



Appointing first-time headteachers who are on the NPQH programme

Information for governors

It is now mandatory for those appointed to a first-time headship to hold the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) or to have a place on the programme. Increasingly, governors will find themselves considering applicants for headship who are in the process of completing the qualification. Whatever their previous experience, newly-appointed headteachers need to establish effective working partnerships with governors: each needs to understand the other's perspective. The following information will help governors to understand the needs of headteachers who are appointed whilst still on the NPQH programme.

The experience of those accepted on to the programme varies widely. They must have provided written evidence of experience of leadership and management of whole school, rather than departmental, initiatives. Some will have had considerable experience; some will have had very little. The NPQH programme provides the necessary challenge and support to take each participant to a threshold readiness for headship. Many will have progressed beyond that threshold before they take up headship; some will have only just crossed it.

As candidates have had very different experiences of leadership and management before they are accepted on to the programme, their experience of the programme will differ. The length of time they take to complete the qualification varies between 6 and 22 months, depending on which Route they are following.

Irrespective of which Route they follow, all candidates are required to spend some time out of school for an induction session, for Final Stage training (two and a half days) and for Final Assessment (one day); and time in school meeting their tutor to agree their contract for the programme (half a day) as well as time with a different tutor when they are undertaking a day's school-based assessment. Most candidates will spend a limited number of days (up to 6) out of school for training and will need time to study materials and interact with colleagues in an internet-based learning community.

Anyone who has studied for a qualification whilst in full-time employment will know that it is a demanding experience. Governors can support newly appointed headteachers in this position by

- taking time to understand what is required of an NPQH candidate. General details are available in the National College for School Leadership's leaflet 'Information for Governors' or on the website ncsl.org.uk
- agreeing to provide the opportunities required by the candidate to fulfil the learning contract which is established when an NPQH tutor visits the candidate in school. Candidates need someone with good knowledge of their school to do this, and a governor may be well-placed to fulfil this role.

- incorporating the candidate's objectives for the NPQH (which necessarily relate to the priorities for the school) into his or her performance management objectives
- recognising that an investment of time spent out of school in professional development activities can pay significant dividends
- establishing effective working practices from the outset, i.e. planning meetings and agendas as far in advance as possible; accepting the need of candidates to schedule time to study; taking an interest in what candidates are learning through their study;
- being a sympathetic and interested listener as the candidate progresses through the programme and asking the candidate how you can best support him or her. Providing space to talk through what he or she has learned from the programme will benefit the candidate and the school.

Knowledge of what is required of NPQH candidates on the programme may help in identifying areas of questioning at interview. All candidates

- are expected to be able to articulate their values and vision for effective education
- are required to take the lead in a significant part of their school's strategic improvement plan
- are required to identify their own professional development needs and identify ways of addressing them

For further information, please contact Judy Burgess at Devon Governor Services (01392 383633), or NPQH South West at the Holway Centre, Keats Road, Taunton TA1 2JB (npqhsw@somerset.gov.uk) or log on to www.ncsl.org.uk