

Planning Impact for Lasting Change

Unlocking NPQ Potential

A comprehensive guide to selecting the right NPQ, supporting participants through their journey, and maximising the impact of professional development in schools.



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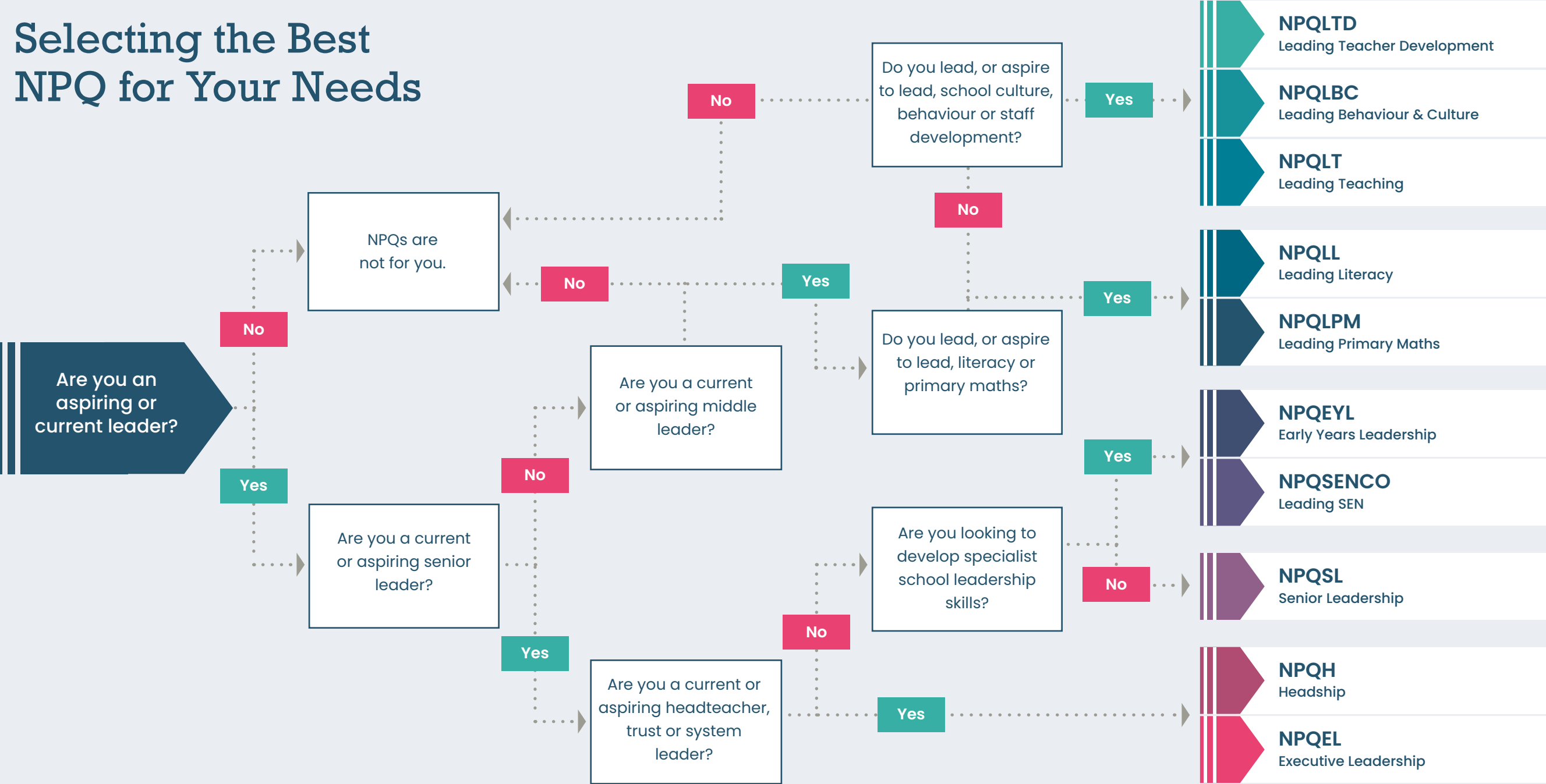
Welcome

Unlocking NPQ Potential: Planning Impact for Lasting Change serves as a practical guide for school and Trust leaders looking to maximise the benefits of National Professional Qualifications (NPQs).

This document provides a framework to help leaders not only select the most suitable NPQ but also plan for its long-term impact. By focusing on clear goals, informed decision-making, and sustainable implementation, it supports educators to drive meaningful change across their schools. With actionable insights and tools, it ensures that NPQs are not just a personal achievement but a catalyst for lasting improvement in teaching, learning, and leadership.

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Selecting the Best NPQ for Your Needs



Maximising the Impact of NPQs in Schools

Where schools actively support NPQ participants with well-structured in-house social support and opportunities to ensure learning is applied in practice, the NPQs are more impactful on both the individual and wider school community.

Key actions for schools:

Identify challenges early

Before committing to an NPQ, ensure participants and their line managers understand the workload, expectations, and how learning will be applied in their role.

Integrate learning into daily practice/priorities

Encourage participants to identify dept/phase/school priorities that they can apply their NPQ learning to and share insights with colleagues.

Maintain regular check-ins

Scheduled discussions help track progress, overcome challenges and keep participants motivated.

Use structured support mechanisms

The Learning and Development Log provides a framework for reflection, application, and long-term impact (see page 7).

Overcoming Challenges with NPQ Engagement & Impact

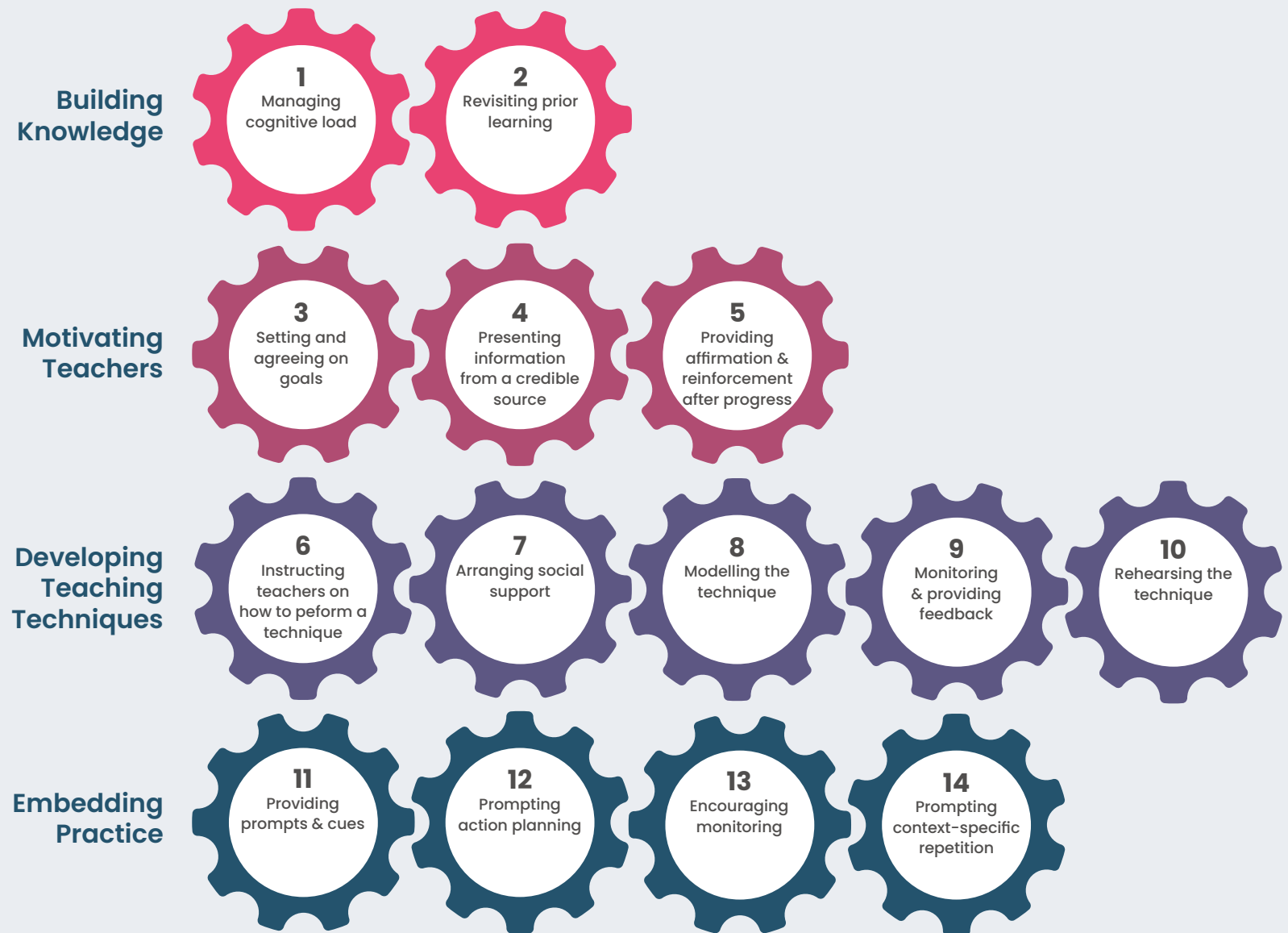
Being aware of these challenges before starting an NPQ—and knowing how to tackle them—can make all the difference in ensuring a successful and impactful NPQ experience.

	Challenge	Considerations
Limited Awareness of NPQs	Coaches, line managers and/or colleagues not knowing the structure, content and requirements of NPQ programmes and potential application of learning to provide appropriate support.	Access the programme structures for NPQs on page 13 . Pre-written Appraisal/PM targets with key actions and milestones can support developing a greater understanding of the NPQ contents and programme, as well as providing a structure for future ‘check-in’.
Competing Demands & Time Constraints	Balancing NPQ study with full-time teaching or leadership roles can be difficult, leaving limited time for completing modules, maintaining momentum for the application of new skills and learning in roles with competing demands is a challenge.	Plan, diarise and try to timetable a weekly slot dedicated solely to NPQs. Do this away from your department or school office to minimise potential distractions and disruptions. Make use of our Learning and Development Check-in structure to maintain momentum and install regular reflection points across a participant’s NPQ experience.
Limited Social Support	It can be challenging for participants to implement what they learn. Limited opportunities for NPQ participants to share and apply learning and lead others.	Which departmental or whole-school aspects of CPD or strategic meetings can NPQ participants lead or contribute towards? What are the opportunities in your school or Trust to model leadership or shadow effective leaders to help participants to bridge the knowing-doing gap?

EEF Professional Development Mechanisms: Ensuring Effective PD in NPQs

Effective professional development goes beyond providing information—it must be structured to support knowledge building, teacher motivation, skill development, and long-term application. **The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)** identifies these four groups of mechanisms to the right – developed from trusted sources of research– as the ‘building blocks’ for more successful PD and meaningful and lasting improvements in leadership.

Our **Learning and Development Log** (on pages 7–9) incorporates the most relevant and effective PD mechanisms from the EEF, providing a structured framework for participants and line managers to reflect, consolidate learning, and plan for successful implementation.



Click **here** to read the EEF, Professional Development Guidance report.

Learning and Development Log:

Initial Meeting - Before starting the NPQ



NPQ Participant and Line Manager / Coach:

1. Brief outline of the area/school focus connected to the NPQ:

2. What do you as a participant want to achieve through the NPQ programme?



NPQ Participant to complete:

1. Which aspects of leadership are you hoping to develop?

2. What opportunities are available to you as a participant to benefit the school through participation?

3. Which colleagues will you aim to apply your NPQ learning with?

Mid-Point Check in - Conversation with line manager



NPQ Participant to complete:

1. Which aspects of your practice have you changed or developed?
2. Which aspect of your NPQ programme influenced these changes or developments the most?
3. What has the impact been so far on, you as a leader, your colleagues, pupils or whole school?

4. Which aspects of learning from your NPQ would you like to put into practice next?
5. What are the two priorities to work on before we meet next?
6. Do you foresee any challenges associated with these priorities?

Final Reflection



NPQ Participant to complete:

1. Tell us about the impact the NPQ has had upon your leadership approach:

2. Are you a better leader now than before completing your NPQ? (If yes, why and how would you demonstrate this?)

3. Tell us the subsequent impact you as a leader have had upon colleagues and the school:

Line Manager / Coach to complete:

1. Tell us about the impact the NPQ has had upon your colleague’s leadership approach:

2. Is your colleague a better leader now than before completing your NPQ? (If yes, why and how have they demonstrated this?)

3. Tell us the subsequent impact your colleague has had upon the members of staff and the school:

NPQ Participant Suggested Performance Management Targets



Target:	Objectives / Success Criteria:	Measures / Evidence:
NPQ Participation – To demonstrate impact of participation in the NPQ XX through leading colleagues in priority areas of subject/ department/ faculty/whole-school improvement including XX .	- Complete programme components including Conferences, Clinics, Communities, Study and Apply Modules (School Visit for NPQH). - Application of programme principles* and modular learning to the roles, responsibilities and school context, demonstrating impact in the NPQ (enter NPQ subject area e.g, Literacy) through: - The Leadership of colleagues - Development of strategic approaches and implementation plans for subject/department/faculty/SLT whole school improvement, informed by course content and programme principles* - Planning and delivery of Professional Development opportunities to lead and develop staff/colleagues - Development of teaching, learning, procedures, policy or XXX resources - Robust and regular Quality Assurance and evaluation of the progress of the of the implemented strategy/strategies. - Updates throughout/Presentation on conclusion of the programme to demonstrate impact	- Steplab engagement records - Strategic improvement/development/ implementation plans or contributions - Coaching/Mentoring/Line management check-in minutes/conversation evidence - Professional Development materials and delivery - Developmental resources with explicit links to NPQ module content or programme principles - Quality assurance records - Subject/department/faculty/SLT Meeting minutes - Student progress/outcomes JTTS Learning and Development Log

*Ambition Institute's NPQ Programme Principles:	Other module principles:
Patient: Keep in mind that implementation is a process, not a one-time event Prudent: Make as few changes as possible whilst maintaining an effective and improving school Context-specific: Consider the fit and feasibility of any change given the context within which it would need to be delivered Needs-based: Start by understanding the problem before looking for the solution Evidence-informed: Make changes based on the best available evidence and knowledge of the context Prepared: Invest time and resource into the planning stage Proactive: Reduce the barriers and increase the facilitators for effective implementation from the beginning and throughout Intentional: Follow a carefully planned and responsive process to delivering the improvement Secure: Make informed decisions on scaling-up or scaling-back	Secure Alignment: Ensure alignment of policies and practices to the strategic direction. Specify Behaviours: Set clear expectations and model the behaviours you want from staff and pupils. Engage with beliefs: Explain the purpose of all actions and enter into an 'open to learn' dialogue to engage with staff and pupils' beliefs. Balance high expectations with support: Enable pupils and staff to achieve high expectations by building support, trust and safety. Reinforce and refine: Use systems to overcommunicate, monitor, feedback and iterate school culture.

NPQ Participant Suggested Performance Management Targets



Target:

Objectives / Success Criteria:

Measures / Evidence:

NPQ Participation – To demonstrate impact of participation in the NPQ **xx** through leading colleagues in priority areas of subject/ department/ faculty/whole-school improvement including **xx**.

- Complete programme components including Face-to-Face events, 1:1 coaching (leadership NPQs), In-school coaching (specialist NPQs), formative assessment tasks and the final summative assessment case study.
- Application of programme principles* and modular learning to the roles, responsibilities and school context, demonstrating impact in the NPQ **(enter NPQ subject area e,g, Literacy)** through:
 - The Leadership of colleagues
 - Development of strategic approaches and implementation plans for subject/department/faculty/SLT whole school improvement, informed by course content and programme principles*
 - Planning and delivery of Professional Development opportunities to lead and develop staff/colleagues
 - Development of teaching, learning, procedures, policy or **xxx** resources
 - Robust and regular Quality Assurance and evaluation of the progress of the of the implemented strategy/strategies.
- Updates throughout/Presentation on conclusion of the programme to demonstrate impact

- Canvas engagement records
- Strategic improvement/development/ implementation plans or contributions
- Coaching/Mentoring/Line management check-in minutes/conversation evidence
- Professional Development materials and delivery
- Developmental resources with explicit links to NPQ module content or programme principles
- Quality assurance records
- Subject/department/faculty/SLT Meeting minutes
- Student progress/outcomes
- **JTTS Learning and Development Log**

Best Practice Network NPQ Programme Ethical Leadership Principles and Behaviours:

- **Self-awareness** – Effective leaders know themselves and their teams, continually reflect on their own and others’ practices, and understand how best to approach difficult or sensitive issues. They are aware of their personal strengths and areas for future growth and understand how their own behaviour affects others.
- **Integrity**– Effective leaders act with honesty, transparency and always in the interests of the school and its pupils. They are able to gain the respect of others by acting in line with their own values, as well as making decisions and choices with the best interests of education and pupils in mind.
- **Resilience** – Effective leaders remain courageous and positive in challenging, adverse or uncertain circumstances. They are able to respond appropriately, manage uncertainty and bounce back even in the most trying situations.
- **Impact and influence** – Effective leaders have a positive impact on students, colleagues and the wider community through persuading, convincing and bringing others round to their perspective. They understand others’ perspectives and priorities and tailor their communication to suit their audience.
- **Partnership working and collaboration** – Effective leaders are able to work with a range of people in schools and the wider community to build a culture of cooperation and achievement. They engage with, and invest responsibility in, those who are best placed to improve outcomes, being open to different perspectives and viewpoints as well as sharing expertise and achieving common objectives.
- **Respect** – Effective leaders respect the rights, views, beliefs and faiths of all pupils, colleagues and stakeholders.
- **Delivering continuous improvement** – Effective leaders secure and maintain positive improvement through articulating a clear vision, setting high expectations and leading a cycle of research, planning, monitoring, analysis and change. They demonstrate the ability to combine operational action with strategic planning, securing short-term improvements while building sustainable change.
- **Future focus** – Effective leaders recognise issues and opportunities and take action to resolve these. Leaders need to look ahead to identify and resolve potential issues and capitalise on opportunities as well as manage day-to-day problems.
- **Holding others to account** – Effective school leaders hold others to account – including creating levels of accountability within the school – ensuring that everyone understands their roles, responsibilities, the standards required and accountabilities. They distribute leadership and delegate effectively, demanding high performance through making expectations clear, with the best interests of pupils and schools in mind.
- **Leading by example** – Effective leaders consistently demonstrate and communicate their vision, passion and commitment. They lead by example, have high levels of professional credibility and demonstrate total commitment to school improvement through their own leadership behaviours.

Key Strategies for Supporting NPQ Participants

Ensuring the success of NPQ participants requires structured support from school leaders, mentors, and colleagues. A well-designed support system helps participants apply their learning effectively, stay motivated, and contribute meaningfully to school improvement. Schools can facilitate this by embedding NPQ learning into professional development practices, performance management, and collaborative learning opportunities.

1. Self-Assessment and Reflection

Encouraging participants to reflect on their leadership strengths and areas for development helps focus their learning. Tools such as Leadership Matters' 360 Review provide structured feedback from colleagues and self-assessment insights.

2. Line Management Support

Line managers should understand the NPQ structure and content ([see curriculum maps](#)) to provide informed guidance. Using the Learning and Development log, managers can facilitate discussions, monitor progress, and ensure learning is applied in practice.

3. Structured Appraisal Targets

Embedding NPQ learning in appraisal/performance management targets strengthens its relevance. Participants should align their professional development with departmental, faculty, or whole-school improvement plans to ensure meaningful impact. (See supporting resources).

4. Coaching and Mentoring

Assigning an NPQ Coach or in-school sponsor provides structured but informal support. These meetings provide social support and help participants reflect on their learning, discuss challenges, and explore how NPQ concepts apply to their role.

5. Collaborative Learning

Providing structured opportunities for NPQ participants to engage with peers enhances learning and retention. Schools can support this by establishing NPQ buddy systems with current NPQ peers or past participants to encourage them to share insights and apply learning in a meaningful way.

6. Knowledge Sharing

Including 'NPQ learning' regularly on meeting agendas. This not only strengthens their understanding but also benefits the wider school community.

7. Demonstrating Impact

Final reflection is essential for ensuring that NPQs lead to real improvements in teaching, leadership, and student outcomes. The Final NPQ Learning & Impact Review (see Learning & Development Check-Ins) provides a structured way for participants to document their progress in four key areas:

- **Learning** – What key insights have been gained from the NPQ?
- **Leadership** – How has leadership practice evolved?
- **Impact** – What changes have been made at an individual, team, or school level?
- **Evidence** – What measurable outcomes demonstrate success?

Useful Downloads

- » **Learning & Development Check-Ins**
- » **Performance Management Targets**

*Other 360-degree review tools that School Leaders may find useful include:
The Key Support for school Leaders 360 degree feedback
(school subscription required)

Other free generic 360 leadership review tools:
<https://www.selfstir.com/individual-solution/>
<https://www.leadership-tools.com/leadership-360-degree-feedback.html>

NPQ Curriculum Maps

Each NPQ programme is designed to develop specific leadership skills, ensuring participants gain the knowledge and expertise needed for their roles. These curriculum maps provide a clear overview of the content, structure, and key learning areas covered in each of our NPQ programmes.

These maps serve as a useful reference for participants, line managers, and mentors, helping to track progress, align learning with school priorities, and support meaningful application in practice. Use this section to explore the curriculum for your chosen NPQ and understand how each programme contributes to professional growth and school improvement.

To access the curriculum maps, please select the appropriate Lead Provider's logo which will take you to their website.

