3 The personal characteristics

Target levels for the headship roles in different settings are shown as follows against the levels in each characteristic:

To be effective, headteachers may only need to achieve target levels in some of the characteristics in each cluster.

Analytical Thinking

Challenge and Support

Developing Potential

Drive for Improvement

Holding People Accountable

Impact and Influence

Information Seeking

Initiative

Personal Conviction

Respect for Others

Strategic Thinking

Teamworking

Transformational Leadership

Understanding the Environment

Understanding Others

ANALYTICAL THINKING

The ability to think logically, break things down and recognise cause and effect

Core question:

Does the headteacher analyse situations and data in a logical and systematic way?

Why it matters:

This characteristic enables the head to think through issues and to focus on priorities for action to create an achievable agenda for change. It supports problem-solving, judgement and decision-making, and ensures action is followed through. The headteacher's capacity to demonstrate analytical thinking will help give importance to a rigorous, logical and reflective approach to situations and issues in the eyes of staff and others. It helps the head stick to the art of the possible, and prevents burn out. It also helps the school make best use of pupil progress data to secure improvements, including making informed use of inspection and research findings.

... in large and medium schools:

Because of scale, there are more potential causes and effects to consider in taking any course of action. There are likely to be more formal systems in place to make sense of situations and data.

... in small schools:

There may be a particular need for heads to have a reasoned, logical approach because the group dynamic and sense of identity in a small school is so strong and can assume great importance in a debate. Juggling competing demands is very demanding and prioritisation becomes critical.

... in special schools:

Analysing the real nature of pupils' needs and bringing a number of hypotheses and professional opinions to bear about these and possible ways of meeting them is a prime requirement for the head. They also need to be highly analytical about difficult emotional terrain so they can make sense of complex situations and feelings - those of pupils, parents, staff, and their own - and have an objective view. This enables them to manage their own feelings and those of others.

ANALYTICAL THINKING

Levels

1. Breaks down problems

Breaks down tasks or problems into key parts. Makes lists of actions required and resources needed. Breaks down programmes of work so that they are digestible, and identifies key milestones.

2. Recognises cause and effect

Thinks through why something happened. Thinks about an implication. Makes clear, logical plans and plans and structures coherent programmes of work.

"We had a certain number of responsibility points. I generated four options for the governors to discuss about how we could best use them."

3. Analyses variables

Analyses *several* possible causes for any given situation. Considers *multiple* possible implications. Uses analytical tools to analyse management and performance data.

4. Undertakes analysis of very complex problems

Tackles apparently intractable, complex or taxing situations by rigorous analysis, including consideration of longer-term effects and impacts, including those on pupils, staff, organisational 'atmosphere' and groups outside the school

Links with other characteristics:

Analytical Thinking underpins a range of more complex characteristics, notably Drive for Improvement (analysing trends and targets), Initiative (anticipating future events and consequences), Understanding Others (recognising possible causes of behaviour), and Impact and Influence (anticipating the implications of own behaviour). Analytical Thinking would also be necessary for Developing Potential (breaking tasks down into small steps, anticipating consequences of development activities), Holding People Accountable (explaining consequences of actions), and Understanding the Environment (understanding how the influences in the environment shape the school). Analytical Thinking would be supported by Information Seeking, to find the information needed to solve problems.

CHALLENGE AND SUPPORT

A commitment to do everything possible for each pupil and to enable all pupils to be successful

Core question:

Are the headteacher's actions based on the desire for each pupil to attain high levels of achievement?

Why it matters:

The lead the head gives means that the one chance *every* pupil gets for their education is seized with both hands - second best provision, and second best response, are simply not good enough. As a baseline, the headteacher needs to fulfil his or her duty of care, by creating a safe, supportive environment. Toughness is needed to give an edge to care for others because sometimes others (including pupils and parents) may need to be challenged to strive for the best possible educational outcomes: mediocrity is not an option. Headteachers must be able to confront when necessary.

... in large and medium schools:

Because of the size of the school, heads may need to work harder to ensure that every single pupil has the best educational provision possible, and has the self-esteem they need to succeed.

... in small schools:

The need to foster close and harmonious relationships in a close-knit team - and community - makes toughness harder but still necessary. In dealings with the outside world the head may have to fight for provision so the school can be adequately resourced.

... in special schools:

Here the head needs to orchestrate other agencies and professionals to get the best possible provision and outcomes for the pupils, to meet their specific needs. They also need to build self-esteem of pupils in an environment where setbacks may be many and progress apparently minimal. Toughness is also required to demand improvements where little had been expected in the past.

CHALLENGE AND SUPPORT

Levels

1. Cares for the pupil

Acts to ensure the practical wellbeing of pupils in his or her care, including putting in place robust steps to ensure their physical and psychological safety as a prerequisite for educational achievement.

2. Expresses positive expectations

Uses a number of ways to build pupils' self esteem - praises achievements and positive patterns of behaviour. Makes progress visible to the pupil and others. Encourages ongoing effort, helps celebrate success.

3. Strives for the best possible provision

Acts relentlessly in the interests of all pupils to secure the best possible provision. Persists in working for the best possible educational outcomes for all pupils, even when the going gets tough.

4. Challenges others in the pupil's best interests
Takes extreme action including robustly challenging
pupils, others, or institutions, to produce a positive
outcome. Is prepared to be appropriately stern in
the best interests of the pupil.

"For a school with children with severe and profound and complex learning difficulties all too often care is seen as the essence. I felt we had to offer more than that, that we had to actually be challenging children, that we had to be prepared to push children that little bit extra."

Links with other characteristics:

This characteristic is fuelled by Drive for Improvement (to ensure the actions are focused on improved outcomes) and by Personal Conviction (to provide the confidence to challenge appropriately). Challenge and Support works closely with Respect for Others and underpins Developing Potential, ensuring that development activities are focused on the best interests of pupils and others in an environment of mutual respect. The inclusiveness at the heart of Challenge and Support links with Transformational Leadership.

DEVELOPING POTENTIAL

The drive to develop others' capabilities and help them realise their full potential

Core question:

Does the headteacher work to develop the long-term capabilities and potential of others?

Why it matters:

The head needs to take every chance to provide long-term development opportunities for others to enhance the collective capability of staff, share leadership, and give staff and pupils a number of different ways to achieve high performance. The head can significantly accelerate raising standards in the school by delegating real leadership activities to the senior leadership team, and more widely, rather than routine administrative tasks. Nurturing potential is important, not only to improve standards of performance by pupils, and create future leaders for the school, but also to create a virtuous circle of positive expectations, opportunity, and achievement.

... in large and medium schools:

Symbolic action is particularly significant when undertaken by heads in large schools, and the head modelling coaching and above all reiterating a positive belief in their own and in others' ability to learn, sends a strong message. Growing *overall* and widespread leadership capability in the school for the medium and long term ensures the continuity needed for the school.

... in small schools:

There are far fewer resources to bring to the job of providing a rich and varied curriculum in a small school, so optimising the potential contribution every member of the teaching and wider team can make is imperative. The head also needs to ensure that staff have learning opportunities outside the school, to prevent insularity.

... in special schools:

The head is likely to be an experienced and knowledgeable professional and as well as creating learning opportunities for others, will be able to coach others - of especial value when it is difficult to create the conditions for learning to take place or to engage with a pupil.

DEVELOPING POTENTIAL

Levels

1. Shows how

Gives step-by-step guidance and demonstrates how to do something. Models how to do something well. Is explicit about standards and what success looks like.

2. Provides tangible support

Provides others with opportunities to practise new skills and capabilities. Shapes development to individual and group preferences. Provides guidance to help others understand and perform well.

3. Gives feedback and encouragement

Gives timely, individualised and specific feedback on what has been done well and where there is room for improvement, to enable individuals to assess their progress and target their learning effort. Gives encouragement, especially when there are difficulties.

4. Creates development opportunities

Deliberately creates opportunities which will help others develop their potential, including delegating fully, having first established others' capability. This includes creating opportunities for others to make and learn from mistakes in a non-critical setting, and equipping them with learning strategies, to manage and direct their own learning.

""My Key Stage 1 teacher is just in her second year of teaching and I consider it's very important she visits other schools so she doesn't get isolated in a village school. So that's what we've done."

Links with other characteristics:

This characteristic is linked closely with Respect for Others and Challenge and Support, because of their emphases on addressing the needs of others. Understanding Others is also necessary in order to gain a better understanding of the particular needs of the people being developed. Developing Potential is fuelled by Drive for Improvement (to ensure that the focus of development is on improved outcomes) and Analytical Thinking (breaking tasks down into small steps anticipating consequences). It may also be driven by Initiative (e.g. developing staff members now to meet future requirements). This characteristic also relies heavily on Impact and Influence (to persuade others of the value of following a particular course of action).

DRIVE FOR IMPROVEMENT

Relentless energy for setting and meeting challenging targets, for pupils and the school

Core question:

Does the headteacher constantly strive to raise achievement and surpass challenging goals taking calculated risks for measured gains?

Why it matters:

Heads need to create challenges to enable pupils and staff, and all those associated with the school, to do more than they ever thought possible. In this way step change, not incremental change, will be achieved. Clarity about what is to be achieved means that there are systems for demonstrating evidence of performance and monitoring it, for quantifying improvement, and for accounting for what has been done. Heads need to ensure the school is focused on the quality of teaching and learning, is outcomes-oriented, and that constant evaluation and self-evaluation takes place. Calculated risk-taking enables a head to make step change improvements in school performance.

... in large and medium schools:

Creating and seeing improvement across the board is harder because of scale, so there needs to be especial resilience and tenacity to set and achieve targets for improvements and to develop the role of team leaders to bring about change.

... in small schools:

Because relationships are so important in this setting, moving others out of their comfort zone by setting challenging goals to achieve extraordinary things may require particular determination.

... in special schools:

Heads need to be flexible and creative in setting targets that are meaningful for their school and their pupils. They may need to inject considerable drive in the face of others' negative or low expectations or misunderstandings of the progress to be made by their pupils.

DRIVE FOR IMPROVEMENT

Levels

1. Creates improvements

Acts positively to improve teaching and learning and achieves a measurable improvement. Improves classroom practice or brings about a specific improvement for the school by accomplishing something better, more quickly or more effectively.

2. Sets and tackles challenging goals

Sets, and plans to meet, challenging goals which represent real 'stretch', relentlessly driving through obstacles and setbacks to achieve success. Is never satisfied with the status quo. Continuously focuses on tracking and measuring their own and others' performance against objectives.

3. Focuses effort

Focuses effort on the key things that matter most, after weighing the pros and cons, to get the maximum pay back in terms of performance and learning outcomes. This involves determining how to target finite resources and effort.

"I said 'We will double the levels of attainment'. And I made that public."

4. Takes risks for performance gains

Takes a carefully calculated risk or commits significant resources and/or time to bring about an improvement in performance and learning outcomes.

Links with other characteristics:

Drive for Improvement provides the energy necessary to achieve improved outcomes in a number of characteristics, including Impact and Influence, Transformational Leadership, Developing Potential, Initiative and Holding People Accountable. This characteristic also supports higher levels of Strategic Thinking, to provide the fuel to generate new ideas to move the school forward. Drive for Improvement is often supported by Analytical Thinking (enabling effective analysis of trends and targets) and Personal Conviction (providing the confidence to set and accomplish challenging goals). Drive for Improvement is often closely linked with Teamworking – working together as a team often enables goals to be achieved more effectively than working alone.

HOLDING PEOPLE ACCOUNTABLE

The drive and ability to set clear expectations and parameters and to hold others accountable for performance

Core question:

Does the headteacher set out clear expectations for others and hold them accountable for performance?

Why it matters:

To raise standards and improve performance, headteachers have to assign accountability clearly, and then hold people answerable for delivery. Without accountability, step changes in performance are not likely to be achieved. This characteristic will be especially critical when heads take over schools which have been under-performing and expectations and values need to be embedded, and poor performance confronted. It will also be important in schools which are 'coasting' or doing well, to avoid complacency and to drive forward to further improvements.

Where heads need to work in partnership with other agencies, there may also be a need to call them to account, and challenge poor practice or non-delivery.

Setting limits or boundaries for others' behaviour is also an important part of achieving the emotional resilience needed as a head.

... in large and medium schools:

Potentially there are lots of corners where poor performance might persist. Special energy is needed to secure uniformly high levels of performance, and to take early action rather than let things drift, and to ensure team leaders also hold others accountable.

... in small schools:

If team members are not delivering, the impact on a small school cannot be mitigated by others – there is a particular urgency in tackling them. This may be tougher because of the threat to day-to-day working relationships, which could provide a reason for inaction.

... in special schools:

Heads have to be especially adept in boundary management because of the helpfulness to all involved in the school of having a set of rules and conventions in an even less predictable environment than mainstream education. Because of the pressures on staff, and the nature of the learning difficulties and disabilities of pupils, holding others accountable may be harder to do, but has to happen to move people on and raise pupil achievement.

HOLDING PEOPLE ACCOUNTABLE

Levels

1. Makes expectations clear

Says clearly what behaviour and what standards of work are expected. Is crystal clear about what is to be achieved. Provides clear direction and contracts for performance or for adherence to a principle, policy or change.

2. Sets boundaries

Sets clear limits and boundaries for behaviour and what can and cannot be done, in order to support learning and get the job done.

3. Demands performance

Holds others accountable for doing what they agreed to do, and for performing to the required standard. Publicly follows up if there is deviation from the agreed goals. Reviews progress against clear expectations and standards.

4. Confronts poor performance

Directly confronts poor performance. Takes decisive and timely action to ensure performance recovery.

"I gave him the target and said these are the things that you really need to concentrate on to get the control of your classroom sorted. Just concentrate on these three things."

"The children's behaviour is appalling. I said 'It is not acceptable. Children should not swear, they should not fight, they should not come up to me and say 'my shirt looks like snot'. So we had a major drive on this."

Links with other characteristics:

Developing Potential and Drive for Improvement provide the rationale for Holding People Accountable. Analytical Thinking is also important in order to understand and communicate the consequences of actions. Personal Conviction is necessary to achieve the higher levels of Holding People Accountable (e.g. having the confidence to challenge). Holding People Accountable supports Transformational Leadership by helping the school or team meet their objectives.

IMPACT AND INFLUENCE

The ability and the drive to produce positive outcomes by impressing and influencing others

Core question:

Does the headteacher use what actions and deliberate influencing strategies to persuade others or produce desired outcomes?

Why it matters:

Heads need to think carefully about the various ways in which others can be motivated or influenced. They can significantly raise standards in their schools only by gaining the commitment of all their staff, pupils, parents and governors, and by bringing together the diverse interest groups within the school community to pursue a common vision. Headteachers' time is at a premium. They need to achieve maximum impact through everything they do, to help understanding and realisation of the school's values and vision. They also need to deploy influencing tactics to get necessary additional resources.

... in large and medium schools:

Heads have more ground to cover with more people so they need to be able to make the time they do spend with others vivid, so it counts. They also need to carry authority with a wide range of others; and be able to influence through others because they cannot steer the school on their own.

... in small schools:

Heads need to hold their own with and influence frequently long-established stakeholders in the local community. They may also need to get additional resources and influence people outside the school to support it.

... in special schools:

Heads have to take the lead in orchestrating a range of fellow professionals and agencies to ensure integrated provision for their pupils, and need to be able to influence them to bring about positive outcomes. Because they frequently have to work in emotionally charged situations purely rational means of persuasion may not be enough, and heads have to have a repertoire of strategies. They are frequently advocates for their client group and need to combat stereotyping and lack of understanding about the nature of special needs education.

IMPACT AND INFLUENCE

Levels

1. Takes actions to persuade

Takes a number of different steps to persuade others, using a number of different lines of argument, including facts or figures and logical persuasion.

2. Calculates an impact

Plans to make a specific impact to influence others and gain buy in. On occasion does something unexpected or vivid to make people sit up and take notice. Tailors an approach to win over an individual or group.

"I got the older children interested in coming to school – because a lot of them hadn't been – by the computer project. They loved it, they were good at it, and that had a snowball effect."

3. Influences indirectly

Influences behind the scenes, using third parties (e.g. parents, other teachers, advisers) to influence others and build support.

"I said to the parents 'I want you to support the children with the homework' and I showed them the homework book and I'd also got a homework policy, 'and we would like you to support this!' These parents were highly critical of the school and I felt I needed to win them around."

4. Influences over an extended period

Uses well thought-through, deliberate and systematic strategies to influence over a long period of time to get others' support.

Links with other characteristics:

The critical links are at lower levels with Understanding Others and at higher levels with Understanding the Environment, to enable a head teacher to understand what approach will work in influencing individuals or groups. In some situations, Drive for Improvement will provide the energy behind an influencing strategy. Analytical Thinking enables a head teacher to choose an appropriate influencing strategy through an analysis of cause and effect relationships to anticipate likely outcomes. Impact and Influence is fundamental to Transformational Leadership and useful in Developing Potential to find ways of motivating others to take responsibility for their learning. Impact and Influence often underpins higher levels of Teamworking, as the ability to influence others is often necessary to bring issues into the open and to build team spirit.

INFORMATION SEEKING

A drive to find out more and get to the heart of things; intellectual curiosity

Core question: Does the headteacher seek out information from a range of sources?

Why it matters:

Heads have to balance the frequently competing demands of a large number of stakeholders. They need to keep in constant touch to detect what is important to each of these. Knowing what is really going on means that headteachers can shape and fine-tune efforts to make big improvements. They address real needs and take account of the specific environment of the school, as well as national and international developments. Failure to demonstrate this characteristic may mean the school is remote and is not harnessing the potential in the wider community to help deliver its vision. It may mean the head also misses out on opportunities to create and draw on wider networks, and get needed support.

... in large and medium schools:

Heads in large schools have more ground to cover and cannot possibly know about everything that is going on. They need therefore to be astute at picking up *significant* detail. Getting out and about and asking questions keeps them close to the action but also sends an important message that others are valued; and gathering quantitative and qualitative data systematically means there is less danger of shortfalls in provision and good ideas being lost.

... in small schools:

Heads have not only to be constantly finding out about the immediate community because it has such a strong presence in the life of the school, but to seek information more widely to enrich the school's offer to its pupils and prevent it being cut off from the outside world.

... in special schools:

Heads are likely to have in-depth expertise and experience in gathering and using information and the insights of others to really understand the needs of their pupils. They need to set the standard for the persistent enquiry that will find ways of reaching special needs pupils and realising their potential.

INFORMATION SEEKING

Levels

1. Finds out

Asks questions of those closest to the action to get a first-hand understanding of what is going on, and of people's thoughts and opinions. Keeps an ear to the ground to learn about all aspects of the school.

2. Digs deeper

Gets to the root of things by asking incisive questions. Goes beyond the obvious questions to probe significant detail.

3. Gathers information

Gets research done or gathers relevant information about a particular topic, or to keep up to date. Gathers information from a wide range of sources.

4. Uses own systems

Develops and uses systems or processes which provide good information about the school and the wider environment. Develops and regularly uses contacts and networks to keep abreast of professional best practice and initiatives.

"I made a point of asking children and parents throughout the year about their actual experiences of and responses to what that particular team was providing."

Links with other characteristics:

This characteristic may be the result of a Drive for Improvement, Initiative, or Developing Potential. It may work together with the thinking characteristics (Analytical Thinking and Strategic Thinking). It often precedes a course of action, so may be linked with Transformational Leadership and other characteristics. Information Seeking often underpins Understanding Others and Understanding the Environment, by providing the drive to obtain information to increase this understanding.

INITIATIVE

The drive to act now to anticipate and pre-empt events

Core question:

Does the headteacher have a bias for action, and does he or she think ahead to anticipate and act on future needs and opportunities?

Why it matters:

Heads need to be able to take decisive and immediate action when there are difficulties, or to prevent a situation escalating. Prompt action enhances the credibility of the headteacher. Headteachers also need to be proactive in the medium and long term so that opportunities are not lost and problems not left to drift. Crucially, they need to be proactive in shaping and reshaping provision to take account of fast-moving societal changes and educational initiatives.

... in large and medium schools:

Because of scale and complexity, like a large tanker a large school may take time to turn in a different direction. Planning for the future needs to happen as early as possible.

... in small schools:

Fewer resources mean that the head is likely to be more often engaged in the here-and-now so using initiative for the long term is particularly important. Demographic trends are likely to have a strong impact.

... in special schools:

Heads need to look to the medium and long term to take account of changes in the configuration of special needs provision both nationally and in their area, and the likely impact of these. There may be even more requirement for them to be poised to take decisive action to deal with emergencies than in other school settings.

INITIATIVE

Levels

1. Acts decisively

Is decisive in a crisis situation. Defuses potential problems before they escalate. questions to probe significant detail.

2. Thinks and acts ahead

Thinks and acts ahead of time, to seize an opportunity or to sort out a problem.

3. Prepares for future opportunities

Anticipates and prepares for possible problems or opportunities *that are not obvious to others*. Takes action to create an opportunity or to avoid a future problem.

"Like a lot of things, if you keep abreast of what's going on around you, ideas just hit you."

4. Acts now to achieve long-term payoffs

Anticipates situations a long way off and acts to create opportunities or avoid problems that are not obvious to others.

Links with other characteristics:

Initiative is often underpinned by a Drive for Improvement (to achieve successful outcomes). This characteristic is particularly effective when combined with Analytical Thinking and Strategic Thinking. Initiative may underpin Information Seeking and Developing Potential (e.g. developing staff members now to meet future requirements

PERSONAL CONVICTION

A passionate commitment to education, based on deeply held values and beliefs, or born out of a desire to serve pupils, parents and the community.

Core question:

Does the headteacher take action based on his or her beliefs, and does he or she take on challenges willingly and with the single-minded aim of getting the best for pupils?

Why it matters:

Headteachers' guiding beliefs will determine the integrity of their decisions and actions when the going gets tough. They work in a highly scrutinised environment and they need to act from and hold to deeply held beliefs and principles so as not to be easily swayed by others, or allow themselves to be deflected from getting the best for the pupils. Demonstrating this characteristic also enables the head to take the position of leader, and serves to reassure others and make them strong, especially in challenging circumstances. It underpins the emotional resilience needed for the long haul of raising achievement year on year.

... in large and medium schools:

There is a need to unify a larger number of stakeholders, not all of whom will agree, and to keep going over time.

... in small schools:

In the closely-scrutinised small school environment, faltering conviction is readily apparent and makes an impact on how people feel about the school and their confidence in it. Confidence is also needed to decide not to do certain things, and to prioritise effort, because the day is only so long, especially for heads who also teach.

... in special schools:

The contributions of many other professionals, parents and stakeholders need to be managed to get the best deal for the pupil to meet his or her unique needs. This puts a premium on the conviction of the head which will stem from in-depth experience as a practitioner and their significant specialist know-how. They also need personal conviction to absorb and deal with others' anxiety, anger, frustration and volatility and give them the emotional resilience and sense of focus that will support others.

PERSONAL CONVICTION

Levels

1. Expresses an independent view

Confidently gives an independent view. Acts on personal beliefs.

2. Expresses a professional view

Speaks and acts from the heart as well as from the head, gives an authoritative view, sees self as a professional, able to resolve issues with a 'can do' attitude. Commands respect.

3. Rises to challenges

Is driven by own values to rise to challenges in the interests of the pupils. Expects to succeed. Acts consistently with own stated values even when it is difficult to do so.

decision. I said 'Well it's not working, so I think we should have a go at this and if you think after a period of time that it's a disaster and it's damaging the children's education I will be in the dog house and I will feel that I've made a management bloomer and I will have to wear the sack cloth...' but I knew it was the right decision to take."

"I listened to their views and made a professional

4. Relishes challenge

Is motivated by challenge: the tougher the better. Takes on challenges and deals with situations that others back away from. Includes challenging powerful stakeholders when necessary. Has faith in the inherent value of his or her own actions, and remains consistent with own values and beliefs even in extremely challenging situations.

Links with other characteristics:

Personal Conviction underpins Transformational Leadership, providing the confidence to motivate others toward a vision even in the face of setbacks and obstacles, and Drive for Improvement (to set and accomplish challenging goals). Personal conviction helps head teachers in challenging others and when dealing with difficult situations, in Holding People Accountable, Challenge and Support, and in the highest level of Teamworking, which involves surfacing and helping resolve issues which hinder the effective operation of the team. The confidence and professionalism of Personal Conviction are also necessary to demonstrate Respect for Others.

RESPECT FOR OTHERS

An underlying belief that other people and individuals matter, and deserve respect

Core question: Does the headteacher show respect and consideration for others?

Why it matters:

Headteachers who show respect for others give a clear lead in demonstrating that the pupil is at the centre of everything that happens in a school. It means clear signals are being given that listening to and valuing individuals, who they are and what they bring, is important to achieving improved standards. This generosity of spirit matters because it is contagious, creating an ethos of mutual respect in the school community.

... in large and medium schools:

There is a danger that individuals and what is special about them may get 'lost' simply because the school is large. Heads need to work harder at signalling that individuals matter.

... in small schools:

Everyone knows each other very well in a small school community and 'labels' can get in the way of seeing who people really are and how they are changing. Heads can lead in recognising and valuing people as they change and develop.

... in special schools:

Heads need to model respecting pupils who may have profound disabilities or behavioural difficulties, especially when others may have negative expectations of them, and there is a danger of negative stereotyping.

RESPECT FOR OTHERS

Levels

1. Listens

Actively listens to pupils and others, hears what they say, shows interest, and acknowledges and validates their points of view and contribution. Is attentive to the individual and his or her unique qualities.

2. Values others

Behaves in a way which shows pupils or others that they are valued as individuals, and for what they contribute. Gives repeated messages about this. Respects and values diversity.

3. Value others despite provocation

Acts in a way which shows pupils or others that they are still valued, even when they have done something unacceptable. Maintains positive expectations against the odds.

tual

4. Creates a community where there is mutual respect

Takes a number of steps over time to create a feeling of community within and beyond the school community. Encourages individuals to value each other when there are differences of view and background. Consistently and publicly praises achievements of pupils who have achieved against the odds.

"I instituted an assembly. Everyone had said 'you can't do it - they'll just start fighting each other'. But we did it. Now everyone looks forward to it as a peaceful time when we take stock and we can all be together."

Links with other characteristics:

Respect for Others is underpinned by the confidence and professionalism of Personal Conviction. It works in parallel with Challenge and Support to ensure that pupils are respected and valued when taking action in their best interests. Respect for Others is fundamental to underpinning Developing Potential, Understanding the Environment, Understanding Others and Teamworking.

STRATEGIC THINKING

The ability to see patterns and make links, even when there is a lot of detail, and to see the big picture

Core question:

Does the headteacher have the ability to recognise patterns and concepts, apply models of best practice to school situations and to create ideas and approaches?

Why it matters:

Heads operate in an environment which can appear bewilderingly complex. Highly effective headteachers are able to see the wood from the trees, and ensure that they create the agenda that is right for their school by knowing what excellence looks like elsewhere. Benchmarking is needed to demonstrate comparative standards and show how these relate to their own schools, and to avoid effort being wasted in reinventing the wheel Heads might choose to use models of change management in order to create the change required in their school. The headteacher has a key role in fostering connections with the outside world, and his or her success in introducing and using best practice from elsewhere will have a major impact on continuing the effort to raise standards, and the degree to which the school is open to outside influences and ideas. This creates new ways of looking at things and enables planning for improvement to have a clear focus and strong momentum.

The head also has a key role in creating urgency and momentum about new kinds of learning and approaches, looking into the future and for example recognising and acting to meet ICT challenges.

... in large and medium schools:

There is more hard and 'soft' data to make sense of to determine direction, and more variables need to be taken into account. More effort needs to be orchestrated to bring about significant change, which makes it very important to get strategy right.

... in small schools:

Engaged as they are in the hands-on running of the school and often a significant teaching load, heads in small schools have to be able to move rapidly between the here-and-now, and the big picture. They also need to be able to pace the change agenda and divide it into manageable steps so it is achievable with scarce resources. Critically, they need to broaden pupils' horizons by building involvement with the wider world, when their communities may be isolated and there is a risk of introversion.

... in special schools:

Heads need to be very clear about the range of needs the school seeks to address and when mainstream provision is and is not appropriate. They also need to integrate provision when there are a large number of stakeholders and other professionals involved in meeting pupils' needs, and create a clear identity for the school.

STRATEGIC THINKING

Levels

1. Sees patterns

Recognises and reflects on patterns and connections, and analyses their significance. Takes a medium and longer-term view.

2. Uses concepts

Thinks broadly and imaginatively using models of best practice from outside the school. Works with others to help them think about how they learn and can be successful, and uses these models to support further learning.

"I took all the examples I could gather of effective assessment frameworks, I went through a modification process which took account of the particular needs and range of needs that there are within the school. I related the frameworks directly to the curriculum. I constructed a curriculum and assessment model because I think if people can see things it's easier to take in and understand how a system works."

3. Makes the complex simple

Cuts through complexity by creating models that help others understand where they are going, and to relate their part of the action to the whole, and to the wider context. Communicates the big picture to others.

4. Introduces new thinking

Thinks 'outside the box', especially to plan for future developments. Experiments and reinvents. Thinks strategically, reshaping ideas and concepts to identify an innovative way forward for the school.

Links with other characteristics:

Strategic Thinking underpins many of the other characteristics and is particularly critical in enabling Understanding Others, Understanding the Environment, and the higher levels of Impact and Influence and Initiative. It is often underpinned by a Drive for Improvement, which provides the energy to generate new ideas to move the school forward. It can also be underpinned by Information Seeking, which can help obtain a clearer idea of the bigger picture. Strategic Thinking enables head teachers to identify a vision, which is a necessary first step before communicating a vision to others in Transformational Leadership.

TEAMWORKING

The ability to work with others to achieve shared goals

Core question:

Does the headteacher work effectively with others to achieve shared goals for pupils and the school?

Why it matters:

The success of the pupils and the school is the result of collaborative effort and shared leadership. The extent to which this effort is integrated, and a climate of purposeful involvement and commitment is created and sustained, is largely dependent on the head. He or she plays a critical role in forging the identity and spirit of the school.

... in large and medium schools:

Heads need to pull more people together into effective teams and the challenge of forging team identity is particularly tough.

... in small schools:

This is critical to provide a seamless curriculum with a small number of staff. If there are divisions, there is an immediate impact on pupils. The 'feel good' factor and pride in the school heads are able to create through effective teamworking is critical because there are usually only two main teams (the staff and the governors).

... in special schools:

Heads need to ensure the seamless integration of the efforts of teams of teachers, other professionals and agencies, support staff and parents to bring about the best possible educational and social outcomes for pupils.

TEAMWORKING

Levels

1. Helps and supports others

Willingly helps others out. Co-operates with, and supports, colleagues and parents when asked.

2. Shares information

Keeps colleagues informed and shares good ideas. Communicates frequently with parents about their children's progress.

3. Gets input from others

Asks colleagues, parents and others for their opinions and their ideas. Asks for feedback from others on his or her own work.

"I said 'What do you think?' I wanted to pick people's brains, really get out their ideas so we could build on them."

4. Builds team climate and spirit

Brings people together and makes them feel proud of being part of the team. Speaks positively about the team and its achievements to others and protects the team. Brings issues which hamper effectiveness of the team in to the open and helps the team in overcoming these.

"I got the children to photograph the places in the grounds where they wanted landscaping and they came back and said where they wanted trees and so on and also a little hideaway, a hollow which they wanted left alone because they liked it."

Links with other characteristics:

Effective Teamworking is often underpinned by Understanding Others and Respect for Others. This characteristic is often linked closely with Drive for Improvement – working together as a team often enables goals to be achieved more effectively than working alone. Impact and Influence and Personal Conviction can also underpin the higher levels of Teamworking, as the ability to behave confidently and influence others is often necessary to bring issues into the open to build team spirit.

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The drive and the ability to take the role of leader, provide clear direction, and enthuse and motivate others

Core question:

Does the headteacher lead others to work together effectively and achieve significant school improvements?

Why it matters:

To create significant changes in performance, heads need to offer very high quality leadership, and raise results with and through others, especially the leadership team. Significant change is unlikely to occur unless the head injects energy and focuses on, and engages with, improvement and innovation. The head is the lead professional and needs to convey the belief that transformation is possible, orchestrate the inputs of his or her teams, including paraprofessionals, ensure they are successful, and build consensus and commitment. This is especially important when the school is struggling to meet the needs of a disadvantaged or divided community, or where the values of the community, or of the home, run counter to those of the school.

This quality matters because it liberates the extra effort and creativity of staff and other stakeholders to significantly raise achievement.

In order to ensure the school can offer the curriculum and care that is right for its pupils, the head has a key role in identifying talent and appointing the right people to take the school forward, ensuring depth and breadth of capability and know-how.

... in large and medium schools:

In the more complex environment of a large school, the calibre of leadership has to be high to reach out and touch a large number of people, and get them motivated on behalf of the school and to raise standards.

... in small and special schools:

The head can make an immediate and marked difference and bring about step change in performance if they work as leaders bringing about transformational change rather than incremental change.

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Levels

1. Makes the school or team effective

Makes the school effective in a variety of ways - orchestrates individuals and teams to work co-operatively. Recruits, selects, positions and develops teachers to create winning teams, playing to strengths and compensating for weaknesses.

2. Takes care of the team

Speaks positively about the school or team to others and builds up their image. Gets needed extra resources for the school or team to achieve its objectives. Removes blocks to the effectiveness of the team. Protects staff from distraction and undue pressure.

3. Takes the role of leader

Steps up to a leadership role - takes responsibility for ensuring that the school or team meets their objectives and creates the tone and the climate by setting a personal example of how they want others to act.

4. Gains commitment to a compelling vision

Communicates a compelling vision of what is to be achieved and inspires other to achieve it, overcoming difficulties and drawbacks and building team identity and pride in the vision.

"We took a day. The main thing was, I got them to acknowledge there were problems and improvements were needed. I turned it round from them coming into the room dispirited and low, to people going out euphoric. We didn't have the detailed strategy then, we just had established we were going to change things – and why."

Links with other characteristics:

Drive for Improvement and Developing Potential fuel this characteristic. It also works powerfully with Understanding Others, Impact and Influence, Information Seeking, and Understanding the Environment. Similarly, Holding People Accountable can support this characteristic by helping the school or team meet their objectives. The inclusiveness at the heart of Challenge and Support also links with this characteristic. Strategic Thinking enables head teachers to identify a vision, which is a necessary first step before communicating a vision to others in Transformational Leadership.

UNDERSTANDING THE ENVIRONMENT

The ability to understand and make positive use of the relationships or social and cultural differences with the school or in organisations in the wider community

Core question:

Is the headteacher sensitive to the realities of organisational politics and social and cultural issues both within the school and in the wider community?

Why it matters:

In order to make a significant impact on performance, heads need to understand how people, groupings and organisations work and relate to one other in order to manage them proactively. This is particularly important in relation to achieving significant improvement; in understanding the positive forces that can be drawn on to support the improvement effort and those which will counteract it, and how these can best be tackled. Of particular importance in this context are the needs of minority ethnic groups and pupils with special educational needs, including the most able. This characteristic is likely to be of increasing significance as school intakes become increasingly varied and communities and families more fragmented, under pressure from economic and social changes.

Knowing what is and is not possible or a priority, at any one time within its particular social context, helps the leader of the school have the resilience and realism needed for the long haul.

... in large and medium schools:

Heads need to understand a wider set of political influences and groupings and their interrelationships.

... in small schools:

The local community has a strong relationship with the school and the head needs to really understand the history to work positively with it. The school is at the centre of the community and is highly scrutinised, so heads need to have a particular sensitivity to how actions will be viewed and interpreted.

... in special schools:

The head needs to deal with a wide range of individuals and agencies who are likely to be under actual or perceived pressure in their roles, often to demonstrate they are delivering. Political antennae are needed by the head to tune into these pressures and to understand why groups behave the way they do, and to use this understanding in their work.

UNDERSTANDING THE ENVIRONMENT

Levels

1. Understands formal and informal structure

Understands and uses formal and informal processes to get things done in the school or community, or in relation to other organisations. Identifies the key influencers and decision makers.

2. Understands culture and climate

Understands a particular organisation or community, and how to respond to their specific needs. Is alert to clues about shifts in team climate and knows what action is appropriate. Knows what is and is not possible.

3. Understands different agendas

Understands the different interest groups and coalitions in the school, community and other bodies, and reasons for their various underlying concerns and agendas. Uses this understanding to achieve positive outcomes.

4. Understands ongoing issues in the school and society

Understands the reasons for *ongoing* patterns of behaviour or social attitudes, and the social, cultural and other influences that have shaped the school and its community in the past.

"You could sense it: the staff became more confident, they too recognised what they were doing must be starting to have some impact. They started to have higher aspirations for the pupils. The pupils started to feel more confident about themselves. The whole feel around the place was changing."

Links with other characteristics:

Understanding the Environment is underpinned by the thinking competencies. Analytical Thinking enables a head teacher to make links between the influences in the environment and their effects on the school and Strategic Thinking enables the understanding of ongoing patterns and the bigger picture in which the school operates. This competency is also supported by Information Seeking (providing information about the environment), Respect for Others and Understanding Others (valuing and listening to the issues associated with different cultures in the community). Understanding the Environment provides a sounds basis for Transformational Leadership and Impact and Influence.

UNDERSTANDING OTHERS

The drive and an ability to understand others, and why they act the way they do

Core question:

Is the headteacher aware of what others are feeling and thinking? Does he or she understand the meaning of and reasons for other people's behaviour?

Why it matters:

Heads need to understand others and set a standard throughout the school for the quality of relationships. The headteacher needs to understand an individual's strengths, weaknesses and aspirations in order to support the personal and professional development of his or her staff, and to inform decisions about their deployment. This characteristic is also critical in bringing about improvements, as the headteacher can diagnose accurately sources of support and resistance, and bring other people on board to get things done.

... in large and medium schools:

There are more people to get to know, so the head needs to have a flair for accurately 'reading' people that they may only catch glimpses of, and developing this skill in others.

... in small schools:

Heads need to be 'in tune' with the team to pick up on any concerns or problems before they impact on the smooth running of the school. Heads need to be able to stand back from this close focus and see the underlying patterns of behaviour of others and take a dispassionate view of strengths and weaknesses.

... in special schools:

Heads as lead professionals set the standard for others in their schools in their dedication to finding out where their pupils are coming from and really understanding who they are. This makes tailored learning interventions more successful. Heads need to have the emotional maturity and range to get close to and understand not only pupils, but parents and others in situations which may be complex and emotionally charged. Their facility in doing this means they are able to manage these situations effectively.

UNDERSTANDING OTHERS

Levels

1. Is sensitive to body language

Observes others and works out how they are feeling from their non-verbal behaviour.

2. Understands meanings

Understands the significance of the behaviour of pupils and others even when this is not overtly expressed. Works out the meaning of what others are doing when they are giving 'mixed messages' - saying one thing but doing another

3. Understands ongoing behaviour

Demonstrates objectivity in assessing others' strengths and weaknesses. Makes sense of the reasons for someone's ongoing patterns of behaviour.

4. Understands group dynamics

Is able to understand the interactions within and between groups and to appreciate the reasons for group behaviour, even when these are not obvious. "The children were very interested and responsive, there were lots of eyes looking upwards and all their hands up." "I noticed it this week, he's started wearing his badge and he was made librarian a month or so ago and didn't wear his badge. These are all signs of self-esteem.

Links with other characteristics:

Understanding Others is underpinned by the thinking characteristics. Analytical Thinking enables a head teacher to recognise the possible causes of a person's behaviour and Strategic Thinking enables one to identify patterns across behaviour in different situations. This characteristic is often enabled by Information Seeking, which allows one to gather information to increase understanding of an individual. It is also underpinned by Respect for Others, which focuses a head teacher on respecting and valuing diversity. Understanding Others is crucial in underpinning Impact and Influence, Transformational Leadership, and Developing Potential and provides a sounds basis for Understanding the Environment