

Top-Tips – Your First 100 Days of New Headship

Congratulations on securing the best job you can ever have – enhancing the life opportunities of our children and young people through education. Education changes lives.

What follows is a brief ‘top-tips’ summary for your first 100 days of headship, and a reading and blog list to stimulate your thinking. This summary comes with a health warning. Each school is different and each new headteacher has different leadership styles, different priorities and different needs. This is why it’s advisable to book a coach /coach-mentor to work alongside you at the beginning of your journey. A coach will enable you to think through strategies, to identify your short-term, medium-term and long-term goals which are all part of the first 100 days of headship.

The schema below sets out a proposed structure – you are doing all three things at once!

Prepare for the journey before you start: pre-planning whilst ‘off stage’

You will, of course, have done your ‘pre-entry school evaluation’ in advance. Although you don’t have all of the information yet, you will have read previous Ofsted reports, scrutinised the website, ‘interviewed’ the Governing Body (as well as them interviewing you) and audited as much as you can via any information given to you (or requested) in advance. It’s always wise to agree with your Chair of GB and the outgoing headteacher your induction into the school with, if possible, a handover period (*a couple of mornings in the school meeting the deputies, the school business leader, P.A; SLT and key middle leaders’ meetings with your Chair of Governors; meeting staff by appointment; reading school documentation, the SEF, SIP etc.*). Even if it is not possible to have a handover period, it’s necessary to read all that you can about the school and at least arrange a visit.

Remain professional, respectful and courteous towards and about the previous head. This position needs to be retained throughout your headship. It’s a rewarding but tough job which everyone does in a different way, depending on who they are and what they had prioritised in that school at that time.

A. Immediate phase (see ‘column 1)

From Day 1 – ‘On stage’. Develop a professional relationship with others

Meeting your staff, sharing your vision (and discovering theirs), making an impression, getting to know people.

Whilst pre-planning is ‘off stage’ - every minute on entry has been planned by you. You know that the minute you’re arriving at the school you’re ‘on stage’ so building rapport, using communication skills and appearance is important. Being authentic, real, warm is also important. As Daniel Goleman says, the emotions of the leader can affect a whole organization.

If you have an opportunity to arrange a staff CPDL/INSET day on your first day then do it! You will have a great opportunity to welcome everyone back from a holiday, build a shared vision, get people on side, share your vision and plans and make an impression.

Although you will have a lot to do and you wonder if you can actually get to meet all of these people, it really is worth meeting everyone for at least a fifteen-minute conversation. Use the questions set out in the table below. It means that you know your staff, they know you, you’re beginning to build rapport by getting to know staff.

Plan your assemblies, share your vision with everyone, particularly students. Consult with staff about dropping into lessons (the response to that question and anything you see will tell you so much in itself!).

Greet students at the gate in the morning and wish them well at the end of the day – they’ll see you around, know you’re the new Head and send a message that you are a visible head, not one who sits in her or his office.

Get your message out there - “this is who I am as a leader”. “This is how we are going to enable our students to be successful”.

Decision-making

Depending on what you inherit, you will need to make key decisions quickly, prioritising safeguarding, health and safety and anything else that urgently needs to be addressed. Seek advice from SLT if you're unsure. You may, in addition, wish to inform staff that you will take time to find out about the school and then review and strategise with them (all context dependent). You will have an immediate impact on the school and its people in the first public decision made. Consider Kotter's change process as an aid.

Draw on your knowledge of situational leadership to lead in whatever way necessary or with whoever you are interacting. Each situation is different. This means being responsive. It also means being authentic and asserting your position (set in trend clear communication processes – being assertive, requesting clarity etc. – *(cross reference ACAS 'Difficult Conversations' training materials. I prefer to call these recommendations 'clear communication'. Read Susan Scott's Fierce Conversations, etc. to add to your clear communication repertoire).*

Secure early wins that build personal credibility

It's important to secure early wins that build personal credibility and accelerate momentum. Early wins may lay the foundation for larger goals and can be used to signal desired changes in culture and stakeholder behaviour.

Create a 100 Day Plan

Start by asking, 'what is necessary here? What is possible here? What is the vision for this school?' Then distinguish those things you will absolutely do in your first 30 days (prioritizing then securing early wins, finding solutions), then the second 30 days, including top-team priorities, and third 30 days (long term vision and strategy). Work with your coach in clarifying goals, knowing that you will not have the full picture of your school yet, so your plan may change (what can be most overwhelming is finding out that as you turn over one difficult stone you discover more that might need changing and so another emerges).

B. Alongside the medium phase (see column 2)

Alongside the above and day-to day in the first month – 'on stage' and 'off stage'.

Auditing school -

how is it doing? what's the 'state of the nation' and how do I /we know?

Build an effective team /teams with a sense of urgency. If it is beneficial for SLT to go off site i.e. a 24- hour residential for strategic planning then do it – or at least plan that you will design and facilitate /co-facilitate an SLT School Improvement Planning time.

Audit across the school as set up in the table below.

C. Long term – Strategically developing a long-term strategic plan (column 3)

Build teams and coalitions that create longer term strategic change

Establish key relationships with power brokers. Build coalitions by influencing and aligning your goals to theirs.

Use the table below to start to plot your strategy – weaving in and out of being 'on-stage' and 'off-stage'.

This perpetual on-off stage experience, along with the 'newness' of the situation and responding to lots of new people and new situations is exhausting! Try to set up good patterns of sleep and rest. Even if adrenalin keeps you going and you're excited, passionate about your new project, then having at least a couple of early nights is important. Have off stage time with friends and family. We, as headteachers, sometimes unintentionally neglect them when we're working at full speed. Plan time off with them, book holidays in advance and eat well. Working with your coach will help with this. You are precious to the lives of more people so you need to take care of yourself!

A 'First 100 Days' Structure

Immediate - Day 1 then 2 Wks	Alongside and Day-to Day Auditing school - How is it going? What's the state of the nation and how do I /we know?	Long term – Strategic Developing long-term strategic plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with people, build rapport, establish relationship. Walking the walk - making an impression, followers through leadership (people connection) • Vision, getting buy-in • Presentation /meetings ready for each stakeholder - your vision and values, who you are, what you want for students and community (being authentic) • Plan a team-building /SLT buy-in event (residential?) • Meet every member of staff - What do you do here? What do you feel proud of? What goes well? What needs improving? What might your role be in that? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative (data, hard evidence, budget, curriculum, T&L, Behaviour & Attendance) • Qualitative (case studies, ethos, impressions) • Meet every member of staff • What do we know (and how do we know it)? • Audit student views • Audit parent views • From audit trail draw up a list of priorities and draft strategies to manage priorities • Meet with your Chair and Vice Chair of Governors to contract your relationship • Audit the strengths and weaknesses of your governing board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term - Strategic • Developing long-term strategic plan by keeping records from audit to evaluate, draw SEF, from SEF, draw up SIP plan • Where will the school be in a year, two years' time? What will it have achieved? • Set out your strategic plan (draft for consultation and buy-in from others) • Share your

Background Reading /Links Ahead of First 100 Days

Blogs

- Lead Learning - First 100 Days of Headship [Leading Learner First 100 Days of Headship](#)

Readings

- First 100 Days of Headship – Guardian [The Guardian - Headteachers' First Term](#)
- Succeeding a Successful Long-Standing Headteacher [The Guardian](#)
- Diary of a Headteacher – De-cluttering your school ; [Sec-Ed](#)
- Fierce Conversation – Susan Scott
- Brave Headteachers: How to Lead A School Without Selling Your Soul, Dave Harris
- Lighting the Way: The Case for Ethical Leadership in Schools – Angie Brown
- [Optimus -Top-Tips-New-Headteachers](#)