



ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN PRACTICE

November 2019



FOREWORD: ETHICAL LEADERSHIP FOR A BETTER EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Ethical Leadership Commission set itself the task to provide busy school leaders with a set of principles against which they could test their most difficult decision-making. We did this to help rebuild professionalism and personal agency in school leaders. Schools are where society looks after its young until they are old enough to take on the mantle of adult citizenship, so school leaders not only model diligent public service but also the behaviour and virtues society values. Accountability is not enough: we have to do good.

Carolyn Roberts | Chair, Ethical Leadership Commission

FRAMEWORK FOR ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION

The Ethical Framework for Educational Leadership is based upon the seven principles of public life.

Selflessness School and college leaders should act solely in the interest of children and young people.

Integrity School and college leaders must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. Before acting and taking decisions, they must declare and resolve openly any perceived conflict of interest and relationships.

Objectivity School and college leaders must act and take decisions impartially and fairly, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias. Leaders should be dispassionate, exercising judgement and analysis for the good of children and young people.

Accountability School and college leaders are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness School and college leaders should expect to act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from scrutiny unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty School and college leaders should be truthful.

Leadership School and college leaders should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles, and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs. Leaders include both those who are paid to lead schools and colleges and those who volunteer to govern them.

Schools and colleges serve children and young people and help them grow into fulfilled and valued citizens. As role models for the young, how we behave as leaders is as important as what we do. Leaders should show leadership through the following personal characteristics or virtues:

Trust | *leaders are trustworthy and reliable*

We hold trust on behalf of children and should be beyond reproach. We are honest about our motivations.

Wisdom | *leaders use experience, knowledge and insight*

We use experience, knowledge, insight, understanding and good sense to make sound judgements. We demonstrate restraint and self-awareness, act calmly and rationally, exercise moderation and propriety as we serve our schools and colleges wisely.

Kindness | *leaders demonstrate respect, generosity of spirit, understanding and good temper*

We give difficult messages humanely where conflict is unavoidable.

Justice | *leaders are fair and work for the good of all children*

We work fairly for the good of children from all backgrounds. We seek to enable all young people to lead useful, happy and fulfilling lives.

Service | *leaders are conscientious and dutiful*

We demonstrate humility and self-control, supporting the structures and rules which safeguard quality. Our actions protect high-quality education.

Courage | *leaders work courageously in the best interests of children and young people*

We protect their safety and their right to a broad, effective and creative education. We hold one another to account courageously.

Optimism | *leaders are positive and encouraging*

Despite difficulties and pressures, we are developing excellent education to change the world for the better.



INTRODUCTION: THE FRAMEWORK FOR ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION

The Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education was launched in January 2019 alongside a report on [‘Navigating the Education Moral Maze: The Final Report of the Ethical Leadership Commission’](#), written by Carolyn Roberts, Chair of the Ethical Leadership Commission. The commission responded to calls by Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) members and the education sector that felt there were no guiding principles for ethical leadership in education.

The commission proposed that the framework would be used in training and reflection for leaders, teachers, governors, trustees, and anyone concerned with how we educate the nation’s young people. The pathfinder project provides resources and training materials to help guide boards and leadership teams. Another development of the Ethical Leadership Commission was the ethics forum. [The Ethics Forum](#), hosted by the Chartered College of Teaching, will develop the language of the framework, and enable the framework to shape around the current educational climate, and pathfinders input into the Forum through their experiences.

In the *Navigating the Education Moral Maze* report, Roberts speaks of the ‘sad legacy of the compliance culture cemented into schools and college leadership’, and the potential that the framework might be considered vague, without sufficient outcomes. However, the pathfinder project has been addressing this by identifying the impact that schools have made with the framework. The purpose of this report is to define experiences of pathfinders within the first 6 months of the programme.

“ *I feel the framework is our moral compass at a time when the pressure to do so much with so little is at its greatest. It keeps our students and their families at the centre of all decision making.* ”

PATHFINDERS AIMS AND EXPECTATIONS

The pathfinder project is hosted by the National Governance Association (NGA). NGA views ethical leadership as a cornerstone of good governance, and therefore good school leadership. Free and open to all, NGA signed up pathfinder schools – who are expected to test out the resources, design new resources, and create the ‘paths’ for other schools to follow to enable ethical leadership to flourish. The aims of the pathfinders were to answer two fundamental questions:

- How well do we fulfil our roles as trusted educators?
- What kind of role models are we to the children in our care?

Expectations

Pathfinders will use the framework, and report back on its use informally and through feedback surveys. The pathfinders were anticipated to work on the framework using the resources provided and also resources they create. Pathfinders can also work locally and within their networks.

Resources

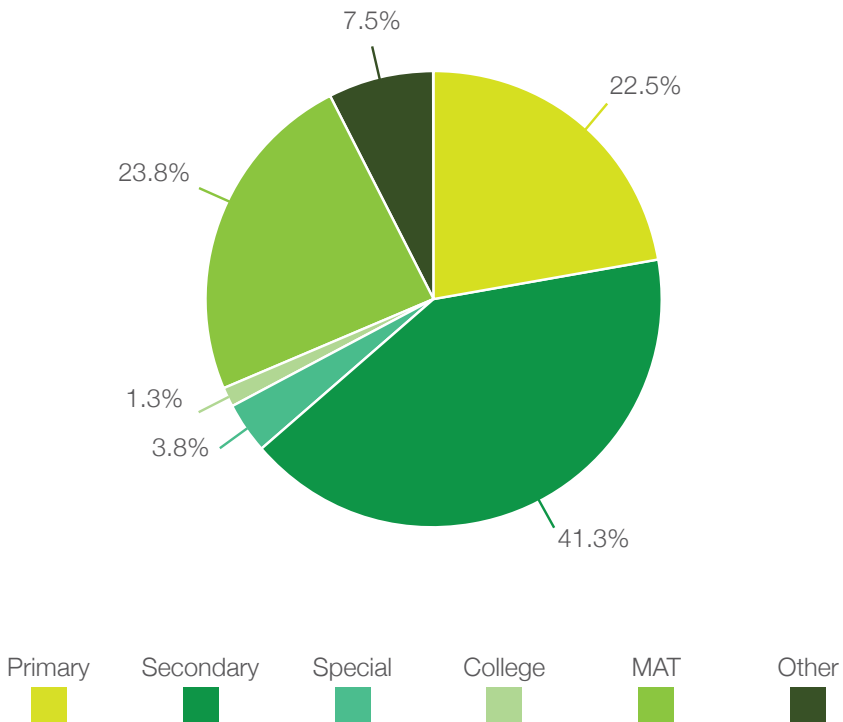
Pathfinders will inform their understanding of educational ethical leadership through the use of resources provided to pathfinders – an ethical audit, board activities, and discussion topics, for schools to use to embed the practise of values and virtues into schools, and to encourage the use of the Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education. The ethical audit is a red, amber, green (RAG) rating exercise, which asks pathfinders what ethical behaviour is already exemplified in their schools. There are four sections to the audit; leadership principles, safeguarding values and virtues, management styles, and a model community. Board development activities are five activities that can be undertaken as part of a board meeting or senior leadership meeting, to start a discussion regarding the school/trust ethical behaviour. The final resources are the ethical dilemmas (previously case studies) – which is a collection of cases of ethical and unethical behaviour, intended to ignite discussion.

Who and what are the pathfinders?

The resources were released to pathfinders who registered and expressed an interest in the pathfinder project. This ensures that there is a record of those using the resources, and to follow up on the results of their activities.

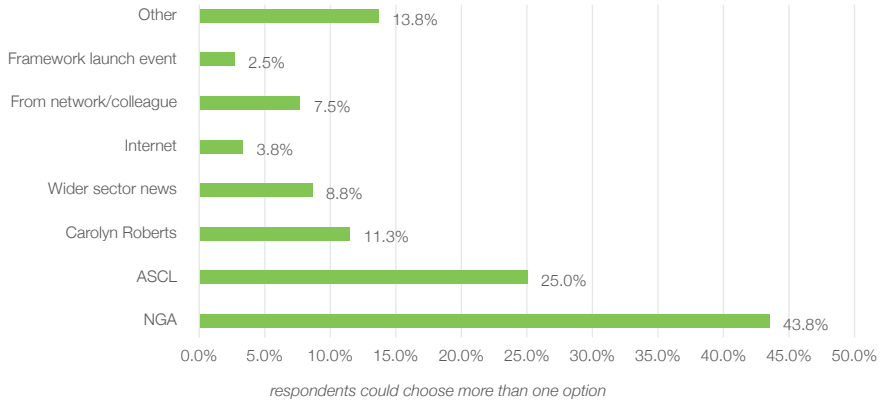
Prior to the January 2019 launch, we had just under 100 registrations of interest from pathfinders. Currently, we have over 150 registered pathfinders. A full list of registered pathfinders can be found on our list of registered pathfinders: <http://bit.ly/EthicalPathfinders>. These registrations represent all aspects of education, from nursery schools to 16-18 colleges, independent, state schools, multi-academy trusts, small rural schools, and everything in between. Through the pathfinder survey in June 2019, we identified that many pathfinders had not yet been able to commence using the framework or resources in a meaningful way. This list has been edited to reflect those who are actively engaging over time and will continue to be updated.

School and Trusts engaged



“ There have been some historical issues with previous leaders in one of the schools in our federation. The federation is new and we are keen that we do things the “right way” from the start. ”

Where did you hear about Pathfinders for the Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education



The pathfinder survey revealed that over one third heard about the programme through promotion from the commission members (ASCL, NGA, Chartered College and Carolyn Roberts speaking across the country). Of those who registered, over two thirds are school leaders; head teachers, CEOs and executive head teachers (or similar). With the last third representing governors and trustees.

When pathfinders shared the reasons they registered, there were reoccurring phrases such as ‘best practice’, ‘embed [values]’, ‘moral’, and ‘ethos’ which proves that pathfinders wanted to engage in ethical leadership. One specific response explained they wanted to be involved “because it is right. Our system is fractious and at times broken. We are desperate for a framework and a network which will help us navigate our way ethically”, and another suggesting that the pathfinder work will “reinforce the work we already do and give structure to all leaders as we grow. And it’s the right thing to do”. The general consensus was positive, with many wanting to use the framework within their setting appropriately – whether this is supporting a new Headteacher, or testing current policies. Using the framework reinforces a school or trusts culture, and because the pathfinder programme is open to all (without being descriptive) it allows pathfinders to determine the best focus. The biggest success of the pathfinder project has been the numbers of schools and trusts who have registered. This has created a network of leaders, eager to work together to discuss and feedback on resources, and attend events.

WHAT HAVE PATHFINDERS BEEN DOING?

In June 2019, NGA surveyed pathfinders about the use of the framework and resources, and the results of the pathfinders. Feedback was given through the pathfinder survey and also the pathfinder ethics exchange hosted in July 2019.

The resources

Of the survey respondents, 65% have started to use the resources. Those who had not yet started to use the resources (the remaining 35%), did intend to use the resources in the near future. None suggested that they did not plan to use the resources, or wished to no longer continue as a pathfinder.

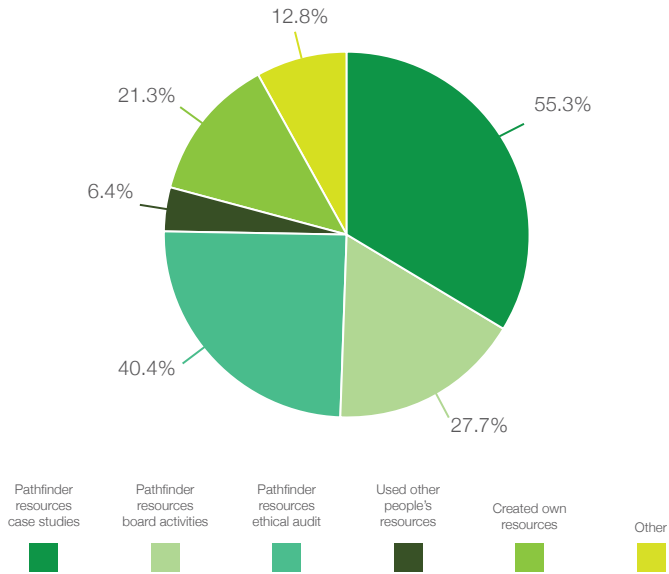
The frequently used resource was the discussion topics, with over 55% of respondents using these. Just over 40% used the ethical audit, and 27% have used the board activities (with most pathfinders using a combination of resources). Most pathfinders used the resources at board meetings (49%), or in a senior leadership team meeting (59%). Anecdotally, we heard reports from pathfinders who had success using the ethical audit, which enabled the school to set up an action plan. The framework and resources have encouraged schools and trusts to promote openness – through gathering feedback from pupils and parents, and setting values and direction in school and trusts policies and growth. At the Ethics Exchange held in July we heard from a range of pathfinders who have been successful in creating an ethical culture using the framework and resources. This included schools presenting the board activities to their trust board, which later enabled the new trust in putting an ethical commitment as part of their values and virtues and is found on their website.

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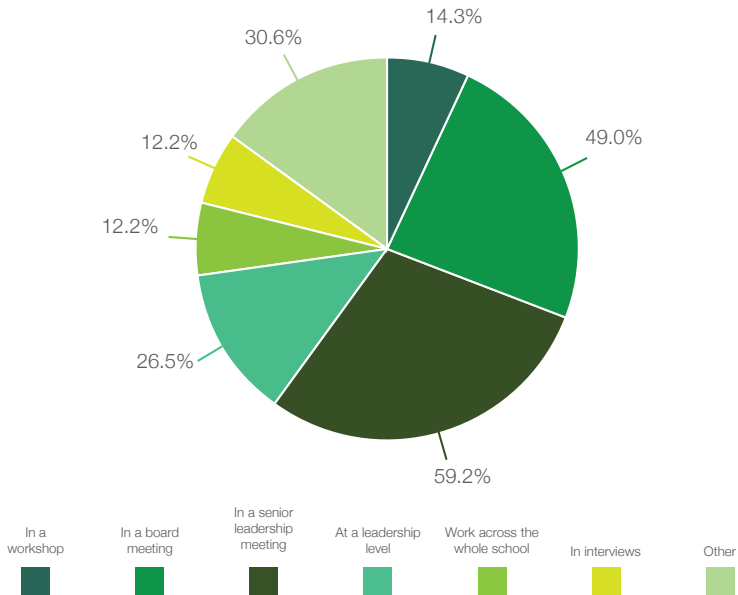
The ethical leadership framework fits perfectly with the work that we do and gives us a clear way of working and 'checking' our decision making. We also want to ensure that going forward as a trust, that the ethical leadership way of working is embedded and whoever is in a leadership position understands that this is the way in which the trust is led

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What resources have pathfinders used?



Where have pathfinders used the framework?



THE NON-STARTERS

The main reasons that respondents suggested that they had not yet used the resources was timing. Some schools suggested they have just recruited new senior leaders, or that the governing board meetings had not yet happened. Other schools and trust leaders also suggested workload meant they were unable to use the resources, with other projects taking priority before the ethical exchange. One respondent suggested they were overwhelmed with the resources and information provided at the beginning, and didn't know where to start.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

Ethics Exchange 04 July 2019

The Ethics Exchange event in July 2019 was successful in promoting schools and trusts not yet involved to get an understanding of the opportunities of the framework and resources. For those already signed up, but struggling to get started, the event gave schools and trusts the confidence to engage with the resources and gain momentum. The day was positive, and received excellent feedback that schools could not wait to get started and engage with the framework and resources.

Pathfinders who attended the inaugural Ethics Exchange event at the University of Birmingham on Thursday 4 July shared their experiences of ethical leadership, and of using the resources. Over 70 schools and trusts took part in the event to tell other pathfinders how they are using the Framework and resources in their decision making, and also discussed the difficulties of ethical leadership in education.

“ *Using the principles alongside questions adapted from the case studies provided, we sought to consider solutions to the funding pressures we are currently facing in school.* ”

Pathfinders showcased how the resources and framework have been used in individual organisations and debated the ethical dilemmas facing schools today:

Cath Kitchen, chief executive of the Skylark Partnership, and headteacher of Hospital and Outreach Education, discussed how she was able to use the framework to build ethical behaviour in the foundations of the new trust. Bringing the board along was made easier through the use of the resources, specifically the board activities, which the trust now firmly stand behind. The board has embraced these ethical principles to such an extent that, whilst discussing funding for a launch event for the new trust, trustees reminded each other of the framework and whether it was ethical to spend so much money on a promotional endeavor - therefore encouraging greater financial management. The trust now have their vision and values reflecting the framework for ethical leadership statement on their website and plan to continue this in the recruitment of new senior leaders.

Karen Cornell, assistant headteacher from Coleshill School, spoke of the work between herself and the local authority (Warwickshire) in creating an ethical culture around inclusion. Working on having difficult conversations between schools and creating trust between schools and local authorities, they have managed to reduce the amount of permanent exclusions and bring students back into education. The framework was hugely useful for all involved in developing the language of ethics that they now use.

Jonny Uttley, chief executive of The Education Alliance spoke about creating an ethical culture within their trust, particular around growth. This is only possible if trustees consider ethical leadership when they challenge and support their chief executive. Using the language of the ethical framework, Jonny also outlined that his MAT defines growth as “expanding the positive impact we have on more lives”. In this way, the trust see leadership as working for everyone – the teachers, the children, and the leaders.

Ela McSorely, trust director for learning & teaching at Nishkam School Trust, and Damien Kearns, principal at Nishkam High School, presented on the ethical developments at their schools and trust. As well as speaking about the development of an ethical curriculum for pupils, the trust has also developed an ethical leadership programme, through which modules specifically focus on ethical leadership and are underpinned by the framework.

FEEDBACK

Following feedback from pathfinders, we determined to publish a list of schools and trusts who have expressed an interest in using the framework. The list can be found here: <http://bit.ly/EthicalPathfinders> and will be regularly updated. Should schools or trusts wish to remove themselves from the list please contact ethicalschoools@nga.org.uk

| Pathfinders said | We did |
|---|---|
| Registration was unclear | We created a short registration survey, after completion we send the resources |
| The resource pack was too large/overwhelming | We split resources into individual packs, making this easier to download and print. The resources are not also available online via the pathfinder page (after registration) |
| More ethical dilemmas | We ask pathfinders to submit their own ethical dilemmas, to expand the collection of resources |
| Want to network with local schools | A list of schools participating in the pathfinder programme can be viewed online. Schools and trusts can contact pathfinders to discuss potential collaboration |
| Want more support for pathfinders | We have a number of consultants available for pathfinders (at a cost) |
| A webpage for pathfinders | Live from the end of October 2019 – currently only accessible for pathfinders and will be continually developed |
| Wanted to see evidence of the framework being used by other pathfinders | We are working with pathfinders to share what they are doing, including through blogs, case studies, and networking/presenting at events |
| Should be a social media presence for the Framework | Twitter handle launched in September 2019 @LeadersEthical |
| Speakers to be available at local events | The commission regularly speak at meetings across the country on ethical leadership and the Framework. Individual schools and trusts may wish to contact local pathfinders to discuss collaboration, with other pathfinder schools able to speak to local schools about the framework |
| Wanted a pathfinder logo | A pathfinder logo is available to download on the pathfinder page to show your involvement in the programme |

FUTURE STEPS

Recruitment for pathfinders will continue until January 2019, and we encourage school leaders and governors/trustees to continue to register their interest. New pathfinders will benefit from the experience of previous pathfinders, and will be able to make further contributions to the resources and influence in the ethics forum. New and existing pathfinders will be invited to our next event; to be hosted in London on 30 January 2020, where we will hear from Commission members and have an opportunity to network with pathfinder schools and trusts.

If you are interested to join us as a pathfinder please visit <http://bit.ly/EthicalPathfinders> or email ethicalschoools@nga.org.uk

Carys Ward
National Governance Association
November 2019



