



The Chelmsford Teaching Schools Alliance



# Specialist Leader of Education (SLE) Briefing pack

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Working together to be better together

## **What is an SLE?**

SLEs are outstanding middle and senior leaders in positions below the Headteacher, with at least two years' leadership experience.

SLEs have a particular area of expertise (such as a subject area, early years, behaviour or school business management) and a successful track record of school improvement.

SLEs must have excellent interpersonal skills, be able to work sensitively and collaboratively with others and have a commitment to outreach work. They must understand what outstanding leadership practice in their area of specialism looks like and be able to help other leaders to achieve it in their own context.

SLEs can come from any school or academy, including nursery, primary, secondary, special, pupil referral unit, independent or free school, or sixth form college. Whilst the individual must be outstanding, his or her school does not have to be.

SLEs support leaders in other schools. The SLE role is about developing other middle and senior leaders so that they have the skills to lead their own teams and improve practice in their own schools. This may be done through one- to-one peer coaching or facilitated group support and could involve a variety of activities, such as data analysis, coaching or joint action planning.

## **Why become an SLE?**

The SLE designation is a way of formally recognising outstanding leaders who have an excellent track record of supporting others and have specialist expertise from which other schools in their area can benefit. From our experience of deploying leaders to support other schools, this type of recognition is highly valued and much appreciated, and has the additional benefit of sustaining morale and enthusiasm.

We expect that SLE work will support continuing professional development (CPD) for these individuals through, for example:

- opportunities to work autonomously and independently
- gaining further experience of working collaboratively with others
- being creative and trying out new ideas
- developing coaching and facilitation skills
- access to other contexts, processes and styles of working, widening their experience of different school environments
- the chance to learn from ideas and approaches used in other schools, to improve their own performance and that of colleagues in their own school
- networking opportunities with their peers

All of the above can help the individual to improve further in his or her current role, as well as to support them if they wish to think about opportunities for promotion.

Finally, we know that leaders working beyond their own schools benefit from knowing they are helping others to improve and are having a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people by using and sharing their knowledge and skills. This sense of moral purpose often proves the biggest incentive of all.

## **SLE application and assessment process**

### **Eligibility criteria**

Applicants will need to meet strict eligibility criteria and who have a particular area of expertise. An SLE could be a specialist in more than one area. However, the SLE approach is about focusing on key strengths.

We do not define middle or senior leadership precisely, as we recognise that roles and responsibilities are different in different schools and that routes to leadership are not always straightforward. The headteacher of a potential SLE will therefore be asked to confirm that the individual holds a middle or senior leadership position.

### **Assessment**

Teaching schools are responsible for assessing applicants. You will need to give evidence that you meet all areas of the **SLE eligibility criteria** and are outstanding in at least one of the approved **SLE areas of expertise**.

**Application form** - Applications will be reviewed against the agreed SLE designation criteria to ensure consistency across the country.

**Assessment Activities** – CTSA will invite successful applicants to undertake face-to-face assessment activities. Assessment activities will include an individual presentation, a panel interview, an observed group discussion and a written task. We will provide details and requirements before your assessment.

The panel will assess applicants against the agreed SLE designation criteria. A representative from another teaching school is required to form part of the panel and will have a formal role in ensuring consistency and moderation throughout the assessment process. The representative of another teaching school will be responsible for formally supporting and signing off the designation process.

### **Aspirant SLE**

You will need to give evidence that you meet all areas of the **SLE eligibility criteria**.

A self-assessment against the eligibility criteria will determine your areas for development and we can provide you with opportunities to ensure that you meet the SLE eligibility criteria before application.

## **Specialist leaders of education areas of expertise**

This list of areas of expertise for specialist leaders of education (SLEs), will enable schools to find the right SLE for them. It is based on four key areas of focus for Ofsted. They are listed below followed by the areas of expertise that sit within these categories. An SLE can be a specialist in more than one area, although the SLE approach is about focusing on key strengths.

<b>Ofsted focus</b>	<b>Areas of expertise</b>
Leadership and management	Academies and academy transition; assessment; leadership of continuing professional development; school business management and financial management; leadership of curriculum
Pupil achievement	Art; closing the gap; drama; design and technology; early years; English; geography; history; information and communication technology; maths; modern foreign languages; music; phonics; physical education; personal, social and health education; religious education; science; special educational needs; support for the most able pupils
Quality of teaching	Initial teacher training and newly qualified teacher development
Behaviour and safety	Behaviour and discipline; attendance

## SLE Eligibility criteria

	Eligibility criteria	Example look-fors/evidence
1	SLEs will be outstanding middle or senior leaders, with at least two years' experience and a first-class knowledge in a particular field of expertise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a leadership role/responsibility within school or academy</li> <li>• Minimum two years' experience in a field of expertise</li> <li>• Demonstrates a track record of successful practice/performance at an individual, department, phase, key stage or school level appropriate to own role</li> <li>• An existing status designation or qualification evidencing the applicant's outstanding practice in a particular field of expertise</li> <li>• Quotes from colleagues within school or other schools supported by the applicant</li> <li>• Lesson observations demonstrating outstanding practice.</li> </ul>
2	SLEs will have a minimum of two years' experience in a leadership role within a school or academy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum two years' experience in leadership</li> <li>• Is based in a school or academy</li> <li>• Training you have led</li> <li>• Evaluation or evidence of your role impacting on school improvement.</li> </ul>
3	SLEs will have a successful track record, supported by substantial evidence of impact, of working effectively within their own school and/or across a group of schools, or working with a range of leaders within a single school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting evidence of outstanding practice with examples showing sustained and continual improvement in teaching, pupil learning and standards</li> <li>• Demonstrates a track record of successful practice/performance at an individual, department, phase, key stage or school level where supporting another person/department, key stage or school</li> <li>• Supporting quotes from colleagues within school, from other schools supported by the applicant, or the local authority</li> <li>• Positive supporting reference</li> </ul>
4	SLEs will have evidence of successfully using coaching and/or facilitation skills to bring about sustainable improvements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation or evidence of impact on school improvement as a result of coaching/facilitation of leaders</li> <li>• Evidence of sustainability through capacity-building of other leaders (rather than direct intervention)</li> <li>• Recognition from Ofsted or other recognised sources</li> <li>• Evidence of using recognised approaches to coaching/facilitation based on strong theoretical knowledge and supported by training evidence where appropriate</li> <li>• Positive supporting reference</li> </ul>

	Eligibility criteria	Example look-fors/evidence
5	SLEs will have a commitment to outreach work, and the capacity to undertake such work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of examples of schools supported/projects undertaken to prove commitment to outreach</li> <li>• Reference to motivation based on moral purpose and desire to improve outcomes for children</li> </ul>
6	SLEs will be supported in their application by their headteacher and be able to be released from their school for a mutually agreed allocation of time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive supporting statement from headteacher</li> <li>• Confirmation of capacity to be deployed</li> <li>• Confirmation of support from headteacher</li> <li>• Evidence of how applicant has supported a middle or senior leader or group of leaders in own school or from another school or academy</li> </ul>
7	SLEs will have excellent communication and interpersonal skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence within examples provided of having supported (a variety of) communication styles and being highly effective in this</li> <li>• Clear and concise in written and oral communication</li> <li>• Listens attentively (in examples provided and in practice)</li> <li>• Tailors communication to audience type and able to recognise clues from the audience (in positive supporting statement from referee)</li> <li>• Is sensitive to others, their values and feelings</li> <li>• Does not interrupt</li> <li>• Effective, positive use of body language, dress, conduct and speech, eg eye contact, head-nodding, smiling, open posture</li> <li>• No use of jargon in written and oral communication</li> <li>• Clarity in speaking and does not make assumptions</li> <li>• Written evaluations/comments from training sessions that applicant has led.</li> </ul>
8	SLEs will have the ability to utilise high levels of emotional intelligence to work sensitively and collaboratively with peer colleagues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence within examples provided supporting a sensitive and collaborative approach</li> <li>• Positive supporting reference</li> <li>• <i>Self-awareness</i> – emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment, self-confidence</li> <li>• <i>Self-management</i> – emotional self-control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, achievement orientation, adaptability, optimism, shows initiative</li> <li>• <i>Social awareness</i> – empathetic, organisational awareness, service orientation</li> <li>• <i>Relationship management</i> – development of others, inspirational leadership, influencer, change catalyst, conflict management bond-building, teamwork and collaborative</li> <li>• Open to ideas of others</li> <li>• Shows respect for perspective of others</li> <li>• Shares responsibility</li> <li>• Demonstrates clarity in approach</li> </ul>

	Eligibility criteria	Example look-fors/evidence
9	SLEs will have an understanding of what constitutes 'outstanding' in their field of expertise and the ability and confidence to articulate this.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of school improvement within field of expertise, with clarity and examples of outstanding practice and high standards (where appropriate compare with recognised standards/frameworks)</li> <li>• Clear vision</li> <li>• High standards and expectations</li> <li>• Clear communication</li> <li>• Assertiveness</li> <li>• Clear understanding</li> <li>• Decisiveness</li> <li>• Positive supporting reference</li> </ul>
10	SLEs will have an appreciation of how their specialism and skills can contribute to the wider school improvement agenda.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence within examples of knowledge of school improvement agenda and expertise contributing clearly to school improvement</li> <li>• Adaptable</li> <li>• Positive personal motivation</li> <li>• Can understand and appreciate interdependencies</li> <li>• Ability to connect the external and internal school environments and vice versa to see the bigger picture</li> <li>• Positive supporting reference</li> </ul>
11	SLEs will have an analytical approach to identifying needs and the ability to prioritise accordingly, including the ability to set and establish new and innovative working practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence within examples of effective and innovative working practices</li> <li>• Innovate ideas/thinking (thinking outside the box)</li> <li>• Shows rationale for answers and sticks by it</li> <li>• Enthusiastic</li> <li>• Methodical</li> <li>• Organised</li> <li>• Applies logical, sound decisions over emotionally ruled decisions</li> <li>• Positive supporting reference</li> </ul>
12	SLEs will have the ability to grow leadership capacity in others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence within examples of growing other leaders by supporting and working collaboratively</li> <li>• Motivates others</li> <li>• Supports others</li> <li>• Gives praise, thanks and encouragement</li> <li>• Inspires</li> <li>• Innovative</li> <li>• Shows ability to identify talent/potential</li> <li>• Allows others to take risks</li> <li>• Does not interfere after delegating</li> <li>• Positive supporting reference</li> </ul>

## **Application Window (Open for 3 weeks)**

CTSA will hold open application rounds. Individuals will be required to contact the Teaching School for the application form.

Section 1 is completed by you, the applicant and section 2 is completed by your headteacher (referee).

Once you have completed section 1, the form should be e mailed to your headteacher to complete the reference section and submit the document on your behalf. This will complete the application process and **must be completed within the application window**.

Application forms will be assessed by teaching schools, which will have responsibility for designating SLEs.

## **References**

**Talk to your referees:** Your application must be supported by two references: one from your current headteacher/principal and a second from a middle or senior leader you have supported. The references are an essential part of your application, and we strongly recommend that you contact your referees to explain your application and to make them aware of the deadline.

## **Headteacher Reference**

Applicants who apply for the programme **must** have the support and agreement of their headteacher, who will confirm that the school has the capacity to release them. The headteacher will act as the applicant's referee and will complete a reference section in the application form. They will need to provide a supporting statement showing evidence of how the applicant meets the criteria and how he or she has supported a middle or senior leader from another school or academy.



**Application form – Example questions** (300 word limit for each answer)

Q1. What **motivates** you to participate in system leadership?

Q2. Please outline the **significant impact of your contribution** as a leader to supporting leaders in other schools or to your own school's performance. Please detail the impact and demonstrate clear evidence of your outstanding practice within your area(s) of expertise or specialism.

Q3. Please detail **performance results and outcomes you have been accountable for** in your area of work (please cite sources).

Q4. Please provide examples of where you have worked sensitively and collaboratively with peer colleagues using **coaching or facilitation skills** to grow leadership capacity in others leading to sustainable improvements.

Q5. Please provide a clear example of a time when you have significantly **challenged, collaborated, motivated and/or inspired** your colleagues to establish new, innovative working practices. What was the impact?

Q6.

<b>Please address each area below, evidencing where you have utilised each skill and the positive impact you have brought about</b>
Excellent communication and interpersonal skills:
The ability to utilise high levels of emotional intelligence to work sensitively and collaboratively with peer colleagues:
An understanding of what constitutes 'outstanding' in your field of expertise and the ability and confidence to articulate this:
An appreciation of how your specialism and skills can contribute to the wider school improvement agenda:
An analytical approach in identifying the needs and ability to prioritise accordingly, including the ability to set and establish new and innovative working practices
The ability to grow leadership capacity in others:

## What's involved as a specialist leader of education?

Element	Details
Allocation to a teaching school alliance	SLEs will need to identify and apply to their nearest or local teaching school, ensuring that their specialism(s) are on the list of the teaching school's priorities. A list of teaching school priorities can be found on our website during application rounds. Teaching schools are responsible for designating SLEs, brokering SLE deployment and providing ongoing support.
Core training day	This is a compulsory training day that all newly designated SLEs attend. It provides SLEs with essential information about the role and will equip you with the tools and techniques for effective school-to-school support. It also provides the opportunity to meet other SLEs.
Deployment to support other schools	<p>The core role of an SLE is to support leaders in other schools, helping them to develop leadership capacity that will ultimately improve outcomes for children. We know that this type of school-to-school deployment has benefits for all involved.</p> <p>Each deployment will be tailored to meet the needs of the supported school. Deployments may involve coaching, mentoring or facilitation skills – there is no set approach, but support will always focus on sustainable leadership development and school improvement.</p> <p>There is no pre-defined time commitment for SLE work because models and types of deployment vary.</p>
Access to ongoing support and training	Allocated teaching schools will ensure that there is support available for SLEs where required. The National College SLE team will also be on hand to answer any queries.
Additional opportunities	As well as supporting other schools, we expect that SLEs will also be able to engage with other opportunities and areas of work. This could include, for example, undertaking research activity on behalf of teaching schools and the College, or engaging with national policy-makers in relation to particular specialisms.

SLE deployment may result in some funding for the SLE's own school, although this will be agreed by the schools involved and by their teaching school alliance.

## **Deployment**

CTSA is responsible for brokering support from the SLEs within our alliance or area, so we wish to have a large pool of SLEs. There is no defined time commitment for deployments as time should be agreed between parties. However, SLEs and schools will need to think carefully about the likely commitment and capacity.

SLEs will be deployed beyond their own schools in response to local needs. The main objective of the SLE programme is for SLEs to support the development needs of peers in schools other than their own through outreach work. It is important to note that there is no guarantee of deployment, as this depends on need and demand.

Models and types of deployments will vary. For example, one deployment might be a two-day diagnostic exercise, whilst another might require a three-month full-time support role.

Many SLEs will continue to use their skills and experience to help support the development of colleagues in their own schools, as a part of their role as a middle or senior leader.

## SLE Deployment: Process diagram

Initial request for school to school support is made to CTSA

For example this could come from:

Individual school, Local authority or Diocese, DfE or NCTL, another Teaching School Alliance



CTSA receives initial request for SLE support and brokers support.



CTSA confirms the needs of the school to be supported and matches SLE, with the appropriate area of expertise and sufficient capacity to offer support, in consultation with SLE Head.

This takes into account:

School phase, school context, location and geography, specific experience, working style and approach.



Meeting takes place between SLE, an appropriate senior leader from CTSA and Head of school to be supported to agree on the terms and scope of the deployment.

Meeting covers:

Focus of work, expectations for outcomes and impact, key actions and strategies,  
funding for work, length of deployment, frequency of contact



All parties sign up to a contracting agreement (SLE deployment form) reflecting the key terms of the deployment.



Deployment commences, SLE completes short summary of action after each visit which is copied to all parties. CTSA sends invoice to supported school. SLE's school sends monthly invoice to CTSA



Final written review and impact evaluation of deployment completed by Head of supported school and SLE and agreed by all parties and copied to SLE's Head and CTSA.



Evaluation of SLEs work completed by Head of supported school and copied to CTSA.

## **Further information**

**SLE Contact at CTSA**

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**Twitter: @chelmsfordTSA**

**Facebook: Chelmsford Teaching Schools Alliance**

Information about SLEs and how to apply:

**<https://www.gov.uk/specialist-leaders-of-education-a-guide-for-potential-applicants>**

General enquiries:

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