

ASK
Advisory Service Kent



Kent
County Council



Children,
Families &
Education
Directorate

Tomorrow's Leaders Today Short Internship Project Evaluation

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As part of our work to address succession planning issues in Kent, we embarked on a project in partnership with the National College for school leadership, to provide an innovative internship programme for potential early leaders in both the primary and the secondary phase.

The internship programme was aimed at potential early leaders with at least 4-5 years of experience. It was fully funded and involved participants taking part in a five day internship at a host school.

The programme addressed five main areas of identified need/challenge in Kent. These were as follows:

- motivate potential early leaders to consider school leadership
- develop leadership capacity in schools and in Kent
- grow new leaders
- strengthen the understanding and application of effective leadership
- strengthen the understanding and application of effective leadership which is context specific

The specific aims of the programme were as follows:

- to provide opportunities for individual leadership development in Kent that will increase the likelihood of both personal improvement and career advancement
- this initiative will develop existing work and create new approaches specifically focused on implementing professional coaching partnerships to create and enhance personalised intern leadership development placements



24 potential leaders participated in the programme, seven from secondary schools and 17 from primary schools.

The programme involved a one day launch, where participants made contact with their host schools and planned their personalised programme. The five day internship took place in June / July and the whole group met again on 16th July for a twilight event, which served as an evaluation session. The objectives of the twilight session were as follows:

- to share experiences by feeding back to small phase groups
- to identify successes of the programme
- to identify future steps and improvements to the programme

The groups were split by phase and spent the first part of the session discussing their experiences in the host school and how this compared to their initial expectations of the programme. They identified key areas where they had gained knowledge and understanding relating to leadership and ideas of what they would do as a result of the programme.

Two participants delivered presentations to the group about their internships and one stated that she hadn't thought she was ready for school leadership, but as a result of her experience on the programme, she will now be actively applying for deputy headships commencing in 2009. This was re-iterated by other participants when they were asked about the next steps they would be taking.

Each group then had an opportunity to identify three successes of the programme. The feedback falls in to two main categories, personal career development and strategic thinking, reflection and sharing good practice. Please see comments below:

Personal Career Development

- enabled quality 'me' time
- personalisation of needs
- personalised professional development
- freedom to set your own aims and objectives towards your own future
- freedom to self-evaluate without judgement
- re-enthuses career development (reaffirms what you can already do and where you want to move next)
- gaining confidence and self-being, reflection upon own ability to progress

Strategic Thinking, Reflection and Sharing Good Practice

- the chance to see different styles of leadership etc., out of own school context
- there was an opportunity for everyone involved to share ideas
- talking to other professionals
- time for the host school to reflect
- strategic thinking time
- sustainable links to share good practice
- time to reflect on different school models
- externally assessing leadership practice, having freedom to analyse in depth
- confidence to explore different aspects of leadership
- Building reflection time into programme

The participants discussed and provided feedback on what they will do as a result of their internship, either in their school, or beyond!

Within their current role

Lots of participants said that they would stay in touch with their host school and one is looking in to collaborative arrangements with their host. An overwhelming focus was on the development of use of data as participants have a clearer understanding of the importance of data at a more senior level. Other comments were as follows:

- work closely with the headteacher to develop some features (especially re. data) of the leadership style seen - already beginning to implement some things
- Make myself more visible to all
- develop a 'vision' and identify values important to me and promote these
- encourage SLT to absorb some ideas/learning from the experience
- develop community involvement/cohesion based on the model/ideas from the host school
- Become member of SMT and develop areas using new skills and understanding
- I am going to be chairing key stage and TA meetings, and take greater responsibility for future developments - will be looking at strategic planning in school
- I will continue to develop the qualities of leadership I observed in successful leaders at the host school
- I have taken on a new role as AST - Teaching and Learning and this programme has made me realise that I have the ability to work very effectively as a member of the SLT
- follow AST career path after all. Internship helped me to focus on taking control of my career rather than be dictated to by circumstance
- develop an 'overview' of school development beyond the direct needs of my curriculum responsibilities (courses on data)
- continue to develop understanding of what it takes to be a successful school leader (through reading and shadowing leaders at my own school)
- continue to be a proactive leader of literacy within current school - question/change things if necessary
- foster relationships between SMT and staff at times of change 'become a bridge'
- share my internship experience in more detail and with more quality time with my present headteacher

Other CPD

- apply for the Aspiring Senior Leaders Programme
- participate in the NCSL Leadership Pathways programmes
- apply for leadership courses (fast-track - equivalent)
- I will investigate the AST route and see whether it is possible in my school
- follow up on possible job swap with NQT in Year 4
- gain more training and experience in mentoring

...Beyond!

Ten participants are planning to apply for assistant or deputy headteacher posts within the next year to 18 months, some participants will also apply for NPQH. Other comments were as follows:

- further training on SEF
- I think it would be useful for KCC to continue to support interns in terms of guidance on suitable leadership posts coming up in Kent
- probably move to a school with more support and opportunities for potential leaders

The host schools were asked to comment on what they regard as the strengths of the programmes and ways in which the programme could be improved. Their comments were as follows:

Strengths

Opportunity for reflection and strategic thinking, for the host and the participant (a fresh pair of eyes).

Personalisation of the programme to the individual and a focus on their specific leadership development needs.

Opportunity to support others.

Sharing practice.

Articulation of leadership style.

Critical challenge.

Freedom and confidentiality.

Symbiosis.

Flexibility and open ended approach.

Building links between schools.

Good experience to see enthusiastic teachers coming through the system

Improvements

Better identification of potential leaders during the selection process and fitting successful applicants to most appropriate host schools.

Better marketing and more advertising.

More clarity on the criteria for taking part in the programme and who it was aimed at, for example, their level of leadership, they should have spent time with their own leadership team prior to the programme.

Reciprocal visit to participant's school, to gain an understanding of the context they work in.

Timing of the programme.

More flexibility on the time spent in the host school, spread days out more to enable reflection and better planning.

Criteria for the programme needs to be clearer.

All hosts must attend the launch event.

Too much covered at launch event, needed more initial planning time based on the gap analysis.



Participants Reflections on the Project

We asked all of the participants to submit a reflection of their experiences during the internship. Here are a few of their comments:

'The impact of the programme on me, at the time, was massive. The concept of immersing yourself in a different school for a number of days was a huge luxury. It immediately provided me with the time (something which is always precious within a normal working week!) to reflect on my own career route so far and consider what possibilities there were for future career development. Having an environment where I was able to openly talk about my own education knowledge gaps and leadership weaknesses without having to worry about how I was perceived by work colleagues was refreshing and I became not only more self-aware and accepting of what I had already achieved but also more focused on how to drive my career forward. Clearly, the greatest impact of the internship week was the increased knowledge I gained about models of outstanding leadership at all levels within a school.'

'In spite of, at first, having misgivings about leadership, I discovered throughout the course that I would definitely enjoy the challenges and aspirations of leadership, although I would loathe to stop teaching regularly. I am seriously thinking of taking on the NPQH course, which was suggested by my headteacher.'

'This internship has lifted the vale of uncertainty that I have held with regards to aspiring to becoming a member of a school's SLT. It has made me more confident and resulted in me adapting my long-term plan with regards to my career aspirations.'

'When I was asked whether I wanted to take part in a leadership internship I had very little idea of what would be involved. I hoped that I would come away with a better understanding of leadership in schools and with greater confidence in my ability to help lead my school forwards. It quickly became apparent that the experience would provide both of these and much, much more. My host school has been identified as having an outstanding leadership team and I was very excited about spending time with them. During my internship I was able to sit in on senior leadership meetings and meetings chaired by the deputy headteacher. I found it fascinating to observe how the different elements of the leadership team worked together and was able to take away many ideas for improving my own relationship with the members of my team.'

'During my internship I was able to discuss a wide range of leadership issues, in confidence and with people who gave me a fresh, professional and independent opinion. I found this to be hugely inspiring and it allowed me space and time to reflect on my own skills and the various challenges my school and I are facing. I was also able to develop a far clearer vision of the leader I wish to be and of the learning community I am part of.'

'This experience has been so much more rewarding than I could have imagined. The opportunity to discuss freely the issues which affect my leadership role was both uplifting and incredibly worthwhile. I would recommend this programme to anyone wishing to develop their leadership potential and would gladly have spent more time in my host school.'

'I found my internship fantastic. I found that the school had excellent leaders. I spent my time work shadowing the deputy headteacher, who was an absolute professional with a great sense of humour. I would wholeheartedly recommend this experience to any aspiring leader.'

'From the outset, the programme encouraged participants to think about future needs of leadership in education, and more importantly, how we could fit into that...The structured programme that I received brought me into contact with the full range of senior leadership within the school and many other staff and students besides. Having time built in for reflection was an invaluable use of time in which to consider what made the school leadership effective and how I might see myself fitting into such a role in the future. There was an undoubted advantage in being able to observe the workings of another school's senior leadership team from an objective perspective. Free from factors that would directly affect me, it was interesting to note the dynamics of another team.'

'Mostly, the outcome of the programme has encouraged me to reflect upon good leadership, which seems effective in allowing people to develop and fulfil their potential, in maintaining procedures for monitoring continuing progress and, most importantly, how through creating the right environment and leading by example can inspire others to work with enthusiasm towards shared goals.'

'Having had the opportunity to observe the day-to-day tasks of senior leadership, but also crucially to understand the potential for real change and progress that it can offer has led to a moment of insight that I am not only capable of moving in this direction, but that it is undoubtedly something that I actively wish to do.'

'I could not liken the Internship Programme to any other I had heard of; it is a rare opportunity for teachers to be able to observe schools in practice once they are past training. In such a time pressed profession, an opportunity to reflect upon ourselves as leaders (and learners) is wonderful!...I thoroughly enjoyed my week and valued the chance to be involved in the programme. I would certainly recommend it as a valuable learning experience for mentors and internees alike. Thank you!'

'At first I was a little disappointed to be placed with a small village school because although that is the environment in which I currently work I did not necessarily expect to take up a leadership post in one. In fact, however, it was very advantageous for several reasons. Firstly, the headteacher was confident about their knowledge of exactly what happened in the school and would stand by it, and so was prepared to allow me a 'warts and all' experience. Additionally, because the management was essentially solo, I spent my time almost exclusively with the headteacher. The internship crystallised what I believe I can bring to a school as a leader. It developed an awareness of the loneliness of the long distance headteacher and the need to ensure channels of communication remain open so that the leader does not become isolated. It made me certain I can lead a school but also aware of the type of team I would need around me to ensure I was most effective.'

'It has been an excellent opportunity for reflection and one that there certainly is little time for, usually during a busy day at school. I am now working towards becoming a deputy headteacher/ assistant headteacher by 2010/2011. As a result of my internship, I have made an action plan to help me work towards my goals.'

'The good aspects of the course included being able to see the inside of leadership but also to simply be at a different school. Speaking to different people allowed me to reflect very carefully on my own teaching and my own career. The reflection log was a good way for me to think about what I had seen and how it would impact my own career.'

'Of the time spent in my host school and after reflecting upon my learning log, I found that one of the most important aspects of the internship was the professional dialogue I was able to have with the deputy headteacher. It gave me some much needed time to reflect on my own expectations of myself and my role and consider the implications of the good practice that I had witnessed on my own practice in my own school. I have gained many skills and more importantly confidence in my own ability and I am grateful to my host school for allowing me an opportunity to achieve this. Now that I have completed the programme, my aspirations of leadership have been fuelled even further. I am developing my own vision of leadership and how I would like to lead a school. Most significantly I am able to take a step back from my own practices and think about where my strengths lie and where I need to gain more experience and confidence. My own school has benefited from many of the things that I have observed and put into practice in a way which suits my setting. Above all I now know that I have the basis of the knowledge and skills that I need in order to become a successful leader and I am excited about pursuing future opportunities that will allow me to build on these and progress into leadership. My personal goals for the future are to apply for a deputy headteacher post and complete my NPQH before embarking on the headteacher rung of my career ladder. This has been a fantastic experience which I would recommend to anyone considering leadership, and I am grateful for having been given this opportunity.'

'I found the idea of a leadership course daunting; I found the whole idea of being a leader daunting. I nervously arrived at the launch event and imagined that most of the day was going to be above me; that I wasn't ready to understand leadership. I found the opposite. The key speaker was inspiring and made me feel that it wasn't a magical and mysterious process, but team work and using people's strengths carefully, while supporting weaknesses. It was useful to share and discuss this shift in understanding with peers and aspiring leaders who also had preconceived ideas of leadership. The thing that most appealed to me was the fact that we then spent valuable time getting to know what kind of leader we could be and looked carefully at our knowledge and experiences so far. The internship was tailored to suit my personal needs. No other course I have found to date has managed this. I came out of the launch event feeling inspired to become a leader and feeling that it was actually quite a manageable task. Since the internship I have realised that being a leader *is* the next step for me. I have been invited to become a member of the SMT in my school and have taken on some areas to develop. I have begun to see school in a different way and want to have an impact in changing things I think could develop further. I went in to the internship thinking that I wasn't able or ready to be a leader and came out thinking not only could I be a leader, but also that I *want* to be one.'



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