

Ethical Leadership - What would high quality ethical leadership training look like?

‘Our strong View is that the ethical health of an organisation cannot be left to chance. Leaders must ensure that the Principles of Public Life are integral to how public sector organisations operate and how the people in them make decisions and treat each other.’
[Leading in Practice, Committee for Standards in Public Life report January 2023](#)

Educational leadership is rooted in institutions but affected by system-wide and social expectations. In our hybrid system, leadership roles differ widely according to context. Leaders of single schools or those in diminished LAs can be very isolated while being responsible for the whole gamut of educational, community, workforce and resourcing decisions. Leaders of individual schools in MATs may have a different range of responsibilities with many strategic top-level decisions – both educational and resource-based - made by MAT leaders. Those leaders have challenging duties and responsibilities of their own.

Since the pandemic, the UK social contract has changed while public service has continued to weaken. Leaders at all levels are making decisions in a context of anger and restlessness, with insufficient funding and too few teachers.

Leaders in all contexts are responsible for upholding the values of public service and modelling ethical behaviour to young people. This training programme marries the general responsibilities of school leadership with a deep understanding of daily decision-making and its effects. How can the Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education support good actions in so many varied and challenging contexts?

The Committee for Standards in Public Life 2023 report regards ‘an organised programme of formal training followed up by regular informal discussion and learning from other leaders’ as essential in organisations. Designing a comprehensive training programme for ethical leadership in schools involves considering various aspects to ensure a well-rounded and effective learning experience. This programme could be used internally in trusts or schools, in leadership teams, trustees or governors or with gathered diverse groups. Here are five sessions that could be included in such a programme:

1. Session 1: Foundations of Ethical Leadership in Education

- Introduction to the Framework for Ethical Leadership in education
How did we arrive at it? How did we choose the values and virtues?
- Understanding the role of ethical leadership in school management
Why does it matter? Why is it as important as accountability measures?
- Exploration of key ethical theories and their application in educational leadership
Aristotle, Kant, Rawls: the right v the good
- Extracting and applying principles from case studies and live examples
Case studies on the egregious and the quotidian in ethical and unethical education leadership

2. Session 2: Creating an Ethical Culture in Schools and Trusts

- Fostering a culture of trust, transparency, and accountability
Developing language, vision and practice in analysing communication.
- Strategies for promoting ethical behaviour among staff, students, and parents
Articulating, planning, disseminating: why virtues and personal behaviour matter
- Developing and communicating a clear code of ethics for the school community
Using the guidance and examples of the 2023 CSPL report
- Building effective communication channels to address ethical concerns
Devoting time and creating processes to hold one another to account and share developments

3. Session 3: Decision-Making and Problem-Solving in Ethical Dilemmas

- Identifying and analysing ethical dilemmas in educational leadership
Sharing home examples, applying language, devising scripts
- Ethical decision-making frameworks and models
Using the learning of session 1 to identify approaches
- Practical exercises and case studies to enhance decision-making skills
Using the learning of session 2 and the CSPL to devise decision-making
- Strategies for addressing moral distress and maintaining ethical integrity
People in real life: procedures, HR and ethics

4. Session 4: Inclusive Leadership and Equity

- Promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in educational leadership
Schools as models of a better world: roll, behaviour and assessment data
- Addressing bias and discrimination within the school community
HR processes to create a fair workplace
- Strategies for ensuring fair and equitable resource distribution
Thoroughgoing analysis of resource allocation
- Creating a supportive environment for all stakeholders
Building equity into long-term planning and reporting

5. Session 5: Continuous Improvement and Ethical Leadership

- Establishing a system for ongoing reflection and self-assessment
Establishing normal mechanisms to review use of the FELE and the MAT's/school's own ethical approach
- Using feedback and evaluation to enhance ethical leadership practices
How to use the session 2 language and the session 3 processes in daily exchanges
- Incorporating ethics into professional development and performance assessments
Devising targets and work programmes
- Creating a plan for sustaining ethical leadership practices over time
Governance commitment, leadership group practice, school publicity and school ethos

The programme would be designed for the needs of the group, but each session could include a combination of lectures, interactive discussions, case studies, role-playing exercises, and practical applications, with inter-session reading and reflecting. Incorporating opportunities for participants to share their experiences and learn from one another will enhance the effectiveness of the programme. These sessions would build up to an approach to and an annual programme for ethical leadership which can be built into a planning cycle. ELA trainers undertake to keep the content up-to-date with relevant research and developments in the field of ethical leadership in education, and the pressures that may lead to ethical compromise.

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