



National College for
Teaching & Leadership

Specialist leaders of education

Information for schools

Specialist leaders of education (SLEs) are outstanding middle and senior leaders who have the skills to support individuals or teams in similar positions in other schools. They understand what outstanding leadership practice in their area of expertise looks like, and are skilled in helping other leaders to achieve it in their own context.

The Schools White Paper (2010) introduced the concept of the SLE role, which helps to improve the quality of school leadership through school-to-school support and peer-to-peer learning, ultimately raising standards and improving outcomes for children. This designation recognises the important role that many senior and middle leaders play in supporting their peers to develop.



Over 3,800 SLEs have already been designated with the aim of building up to 5,000 by March 2015, in line with the expansion of the teaching school model. Teaching schools designate SLEs and broker their deployment into other schools.

1. While SLEs will be outstanding at what they do, they can come from any school, regardless of the school's Ofsted grade. However, the headteacher must agree that the school has the capacity to release them.
2. SLEs need to meet strict designation criteria, which can be found in full on our website.
3. SLEs have expertise in a specific area, for example, a subject area, early years, behaviour or school business management. A list of areas of expertise can be found on our website.
4. There is no pre-defined time commitment for SLE work because models and types of deployment vary.
5. There are no plans to have a pay scale for SLEs, or a set payment rate for SLE time. Deployment may result in some funding for the SLE's school, although this will need to be agreed by the schools involved and by the appropriate teaching school alliance. Even if remuneration does not take the form of direct funding, it could involve an exchange of services that may help support or enhance an area of the SLE's school.
6. Find out more about SLEs online at www.gov.uk/specialist-leaders-of-education-a-guide-for-potential-applicants.

How will a specialist leader of education benefit my school?

The SLE's own school

School-to-school support enables the sharing and development of outstanding, innovative practice, which can benefit both schools in a partnership. The national leaders of education (NLE) and local leaders of education (LLE) programmes have shown that undertaking outreach work can further improve an individual's ability to undertake their current role in school.

The SLE programme:

- is an excellent form of continuing professional development (CPD) for middle and senior leaders, enabling them to enhance their knowledge, skills and abilities in a variety of ways
- further develops SLEs' coaching, mentoring and facilitation skills, which can also be used to support colleagues in their own school through internal training and development
- gives individuals the opportunity to learn about different school contexts and systems, which will in turn help them to develop their practice in their own school
- supports schools' internal succession-planning strategies, by enabling individuals to demonstrate they are ready to step up to the next leadership level
- supports staff retention by motivating and re-energising leaders who are taking on this new role
- possibly results in some funding for the SLE's own school, although this will be agreed by the schools involved and by the appropriate teaching school alliance. Even if remuneration does not take the form of direct funding, it could involve an exchange of services that may help support or enhance an area of the SLE's school

Schools in receipt of SLE support

Feedback from current SLE work and similar leadership programmes tells us that leaders value and benefit from the support of their peers.

This type of peer support:

- is credible, because it is rooted in current leadership practice and draws on real, relevant experience
- takes place within the supported school, with the SLE working alongside staff and taking into account demands on their time
- is flexible and bespoke, adapting to the particular needs of the supported school
- brings a fresh perspective to specific challenges or issues, as well as specialist knowledge and expertise
- takes a coaching approach, meaning that development will be collaborative
- helps to assure long-term, sustainable improvement – the aim is to help supported leaders to develop their own leadership capacity
- can contribute to improving school performance overall by providing a specific focus for development and implementing tangible goals that staff can really engage with

How can I request SLE support for my school?

SLE support is brokered by teaching schools. If you would like to commission SLE support you will need to contact a teaching school directly using the school-to-school support directory:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/how-to-access-school-to-school-support