

SCIS Senior Leadership development programme

Aims

The SCIS Senior Leadership development programme aims to:

- Provide an inspiring, practical and insightful leadership development programme tailored to the needs and context of aspiring leaders in independent schools in Scotland
- Support participants in building their self-awareness, confidence and resilience as leaders
- Support participants in their development as effective leaders and strategic leaders of change
- Prepare participants to take on their first Senior Leadership post by developing skills, knowledge and understanding in key areas which fall into the complex and multifaceted role in independent schools including HR, Finance and Governance
- Provide space and stimulus for reflection, critical evaluation and collaborative learning
- Ensure future senior leaders understand their responsibilities across a wide range of areas including Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Raise awareness of wider perspectives and national policy in Scotland.

Key Elements

The programme comprises a number of key elements which come together to support the professional development of the individual and encompass the elements of the national model of professional learning.

- 6 days covering a variety of topics delivered by experts in leadership in the world of education and beyond
- Self-evaluation as a Leader contributing to a Leadership Development Plan (LDP)
- Networking and professional dialogue with colleagues from different schools with diverse backgrounds and perspectives
- Reflective, practical in-school tasks
- Reflective log
- Professional reading and viewing
- Professional dialogue with line manager/colleagues in school
- Ongoing sharing of ideas and useful articles between taught days
- End of course oral presentation.



Course Overview 2026/27

Whilst each day takes a distinct focus and approach, common threads recur in discussions throughout the programme on the role of the leader and strategic leadership, vision and values, leadership styles and what constitutes effective leadership.

24th September at Robert Gordon's College, Aberdeen

Strengths & Behaviours for Leadership -Yvonne McCracken, Leadership Executive Consultant; John O'Neill, Rector at High School of Glasgow & George Salmond, Head of Junior School, George Watson's College

A week before you will complete an online profile to identify strengths and behaviour preferences. This will then be used throughout the session to work through leadership behaviours, decision-making and promoting a positive leadership culture.

Course introduction - Mrs C Smith, Head of RGC Senior School will introduce the Course, focussing on the importance of the professional reading content and the presentation requirements.

4th November at Edinburgh Academy Senior School, Edinburgh

Developing strong relationships & moving to senior leadership - Dr Jill Berry

Session 1: Getting the best from those you lead

- The nature of leadership
- What we can learn from positive and negative leadership role models
- Striking the right balance of support and challenge
- Appreciative Inquiry - finding the bright spots and building on the positives
- Managing conflict and navigating challenging conversations

Session 2: Getting the job you dream of

- The specific challenges and opportunities of Senior Leadership
- Doing your research and finding your fit
- Crafting a compelling written application
- Preparing for and performing well at interview
- Dealing with disappointment and success

14th January at Hutcheson's Grammar School, Glasgow

Leadership for Learning – Bruce Robertson, Next Level Educational

Pastoral Leadership - Gillian Clarke, Depute Rector at Hutchesons' Grammar

12th March at Fettes College, Edinburgh

- **Trauma Informed Practice for Senior Leaders** – Resilience Learning Partnership
- **Promoting Diversity and Inspiring Inclusivity in leadership** - Sadia Hussain-Savuk, EDI lead and Diversity Consultant.

May

- **Employment Law & HR**
- **Balancing the educational & financial sides of senior leadership**
- **Supporting educational leadership** - Margaret Orr, Education Consultant & Chair

June

- **Final reflection presentations**

Leadership Development Plan

The Leadership Development Plan (LDP) is about your professional learning and leadership development.

Your LDP is a tool to help you reflect on your professional development goals over the next 12 months. The focus of your goals may shift as your knowledge, understanding and insights develop during the course.

Self-evaluation is the starting point for development and will form the basis of your Leadership Development Plan (LDP). From the activities and discussions during Day 1, reflect on how your identified strengths and remit fit with the GTCS Standards and specifically identify 2-3 strengths and 2-3 areas for development.

The LDP may relate to a particular project or initiative you are already involved in or are planning to become involved in over the coming months or may relate more generally to aspects which come up in your day-to-day work and interactions with other members of the school community.

In putting together your LDP, you will find it helpful to consider the following questions:

- Which aspects of your leadership practice are you currently interested in developing?
- What changes do you want to make to your leadership practice?
- What are your reasons for these changes?
- What is your vision/goal in relation to these identified areas?
- What do you envisage will be the impact of your professional development/professional learning in this area? – on yourself/ on pupils and/or colleagues/on your school?
- What strategies/areas of practice will you use to support your development in the identified areas?
- What resources will you need? e.g. support from others
- How do your identified areas for development link in with the GTCS Standards?

At regular intervals during the course of the year you must reflect on your LDP and consider your professional development and further insights in relation to your initial thoughts.

The format of the LDP is flexible. It could be a narrative format in paragraphs or in tabular format or a mindmap etc. It is a tool for your own personal use to contribute to your professional leadership development.

You will be required to incorporate your LDP into your end of course presentation.

Professional Reading and Viewing

The taught days will be supplemented by comprehensive handouts but the following texts provide a starting point for further background reading. You will also find the EBSCO Education resource (see below) useful for accessing articles on a wide range of topics relevant to educational leadership and management.

[Education Reform - Schools](#)

[Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education](#)

[It's Our Future - Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment: report](#)

[Education - achieving excellence and equity: National Improvement Framework 2025](#)

[Education Scotland – How good is our school 4th Edition](#)

- Robertson, B, 2020, The Teaching Delusion; Why teaching in our schools isn't good enough (and how we can make it better)
- Berry, Dr J., 2016, Making the Leap: Moving from deputy to head
- Enser, M. & Z., 2021, The CPD Curriculum: Creating Conditions for growth
- Grant, V., 2014, Staying A Head
- Grenny, Patterson, McMillan, Switzler, Gregory, Crucial Conversations Tools for Talking when stakes are high.
- Mannion, Dr J, 2025, Making Change Stick: A Practical Guide to Implementing School Improvement
- Munby, S., Bretherton, M-C., Imperfect Leadership in Action: A Practical Book for School Leaders Who Know They Don't Know It All
- Myatt, M. & Tomsett, J., 2021, Huh: Curriculum conversations between subject and senior leaders
- Robertson, B, 2021, The Teaching Delusion 2: Teaching Strikes Back and The Teaching Delusion 3: Power Up Your Pedagogy
- Wespieser, K., Bennett, T., The researchED Guide to Special Educational Needs: An evidence-informed guide for teachers

Online access to educational journals

GTC Scotland provides all registrants with online access to the EBSCO Education Source package and the Leadership & Management Learning Centre. Education Source is a collection of over 1,700 education journals. You can access the EBSCO Resource by logging into your MyGTCS account.

Education Scotland www.educationscotland.gov.uk

General Teaching Council for Scotland www.gtcs.org.uk

End of Course Oral Presentation

The SCIS Senior Leadership programme provides the opportunity for enhanced and sustained professional learning in school leadership. The presentation provides the opportunity for you to consider and analyse the impact of the programme on your development and practice as a leader and the impact of your development on learners and your school community.

You should prepare a short oral presentation, and the emphasis should be on the impact of your professional learning and development as a leader during the last 12 months. The structure and format of your oral presentation is up to you.

You must draw on the Leadership Development Plan you drew up at the start of the course and your initial self-evaluation activities, your reflective log, discussions you have had with colleagues and other participants, discussions with your line manager as an integral part of PRD discussions, your involvement in any school-based projects and your professional reading and viewing.

Questions to consider

Critically analyse, examine and evaluate what **impact** your participation in the SCIS Leadership programme has had on your thinking, learning and practice and on pupils and colleagues in your school.

What have been the key learning points for you during the programme and how has this **impacted** on your practice?

How do your recent leadership experience and development fit with the GTCS Standards?

How have your discussions with other members of the group and your colleagues in school **impacted** on your practice?

How has theory covered during the taught days and your professional reading and viewing **impacted** on your practice?

What hasn't gone well for you professionally during the last 12 months and what have you taken from this?

What are your next steps for your professional learning and development?

The presentation will be attended by other members of the group and a 'panel' made up of at least two of the presenters involved in the delivery of the programme.

5 minutes will be allowed after each presentation for any questions from the group/panel.

Follow-up

Feedback from previous courses has consistently indicated that participants value further opportunities to network. This programme is complemented by a wide range of one day courses offered for leaders on a regular basis by SCIS e.g. Employment Law and Health & Safety Masterclasses, Safer Staff Recruitment, Leading Change, Managing Difficult Conversations, Coaching Skills etc.