

The National Strategies

Stronger Management Systems

Overview and user guide

Guide for senior leaders

The Stronger Management Systems (SMS) programme is designed to help schools to improve how leaders and managers at all levels play their part in improving standards. It focuses on practical but essential elements of management, providing materials to help schools review, refocus and improve systems and structures.

Strong and consistent management systems are vital if schools are to improve and sustain their improvement. Planning improvement will also need to be sensitive to the need for short-term impact, focus and alignment and longer-term capacity building.

Despite the especially strong reaction in the UK among some educators against 'managerialism', we believe that strengthening of management knowledge and skills is essential to the ability of leaders to achieve the vision set for their schools.
(Adding Value to School Leadership and Management.
© National College for School Leadership 2005.)

How the materials are presented

The materials are set out in a way that facilitates ease of use, which is personalised and targeted to only those areas of management that a school might need to improve. Schools are not expected to work through every element or section within this; they select only those aspects relevant to their identified priorities.

The full suite of materials includes:

- this **overview and user guide**, which explains the scope and use of the programme
- the **Raising Attainment Plan (RAP) Management Guide**, which sets out the essential features for effective improvement planning
- the **Self-assessment materials**, which contains the quality standards for all elements of SMS in one booklet
- ten **elements**, which explore ten aspect of management systems and structure:
 - Element 1 – High quality and effective line management structures and practice
 - Element 2 – Effective performance management and objective setting informed by whole-school priorities
 - Element 3 – Collaborative professional development at all levels, informed by whole-school priorities
 - Element 4 – Securing behaviour and attendance for learning across the whole school
 - Element 5 – Assessment for Learning (AfL) good practice embedded across the whole school
 - Element 6 – Effective identification and intervention for individual and groups of pupils
 - Element 7 – Quality standards used in lesson planning – achieving consistency, reducing in-school variation
 - Element 8 – Self-evaluation
 - Element 9 – Monitoring and evaluation underpinned by a clear focus on standards
 - Element 10 – Tracking pupil progress at school, year, class and pupil level – addressing underperformance, reducing in-school variation

How to use the materials

The central principle of our strategy is that each school is responsible for its own improvement and should have, or be able to develop, sufficient internal capacity to deliver and sustain higher outcomes for children.

(Promoting Excellence for All – School Improvement Strategy:
Raising Standards, Supporting Schools © DCSF 2008)

Improvement is driven by schools and begins with rigorous, honest and robust self-evaluation. Where the RAP identifies significant areas of improvement in management, schools can identify and use those elements of SMS which will help them to address their most urgent and important issues.

To see one school's perspective on engaging with the National Challenge, access the National Challenge DVD clip 'Introduction and Rising to the Challenge', on the SMS overview homepage.

The programme is designed around a quality management framework, with each element following the same format and containing:

- **a rationale** to explain its nature and importance
- **quality standards** to define good practice
- **exemplification** showing what good practice looks like
- **self-assessment materials**, which use the quality standards to help the school clarify what it does well, and where and how it needs to improve
- **professional development**, offering examples of materials, templates and powerful processes to help schools achieve the quality standards
- **resources and web links**, offering a wider range of other easily accessible resources.

It is recommended that schools begin by using the quality standards self-assessment materials. This provides an opportunity for the leadership team to rate the school's performance in relation to a set of quality standards applicable to particular aspect of management. Having identified an area for improvement schools can then access the relevant continuing professional development (CPD) sessions to support improvement. The same tool can then be used again later, for example at the end of a six-week improvement cycle, to see what progress has been made.

Delivery

SMS is a professional development activity that will enable schools to improve practice. Schools may lead this for themselves but this is designed as a mediated programme, with support and facilitation available from their National Challenge Adviser (NCA), school improvement partner (SIP) and local authority (LA) advisers.

All schools can draw on support from a National Strategies School Improvement Regional Adviser (SI RA) to support delivery of elements of the programme.

Quality standards

The SMS programme as a whole is based on the following **quality standards**:

- a. Senior leaders have an unrelenting focus on improving standards and are recognised by the staff as the school's leading pedagogues.
- b. Senior leaders display a commitment to staff development that goes far beyond continuing professional development days and provides solutions where and when they are needed.
- c. Senior leaders provide time and resources for staff reflection and research where and when they are needed.
- d. Senior leaders ensure that all data is used intelligently and inform activity at individual teacher and pupil level.
- e. Senior leaders understand and apply the principles of quality management in their drive for continuous improvement.
- f. Senior leaders understand the mechanisms by which change is both led and managed and can take staff with them.

As a starting point for use of the programme, it is recommended that the leadership team begins by using the quality standards self-assessment materials found at the end of this document. This provides an opportunity for the leadership team to rate its own performance in relation to a set of quality standards and to explore together the concepts and issues underlying this. The same tool can then be used again later to review what progress has been made.

Reducing in-school variation

In planning the use of Stronger Management Systems it will be particularly important to focus on reducing in-school variation (ISV) to ensure that progress and attainment improve in those classes and subjects that lag behind the rest. Indeed, ISV is a key issue for many schools if they are to avoid development that improves the most engaged students and teachers but leaves the others where they are.

The Stronger Management Systems programme is designed to help schools address these issues. **Elements 1, 6 and 9** may be particularly helpful as schools set about reducing variation, although others will also be useful.

Element 1 (High quality and effective line management structures and practice) helps schools to explore how senior leaders can more effectively support, challenge and hold to account their middle leaders.

Element 6 (Effective identification and intervention) provides powerful Venn analysis tools so that schools can analyse evidence and identify target groups for action.

Element 9 (Standards agreement, monitoring and evaluation) provides practical examples of how the leadership team can work with subject leaders to explore how the quality of work, attitudes and expectations can vary between subjects.

Linked programmes and materials

Where schools identify a need for improvement in aspects of behaviour, attendance and social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) they will be able to draw on the following programme materials.

Core Plus English, mathematics and science

These programmes have been designed and set out in a similar style to SMS in order to facilitate ease of use and access. The Core Plus programme consists of specialised materials to support leaders of core subjects – English, mathematics and science – and their teams, to ensure high-quality teaching and learning, including the effective use of the Secondary Framework and Assessing Pupils progress (APP).

Behaviour, attendance and SEAL

Good behaviour, high-quality relationships and the emotional environment of a school are essential prerequisites for improvement. **Element 4** of SMS provides guidance to senior leaders on securing behaviour and attendance for learning whole school. In addition, support and guidance are integrated into every aspect of all programmes in order to:

- foster high expectations and ensure regular attendance
- encourage positive behaviour for learning in the classroom
- develop social and emotional skills to help pupils access curriculum opportunities.

Leading core subjects

This separate programme is particularly designed to increase the effectiveness of senior line managers of core subjects, who may be inexperienced or need support in holding to account, supporting and challenging core subject leaders when outside their specialist subject area. It also explores wider issues of staff recruitment and retention.

Acknowledgments

Extract from *Adding Value to School Leadership and Management*, National College for School Leadership, 2005 used with kind permission.

Self-assessment materials

Quality standards in effective whole school management systems and structures

This exercise may be completed individually by the senior leadership team or in groups representing a range of perspectives across the school. Make a judgement and note evidence against each of the quality standards and use the notes to make links between your judgements and available professional development materials.

Quality standards	R A G	Evidence to support judgement and notes for action	CPD support
a. Senior leaders have an unrelenting focus on improving standards and are recognised by the staff as the school's leading pedagogues.			Elements 4, 5, 7
b. Senior leaders display a commitment to staff development that goes far beyond continuing professional development (CPD) days and provides solutions where and when they are needed.			Elements 1, 2, 3
c. Senior leaders provide time and resources for staff reflection and research where and when they are needed.			Elements 3, 8, 9
d. Senior leaders ensure that all data is used intelligently and inform activity at individual teacher and pupil level.			Elements 6, 10
e. Senior leaders understand and apply the principles of quality management in their drive for continuous improvement.			All elements
f. Senior leaders understand the mechanisms by which change is both led and managed and can take staff with them.			Element 1