

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN 21st CENTURY SCOTLAND THE LEARNING ORGANISATION

Programme Summary

1. Background and Context

Educational systems across the world are in a period of great uncertainty about the future for young people. Together with international organisations such as the OECD and the EU, countries across the world are re-thinking their educational structures and curriculum. Having already redesigned its curriculum around four capacities to be developed in all young people, Scotland is seen as having been in the vanguard of such thinking.

For schools this is a challenging but exciting time. Important moves towards greater autonomy, increased opportunities for collaboration and a concerted drive to **closing the gap** between the most and the least **disadvantaged young people provide fresh leadership challenges**. There are, however, “turbulent times” that require to be addressed.

Evidence from research points to the importance of context in achieving high quality learning and teaching. There are no simple external prescriptions for success. Rather, the **leadership capacity** in schools and the **quality of teachers** are the **essential ingredients** for that **success**. Research on learning organisations points to the potential of such an approach to support school leaders in meeting the challenges and opportunities they face now and will face in the future.

“Today’s schools must equip students with the knowledge and skills they’ll need to succeed in an uncertain, constantly changing tomorrow. But many schools look much the same today as they did a generation ago, and ...are not developing the pedagogies and practices required to meet the diverse needs of 21st-century learners. In response, a growing body of scholars, educators and policy makers is making the case that schools should be reconceptualised as “learning organisations” that can react more quickly to changing external environments, embrace innovations in internal organisation, and ultimately improve student outcomes.”

*‘What makes a school a learning organisation
A guide for policy makers,
school leaders and teachers’
OECD (2016)*

2. What makes Tapestry’s Programme different and why do we need it?

In this context a **new team-based approach** to professional learning for school leaders is needed. The Tapestry Programme offers a **carefully structured course** aimed at **developing a culture of trust, learning and inquiry** as well as supporting schools that wish to become **Learning Organisations**. The Programme will **build on strengths** already evident **in each school** and **from across the system**.

The distinctive feature of this New Programme is that it will involve teams rather than individuals from participating schools. **The Programme aims to build ‘learning leadership’ capacity** at school level and across the authority by inviting HTs to select members of their existing leadership teams and/or other staff who exhibit leadership potential, to join them as full participants. The Programme will provide a sound understanding of **current leadership theory** and the **importance of culture change and collaboration**, as well as opportunities for **participating leadership** teams/potential leaders to develop a solid theoretical basis and practical rationale for their work in schools. The Tapestry Programme will provide high quality collegiate professional learning for groups of leaders from each participating school. Teams will have opportunities to reflect on, try out and evaluate rationales and strategies related to their professional learning.

Initial discussions have taken place with the GTCS who are keen to be involved and the EIS is also supportive of this Programme.

3. Overarching Aims

The Tapestry Programme aims to:

- **support schools to develop and sustain a learning culture and move towards becoming learning organisations;**
- promote **team learning** and a **culture of professional collaboration** within and across schools;
- offer a **dedicated forum for HTs** to exchange knowledge and share experience;
- work with the HT and team in developing a **shared vision centred on the learning** of all **students and staff**;
- offer support in **establishing an inspiring culture of trust, learning, inquiry, exploration and innovation**;
- support and **impact positively** on **staff wellbeing** and **student outcomes**.

4. What Professional Learning Works Best for School Leaders and Future School Leaders?

To achieve its aims, the Tapestry Programme, after consultation with key persons in Glasgow, will provide team-based, high quality professional learning for groups of leaders from participating schools. The Programme embodies the evidence in *Teacher Professional Learning and Development Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration [BES]* by Timperley, H. et al (2007) that the best professional learning is:

- authentic – concerned with real issues in real contexts
- extended – not one-off
- open to external stimulus and challenge
- engaging
- collegiate
- supportive
- directed at impacting on student outcomes.

This Tapestry Programme will take account of “turbulent times” facing school leaders in Scotland and will consider criteria for schools moving towards becoming learning organisations where:

“...the beliefs, values and norms of employees are brought to bear in support of sustained learning; where a learning atmosphere, learning culture or learning climate is nurtured; and where learning to learn is essential for everyone involved.” (OECD, 2016).

The methodology of the programme will model **some** aspects from the OECD paper such as the need for priority to be given to seven dimensions (*see OECD, 2016*) and some cross-cutting aspects such as the collective building of trust. A shared understanding of these dimensions and actions arising, should enable schools to respond more effectively to new and existing issues – **by encouraging the engagement of all in co-creating, understanding and solving problems and harnessing creativity**. The Programme will aim to provide an objective forum for potential future leaders to explore, challenge and critically reflect on the OECD and other perspectives and not to simply acquiesce with literature.

5. Programme Launch and Outline

There will be:

- an **Information Session** for interested HTs with Professor Graham Donaldson (**28th February 2019**);
- a **preliminary meeting** of those HTs who commit to joining the Programme (**23rd May 2019**);
- a **Programme Launch with international and national leaders in education** (**September 2019**);
- **Dedicated Professional Learning Sessions** for participants facilitated by Tapestry Tutors (**October 2019 - December 2020**);
- **Informal Forums for HTs** interspersed throughout the programme to provide HTs with a forum to work with, and learn from, leaders in the field and each other in a small and close setting.