
- seek evidence to illustrate one of the key points of consensus or contention to bring back to the next meeting;
- ask members to complete the rest of the selected prompts privately and return them at a given time and place;
- discuss how these prompts and/or the data may be used for school self-evaluation and evidence for inspection;
- develop the prompts (reducing, adding, revising items) to fit the school's own context;
- consider how the prompts might be developed for use with other groups (eg parents, pupils, partner agencies).

Three schools: three variations on a theme

School A

Getting our act together as an SLT

The headteacher distributed the 8 prompt sets to the six members of the senior leadership team and asked them to have a close read of them before the next senior leadership team meeting.

At the meeting they discussed how best to use them and decided they would select one leverage area to examine in depth. They chose Lever 2 as their starting point as they saw the internal commitment of staff as the essential precondition for all the other seven levers. The SLT then discussed each of the eight prompt sets in turn, spending five to ten minutes on each, examining the extent to which there was agreement within the team and the evidence base on which people were basing their judgements.

At the end of the discussion they agreed that with a much clearer expression of their own values as a team and a clearer picture of the practice-aspiration gaps they would broaden the discussion at the next meeting of the inter-agency working party.

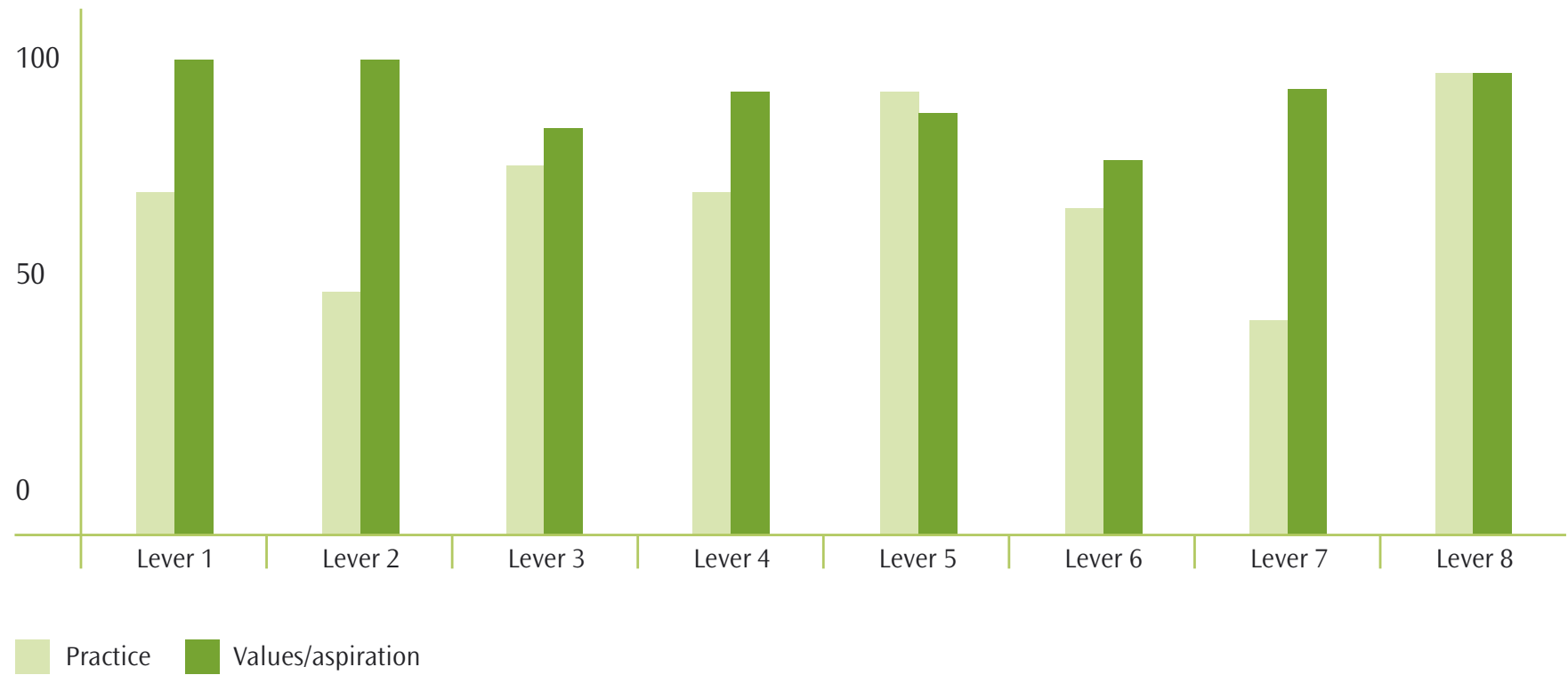
School B

A staff survey

Having returned from a regional network event where they had been introduced to the instrument, the head and deputy decided to go through all 8 levers item by item separately and then compare notes the next day. They were gratified to find a high level of agreement on most of the prompts but surprised to find considerable disagreement on some others. They were intrigued to know whether the same levels of agreement/disagreement existed among the staff and wanted to test the potential of this questionnaire and to feed into the School Evaluation Form (the SEF) which they were about to complete. The questionnaire was distributed to all staff with a deadline for return by the end of the week. Two members of staff volunteered to do the analysis and report back the findings to the next staff meeting.

At the next meeting staff were organised into 5 groups. Four of the groups looked at the responses to the prompts of levers 1,2,4 and 7 where there was a gap between practice and aspirations, Each group had 45 minutes to discuss the issues and the reasons for the gap and to give a three minute report back on one key priority for action that arose from their discussion.

The fifth group looked at 3 5 6 and 8 and considered why these showed close alignment between reality and aspirations and what that said about the staff and what the school was doing well.



School C

A view from the community

After discussion between the chair of the PTA and the Assistant Head (Community) it was decided to use an adapted form of the questionnaire at a parent evening. Together the AHT and PTA chair went through the 70 prompts and chose 10, from various levers, which they thought would be of most relevance to parents and the ones they would be most likely to have an opinion on.

On the evening the 55 parents who turned up were seated at tables of five. They were asked to take 10 minutes individually to respond to the questions that they felt they could answer and to feel free to use the *Don't Know* column as often as they liked. They then had 30 minutes as a group to share their opinions. They were asked as part of their discussion to look at the *Don't Know* column and, in the feedback session, to make one statement about a key issue they had debated and to pose one question to address the *Don't Know*.

The decision was to take the ideas forward to a joint meeting of the PTA and Board of Governors.

The eight levers and their sets of prompts: valuing differences

One of the purposes of this instrument is to focus on the degree of consonance between current practice and aspirations and to explore differing perspectives and understandings of priorities and practices.

1. Ensure the data is in user-friendly form.
2. Be clear about its purpose as a 'tin opener' – that is, to open up honest and challenging discussion.
3. Emphasise that we learn through understanding differences rather than always striving for consensus.

Step 1: Ensure the data is in user-friendly form

If the data presented is too complex or seen as too 'scientific', it may get in the way of open discussion of what the data may be telling us about our school and its relationship with the outside world. The KIS principle (Keep it Simple) is the byword!

Ask someone in who loves playing with figures (perhaps someone in the maths department) to portray the data in the most

accessible way – for example, a bar chart, the mean score for each item of the prompt or a gap index highlighting the significant differences between practices and priorities.

Step 2: Be clear about its purpose as a 'tin opener' – that is, to open up honest and challenging discussion

Try to ensure a comfortable setting for discussion and a climate in which people feel free and relaxed enough to give their views honestly and talk about their experience and values. Emphasise that we learn through understanding differences rather than always striving for consensus.

Issues for discussion may be any or all of the following:

How important is it that there is consensus:

- on how we view our practice?
- on how we view our priorities?
- on how we view the relationship between priorities and practice?

Ground rules for discussion

Apply the 80%/20% listening to talking ratio.

Listen to understand others' points of view.

Suspend judgement.

Explain but do not argue for your position.

Offer and seek evidence to support your views.

Step 3: How do we understand and learn from our differences?

You may find it helpful to discuss the following quotes as cards, posters or using PowerPoint.

Quotable (and discussable) quotes

The most notable trait of great leaders, certainly of great change leaders, is their quest for learning. They show an exceptional willingness to push themselves out of their own comfort zones, even after they have achieved a great deal. They continue to take risks, even when there is no obvious reason for them to do so. And they are open to people and ideas even at a time in life when they might reasonably think – because of their success – that they know everything. (Hesselbein, F, Goldsmith, M & Beckhard, R, eds, 1996, *The Leader of the Future*)

“Seek first to understand” involves a very deep shift in paradigm. We typically seek first to be understood. Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply. They’re either speaking or preparing to speak. They’re filtering everything through their own paradigm, reading their autobiography into other people’s lives. If they have a problem with someone – a son, a spouse, an employee – their attitude is “That person just doesn’t understand”. (Covey, SR, 1996, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*)

Homogenous groups become cohesive more easily than diverse groups and as they become more cohesive they also become more dependent on the group, more insulated from outside opinion and therefore more convinced that the group’s judgment on important issues must be right. (Suriewicki, J, 2006, *The Wisdom of Crowds*)

What gets us into trouble is not what we don’t know
It’s what we’re sure we know
But it just ain’t so.
(Mark Twain, Tom Sawyer)

Prompts for Level 1

The statement is true of our school now						In our school now, this should be a			
Don't know	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	<i>Leadership lever 1</i> Navigating national, local authority and community politics	Very high priority	Quite high priority	A low priority	No priority at all
					1. School staff take part in local networks which discuss local and national policies and how they impact on the life of the school.				
					2. The school is part of wider national networks in which the impact of key policies and politics are debated.				
					3. As a school we keep in close touch with community politics and developments through good intelligence sources.				
					4. Information about community development is widely shared and discussed within the school.				
					5. We take time to listen to external partners so as to gain a better understanding of their purposes and priorities and pressures on them.				
					6. We reflect critically on language and 'jargon' in our communications with external partners.				
					7. We do not get panicked into adapting new policies. We implement change at our own pace and in line with our planned priorities.				
					8. We are not afraid to challenge policies or practices that conflict with the core values of our school.				
					9. We are well informed about national and local policies and practices on ECM and extended schools.				
					10. Discussions about strategy and priorities are focused and decisions quickly reached.				

Prompts for Lever 2

The statement is true of our school now						In our school now, this should be a			
Don't know	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	<i>Leadership lever 2</i> Engaging commitment of staff, students and partners in a vision of the purpose and ethos of the school	Very high priority	Quite high priority	A low priority	Not a priority
					1. The senior leadership team have a broad educational and social vision. It is underpinned by a shared sense of our moral purpose among the staff.				
					2. We discuss the ECM five outcomes with our community partners and how it can best contribute to our vision for the school and its pupils.				
					3. All our staff feel confident in describing our vision to parents and to staff of other agencies.				
					4. All of the staff in our school believe that children can learn even if their lives are in turmoil.				
					5. All staff believe that for children to learn effectively we need to address their social and emotional needs.				
					6. We discuss differing perceptions and priorities of the ECM agenda among our community partners and what these may mean for our pupils.				
					7. Our governors are clear about the school's vision and values and their relationship to ECM.				
					8. Pupils play a role in shaping purposes and provision of extended services.				

Prompts for Lever 3

The statement is true of our school now						In our school now, this should be a			
Don't know	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	<i>Leadership lever 3</i> Shaping school culture and ethos proactively around children's needs	Very high priority	Quite high priority	Not very high priority	Not a priority
					1. Our recruitment policies reflect our belief that all children and young people can learn with appropriate support.				
					2. We are continuously seeking out opportunities for our pupils to experience success in learning beyond the classroom and outside the formal curriculum.				
					3. Teachers work flexibly across the boundaries of the classroom and the 'school day'.				
					4. We closely monitor and review curriculum provision to ensure that it is meeting the learning needs of our pupils.				
					5. In our planning we continuously review where expertise may lie both within the school and external to it.				
					6. Our pastoral system is good at identifying what may be blocking pupils' engagement with learning.				
					7. We systematically plan, monitor and evaluate extended school provision against ECM outcomes.				
					8. Pupils are well aware of who to turn to for different types of help.				
					9. The ethos of the school reflects our commitment to the principle of inclusion.				
					10. Our collaboration with external agencies means that pupils with difficulties and families in trouble quickly get appropriate support.				

Prompts for Level 4

The statement is true of our school now						In our school now, this should be a			
Don't know	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	<i>Leadership level 4</i> Creating structures that distribute leadership, spread responsibility and foster trusting relationships	Very high priority	Quite high priority	Not very high priority	Not a priority
					1. We review and develop staffing structures in light of changing priorities within the local community.				
					2. We have found ways of increasing opportunities for pupils to exercise leadership.				
					3. There are opportunities for all staff to exercise leadership in the school and/or beyond the normal boundaries of school.				
					4. Staff trust each other and know what their respective contributions are.				
					5. When there are serious disagreements among staff or with governors we address these constructively and without animosity.				
					6. Clarity of communication within the school helps to build productive relationships with external agencies.				
					7. We are finding ways in which parents can exercise leadership.				
					8. Staff feel free to take risks in the knowledge that there is support from senior leadership in the event of setbacks.				

Prompts for Level 5

The statement is true of our school now						In our school now, this should be a			
Don't know	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	<i>Leadership level 5</i> Managing workforce remodelling with a clear understanding of, and sensitivity to, professional expertise and capacity	Very high priority	Quite high priority	Not very high priority	Not a priority
					1. Workforce remodelling allows teachers to concentrate on learning and teaching.				
					2. Pupil learning is seen not simply as the province of teachers but as a responsibility of everyone.				
					3. Classroom teaching is the responsibility of qualified teaching staff.				
					4. There are opportunities for all staff to initiate or lead aspects of extended services.				
					5. Young and new members of staff are given opportunities to take a lead in the direction of the school.				
					6. Staff development and support arrangements ensure that all staff feel competent in their roles.				
					7. Remodelling of roles and responsibilities reflects the school's commitment to ECM.				
					8. Remodelling is helping to foster trusting relationships among the staff of the school.				
					9. There is a strong sense of team work across roles, rank and status.				
					10. New roles are created to carry out functions such as child protection, family liaison, and community development.				

Prompts for Level 6

The statement is true of our school now						In our school now, this should be a			
Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	<i>Leadership lever 6</i> Placing high priority on the professional development of the whole staff	Very high priority	Quite high priority	Not very high priority	Not a priority
					1. Distributing leadership is a powerful form of professional development in this school.				
					2. Staff meetings and professional development events within the school involve all of the staff.				
					3. In this school we grow our own talent from existing staff and from within the local community.				
					4. There are career paths for teaching assistants and other support staff which help them to assume greater responsibilities.				
					5. There are opportunities for all staff to take a lead in the professional development of their colleagues.				
					6. ECM plays a central role in professional development within the school.				
					7. We involve partner organisations in our professional development activities.				
					8. Team building is one of the major thrusts of professional development.				

Prompts for Level 7

The statement is true of our school now						In our school now, this should be a			
Don't know	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	<i>Leadership lever 7</i> Managing external relationships and the permeable boundaries between school and community	Very high priority	Quite high priority	Not very high priority	Not a priority
					1. In planning and reviewing our services we draw on all available sources of information about the local community and its residents.				
					2. We keep in touch with 'what's going on' by gathering data from pupils, parents, staff, governors and other key stakeholders.				
					3. Many staff, not just the senior leadership team, represent our school and negotiate with the outside world.				
					4. All staff agree on the importance of working with staff from external agencies.				
					5. We take pains to build trusting relationships with other professionals who work with our children and their families.				
					6. Being clear about our values as a school helps us in making links with groups and organisations we would not normally work with.				
					7. We communicate a consistent message to the outside world about our purposes, values and successes.				
					8. We ensure that external organisations know that we deliver on what we promise.				

Prompts for Level 8

The statement is true of our school now						In our school now, this should be a			
Don't know	True of our school	Mostly true of our school	Only partly true of our school	Not at all true of our school	<i>Leadership lever 8</i> Ensuring sustainability of commitment, finance and resourcing	Very high priority	Quite high priority	Not very high priority	Not a priority
					1. We maintain a commitment to our goals by sharing leadership among school staff.				
					2. We evaluate our extended services provision and share the results with partners, pupils and parents.				
					3. We share information and resources (and perhaps staff) with other schools in our cluster or network.				
					4. The senior leadership team is creative in finding and negotiating sources of funding.				
					5. The focus of our long term strategies is to build a strong commitment to education within the local community ("social capital").				
					6. We know how to get hold of specialist expertise when we need it.				
					7. We plan for the longer term as well as the immediate future.				
					8. Secondary and primary schools collaborate in ways that ensure continuity in children's learning.				

Summary score card for all the eight levers

Use this sheet to record the responses for each of the leadership prompts. The right-hand columns have been left blank for you to use for your own observations.

Consensus high reality	Consensus high priority	High discrepancy	Gap index	Leadership lever	
				Navigating national, local authority and community politics.	
				Engaging commitment of staff, students and partners in a vision of the purposes and ethos of the school.	
				Shaping school culture and ethos proactively around children's needs.	
				Creating structures that distribute leadership, spread responsibility and foster trusting relationships.	
				Managing workforce remodelling with a clear understanding of and sensitivity to professional expertise and capacity.	
				Placing high priority on the professional development of the whole staff.	
				Managing external relationships and the permeable boundaries between school and community.	
				Ensuring sustainability of commitment, finance and resourcing.	

Applying high leverage leadership to influence learning

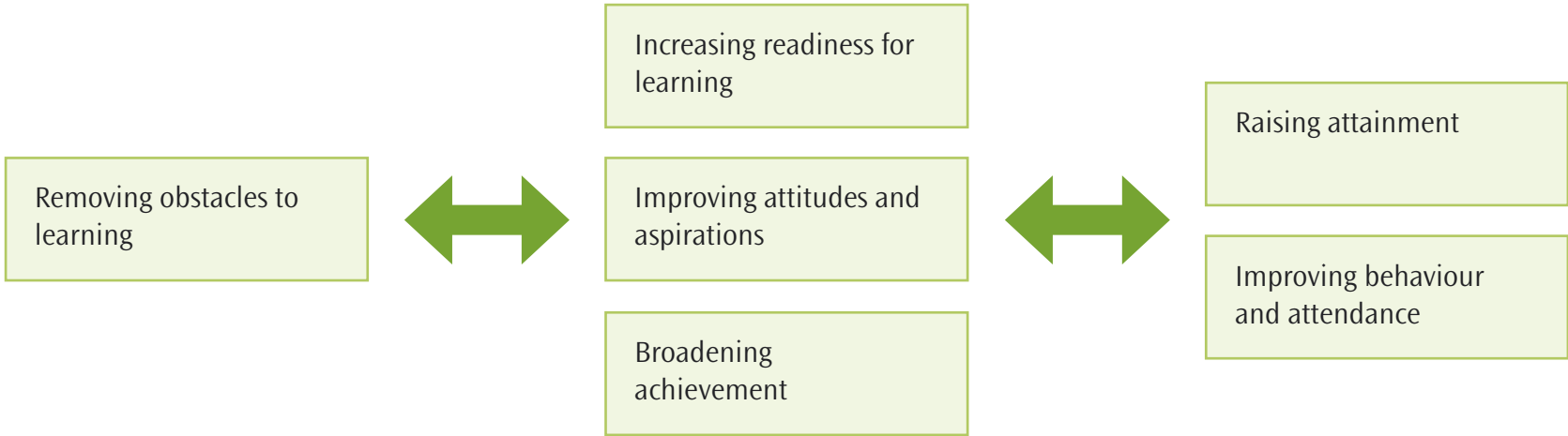
Clarifying Purposes

In this second part of the toolkit we are linking the issue of purposes with the questions about who are the learners.

The 14 extended schools in the study were seen as having six closely interrelated strategic purposes as shown in diagram 1 below. The right hand pair of purposes are the core of traditional school improvement strategies focused on improving teaching in the classroom, assessment for learning,

pupil behaviour etc. The left hand box could be seen as the traditional role of educational welfare services, now of the multi agency teams within extended services. What distinguished schools in the study was the effort they put into the central trio of purposes. The schools both ran extensive programmes of study support and family learning and designed them to support interventions with pupils and their families and to reinforce strategies to improve teaching and in-class learning.

So, for example, providing opportunities to succeed in an after school drama group may enhance feelings of self worth in a group of self harming girls, supporting therapeutic interventions and increasing their readiness for learning within the classroom.



The leverage grids

The leverage grid brings together these six purposes in a matrix with different groups of learners, individuals and groups within the school and outside it in families and neighbourhoods:

- targeted individual pupils whose needs had been assessed and profiled;
- groups of pupils with common characteristics, needs and aptitudes;
- the school population as a whole;
- families – parents, peers and carers;
- the neighbourhood and wider catchment.

This is not a needs analysis, but rather a tool for bringing together and sharing existing information about pupils' progress or lack of it, and the nature of internal and external sources of support. The grids are intended to provoke deeper inquiry, to circumvent a rush to judgement about services that are lacking and to asking probing questions about underlying causes of presenting problems.

On the face of it the grids do not specifically address the ECM five outcomes. This is

because the focus is on learning and on critical reflection as to how that is expressed in and out of classrooms, within and beyond the school. What helps young people 'enjoy and achieve' is at the heart of the discussion.

Using the leverage grids will be complementary to the TDA School Improvement Planning Framework that provides a structure and techniques for detailed framing of schools' improvement plans in the light of extended services. These tools are a precursor to that detailed planning work because they focus on developing habits of leadership and clarifying underlying values and purposes.

Leverage grid 1

	Purposes					
The focus of improvement	Remove obstacles to learning	Increase readiness for learning	Improve attitudes and aspirations	Improve behaviour and attendance	Raise attainment	Broaden achievement
Individual pupils						
Groups of pupils						
Whole school						
Families						
Neighbourhood and wider area						

Using the grids

The first use of the leverage grid is to **plot existing provision**. You should consider doing this several times from two different perspectives

- a) who is providing it: our school, our current partners, the extended services cluster.
- b) who is accessing it; which key stages or particular sub-groups of pupils. This analysis often reveals that what at first sight appears to be rich and comprehensive programmes are in fact quite limited or highly skewed.

This work on existing provision can then be used to determine how far the school is meeting its key objectives through using the TDA School Improvement Planning Framework.

This analysis allows you to move to the second purpose of the grid **planning future provision**. Here the grid allows you to look at the balance of programmes and interventions. There can be no rules only questions about the balance between whole school and targeted groups and families and more general community orientated projects. Here the second grid is designed to be useful.

The leverage grids

The leverage grids are designed for a group – a senior leadership team, a group of staff, a group of governors – to use as a framework for discussion without necessarily having the support of an external adviser or consultant. However, the grids come supplied with a ‘virtual critical friend’, a set of friendly but critical questions designed to deepen reflection and action planning.

The second grid contains a series of questions that try to replicate what a critical friend might ask when sitting in on the discussions of these issues.

These are followed by touchstones, that is, statements that attempt to capture what good practice might look like. If any of these touchstones seem unclear, unrealistic or too easily attainable, that should prompt you to discuss what could be your own, perhaps more challenging, touchstone for that aspect of the work.

The third elements of the grid are the success indicators. These attempt to identify the type of measures that could be turned into tangible evidence of success. In qualitative areas such as enjoyment and well-being adducing ‘hard’ evidence is a difficult task, but Einstein’s words have particular resonance in this respect: ‘Not everything that counts can be counted. And not everything that can be counted, counts’.

Leverage grid 2: Questions, touchstones and success indicators about programmes and the assumptions and theories underpinning them

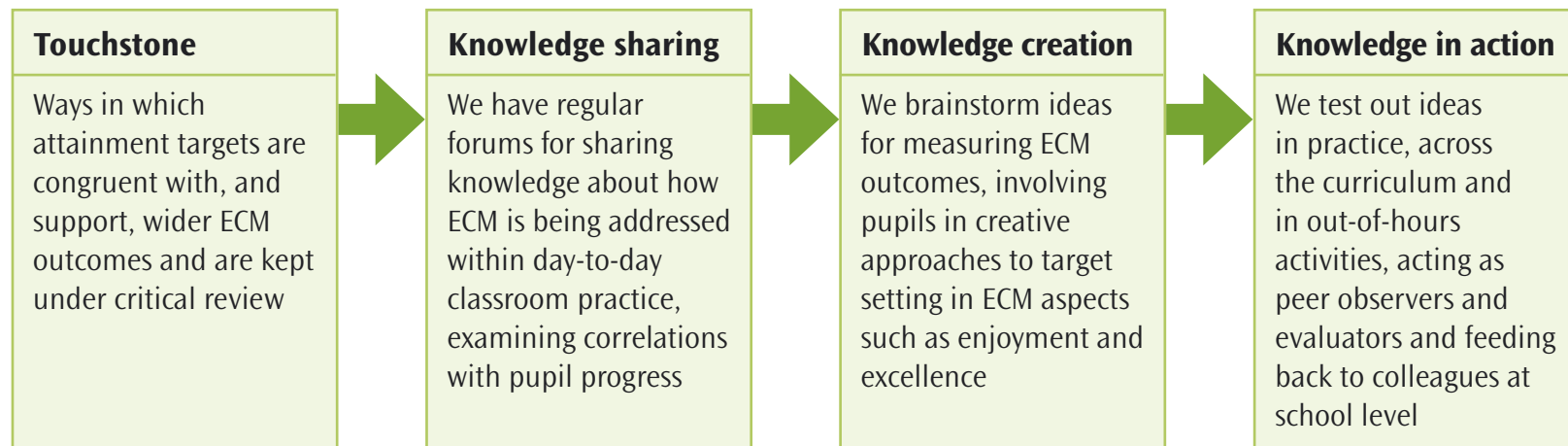
	Remove obstacles to learning	Increase readiness for learning	Improve attitudes and aspirations	Improve behaviour and attendance	Raise attainment	Broaden achievement
A critical friend asks	What aspects of life in family and community inhibit learning in school? How much do you know about the causes of anxiety and disaffection and how to address them?	What are your theories about when and how your pupils learn best? How have you changed structures and routines to take these into account?	What are the incentives and disincentives to learning and how do they differ for individual pupils? How open are these to change?	To what extent is there agreement across the school and community partners about causes of poor behaviour and attendance and how to address them?	How do you ensure that tests, grades and exams are the consequence rather than the drivers of learning?	What opportunities exist within and outside of school hours that engage interest, widen horizons and increase opportunities for achievement?
Touchstones	The nature of multi-agency working with locally set goals for staying safe, being healthy, economic well-being, enjoyment and achievement across a range of sites and contexts	The nature (or 'feel') of the school at key times and potential 'hot spots' during the day. Punctuality and independence in arriving at classes and activities	Ways in which the response of pupils and parents to rewards and sanctions is kept under review. Requests for voluntary learning opportunities. Leadership of such programmes	'Living' planning that engages pupils and staff in continuing review and monitoring of behaviour, attendance and the links between them	Ways in which attainment targets are congruent with, and support, wider ECM outcomes and are kept under critical review	Entitlement of pupils to types of experiences and the accessibility of these for all pupils
Success indicators	Data on attendance and behaviour. Case outcomes from health and social services partners	Teachers' reports of pupils' preparation and participation for, and in, lessons. Pupil self-reports	Data on numbers and targeted pupils participating in activities	Data on exclusions and incidents. Good behaviour reports. Attendance awards	Measures of progress. Records of achievement. Tests and exam performance	Awards, certificates, testimonials, portfolios, newspaper reports, photographs, videos

From knowledge to practice

Good schools are schools full of conversations. They thrive on dialogue (from the Greek dia logos, ‘a continuous search for meaning’). Leaders learn by listening, by actively seeking out viewpoints different from their own, by testing ideas with others. They provide space for staff to share their practice. Activity without learning conversations will be sterile but fruitful activity is fed by dialogue (see, for example, Alexander, R & MacBeath, J, 2004, The Dialogic School, Nottingham, NCSL).

There is nothing as practical as a good theory. (Kurt Lewin 1951)

So discussions of leverage, touchstones and success indicators should lead into and enhance practice. The following is one example of how a touchstone may be used to move from paper to shared discussion, to knowledge creation and to action. You might like to consider other examples using this model or a variant on it.



What have we learned?

This is a resource designed to apply the findings of a research project into the identification of the evidence base for a link between ECM and improvements in school standards, and to identify the nature of the leadership underpinning it. The aim of the resource is to promote further learning within the school community and in its relationships with external partners. In using the materials it is important to find time to stand back and pose the question:

What have we, as a leadership team or as a school, learned from pursuing the issues raised in these resource materials?

In emphasising the importance of reflection and dialogue as the key to school improvement this resource draws on what we have learned from the 14 extended schools of the research study but also from a large body of literature on organisational and community learning. There is a consistent recurring theme in all these studies – schools

that learn together stay together. It is the continuing commitment to inquiry and self-evaluation that creates the resilience and self-confidence to stick to the vision, to steer a moral course and to deal proactively and critically with change. It rests on:

- commitment at the individual level
- dialogue at the professional level
- alignment at the organisational level
- collaboration at the inter-organisational level.

In the end, we are brought back to where we started. If leadership is for learning we need to be clear about who leads and who learns and the continuing search for strategies that connect those two big ideas. That is why this is not simply a once and for all resource but one to return to with new insights, deepened understanding and with new frames of reference.

Useful sources

Senge, P, 2000, *Schools that Learn*, New York, Doubleday

MacBeath, J & Dempster, N, eds, 2008, *Connecting Leadership and Learning*, London, Routledge

McGilchrist, B, Reed, J, Myers, K, 2004, *The Intelligent School*, London, Sage Publications

Mitchell, C & Sackney, L, 2000, *Profound Improvement: Building capacity for a learning community*, Lisse, the Netherlands, Swets and Zeitlinger

Perkins, D, 2003. *King Arthur's Round Table: How collaborative conversations create smart organisations*, Hoboken, NJ, John Wiley & Sons

The Training and Development Agency (TDA), *School Improvement Planning Framework*, available from the TDA, www.tda.gov.uk/schoolimprovement

NCSL publications

Collaborative Leadership in Extended Schools: leading in a multi-agency environment (2006)

ECM: Why it matters to leaders (2006)

Every Child Matters: How leaders in extended school respond to local needs (2007)

Publications and resources also available from NCSL:

- **ECM Leadership Direct** is an online Resource exploring the implications for Every Child Matters for schools and school leaders.
www.ncsl.org.uk/ecmleadershipdirect
- **NCSL programmes** for school leaders at all levels.
www.ncsl.org.uk/programmes
- **Publications and resources** available to download and order.
www.ncsl.org.uk/publications
- **The Leadership Library** is a free unique resource bringing together some of the best leadership and management thinking from around the world.
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- **The Tomorrow's leaders today** campaign is about finding, developing and keeping great headteachers.
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