

# Ealing Council

## Induction programme for new headteachers and acting headteachers September 2010-11

### headteacher mentor – coach brokerage

#### Rationale

As part of our strategy for developing sustainable leadership models in Ealing schools, we are able to broker the support of headteacher 'mentor-coaches' to all newly appointed headteachers and acting headteachers in the first two years of headship. Mentor-coaches will offer up to four days of support in the first year and up to two days of support in the second year. Headteachers new to headship should access funding for this through the NCSL's Head Start scheme. Experienced headteachers should negotiate funding for mentor-coaching through their governing body. For the purposes of the programme, we will define mentor-coaching in the same terms as used by London Centre of Leadership.

#### Mentoring-coaching

Mentoring-coaching is a structured, sustained process of guidance and support especially useful in supporting professional learners through significant career transitions. In working with new headteachers, mentor-coaches will also support the development of critical leadership skills and attributes for headship:

1. Leadership – the ability to lead and manage people to work towards common goals
2. Decision-making skills – the ability to investigate, solve problems and make decisions
3. Communication skills – the ability to make points clearly and understand the views of others
4. Self-management – the ability to plan time effectively and to organise oneself well
5. Attributes – the ability to adapt to changing circumstances and develop self-confidence

#### Headteacher mentor-coaches

Mentor-coaches are colleagues with knowledge, skills and considerable experience of the role of headship. They use these attributes to support the new headteacher in an unthreatening and non-judgemental relationship. As well as directly advising, they can also broker access to support from elsewhere and encourage self-directed learning. Mentor-coaches are selected on the basis of appropriate skills, knowledge and experience and are carefully matched to the needs and working context of the new / acting headteacher.

#### What sort of things will the mentor-coach do?

Mentor-coaches will tailor activities to meet the individual needs of each new (or acting) headteacher but the following may well form a part of the mentoring-coaching process:

- Identifying learning goals and supporting progression toward those goals
- Developing the learner's control over their own learning
- Active listening to the learner
- Modelling, observing, articulating and discussing practice to raise awareness
- Share learning experience(s) (for example via observation or video)
- Providing guidance, feedback and, when necessary, direction
- Reviewing and action planning
- Assessing and appraising practice
- Encouraging reflection and analysis
- Brokering a range of support from other agencies or individuals

As the relationship develops the mentor-coach will make adjustments to the way he / she works with the new headteacher, reacting to the new headteacher's growing confidence in his / her role but also taking account of any personal or professional issues and problems encountered by the new headteacher.

#### The mentoring-coaching relationship

At the heart of the mentoring process is a professional relationship between two colleagues. The success of the relationship depends on a number of factors:

- Clarity about roles and responsibility
- Clear communications and expectations
- A shared and agreed understanding of the forms of support available
- A focus on development and progression
- Flexibility of support
- An emphasis on reflection and critical thinking
- Timing that meets the needs of the headteacher and the school
- Support that is personalised and negotiated
- Regular reviews of process, outcomes and the relationship itself

Many mentors and those mentored note that the relationship alters with time, moving from one of support to one which reflects a more equal partnership where both learn from each other. Increasing professional equality often leads to collaborative learning for both headteachers.

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### Criteria for choice of mentor-coach

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Headteachers recommended as mentor-coaches in Ealing will:

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- Possess good communication, analytical and interpersonal skills
- Be experienced and successful practitioners of at least three years experience in headship
- Have respect and credibility within their own school and within the LA
- Have received Ofsted judgements for leadership and management of “good” or “outstanding”
- Be leading schools with good capacity to further improve and distribute leadership
- Have continued with their own professional development in aspects of mentoring-coaching
- Have the commitment to encouraging the learning and development of others
- Understand the main issues of the national agenda for leadership and school improvement
- Be committed to quality in their own work and clear standards of performance
- Be able to devote sufficient time and energy to the role

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### Practicalities of a mentoring-coaching agreement

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The starting date for the programme will be agreed by the two headteachers. Ideally the first meeting will take place before the headteacher begins his/her appointment

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- Meetings need to be planned and held regularly at appropriate points to review progress
- It is recommended that at least two meetings be held in the first eight weeks after the start of the programme
- Meetings will usually take place in the new headteacher’s school and will require a quiet space that allows confidential discussion and reflection
- The mentor-coach will also be available via telephone and email
- The mentor-coach should maintain regular contact to check on progress and any support needed
- Appropriate confidentiality will be observed by the mentor-coach and mentee throughout and beyond the programme
- Any information arising from the programme that needs to be shared with others will only be shared by mutual agreement

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### Quality assurance of the programme

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Evaluation forms will be completed at the end of the school year by the new headteachers / acting headteachers and returned to the LA.

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### The First Formal Meeting

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The mentor-coach and the new headteacher will need to come prepared for this first formal meeting. The initial agenda setting / contracting meeting is critically important in setting the tone for the mentoring relationship.

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### It is essential to establish:

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A shared understanding of the purpose of the relationship

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- Good understanding of the context in which the new headteacher will be working
- Clear expectations of one another
- Ground rules for an effective relationship in terms of process and outcomes
- Clear parameters of confidentiality which will help to create an honest, open, trusting relationship
- The desired learning outcomes
- The forms of support that might be helpful within the formal / informal structures of the relationship

It is helpful if the new headteacher has completed a needs analysis or skills audit prior to the first meeting. This can be accessed through the NCSL Head Start Programme.

**A mentor-coach will more effectively support the new headteacher if she / he can:**

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Listen sensitively and with an open mind, showing empathy, understanding and not taking a judgemental stance

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- Act as a sounding board helping the new headteacher to articulate his / her own thinking
- See an issue from the new headteacher's perspective, but also challenge and question his / her assumptions
- Affirm the new headteacher's strengths and help him / her to identify areas for further growth and development
- Encourage the new headteacher, helping him / her to reflect on previous achievements as a motivation for new achievements
- Reflect and clarify the new headteacher's thoughts and feelings
- Give constructive feedback following observation of, or data collection from, various work activities
- Help the new headteacher recognise potential barriers and difficulties
- Guide the new headteacher, suggesting where he / she might look for new knowledge and insights
- Wherever possible draw upon his / her own experience and understanding
- On occasion take action on the new headteacher's behalf to assist him / her in the new role but without intervening excessively

**A mentor-coach will not effectively support the new headteacher if she / he:**

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Is overly judgemental of the new headteacher's work

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- Attempts to prescribe his / her own preferred solution to any problem
- Becomes over protective
- Takes on the role of surrogate headteacher of the other school
- Encourages passive dependency

**Highly effective mentor-coaches share a number of common characteristics, they:**

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- Possess good communication skills
- Are willing and able to give quality time to the relationship
- Are respected and are effective at giving respect
- Are still keen to learn themselves
- Are approachable and have a 'natural' interest in sharing their experience and in helping other colleagues
- Have current knowledge and experience
- Possess observational and analytical skills, are able to give feedback and challenge appropriately