

Developing a vision statement

A vision statement should express values and beliefs about what the school community considers to be of real importance in education in the future. Vision is an important part of effective school leadership because it:

- clarifies purpose and direction
- is a source of motivation and energy
- is powerful in shaping practice within the school community

A vision statement should be compelling and inspiring and motivate people to work together towards shared success. It is a succinct way to describe the ideal result a school is seeking. The development of a vision statement requires thinking boldly and setting high goals.

A vision should be a *realistic, credible, attractive and future-focused* for a school.

Realistic: the vision must be based in reality to be meaningful.

Credible: the vision must be believable to be relevant. Most importantly, it must be credible to the staff, students, governors, parents and other partners. If the members of the school community do not find the vision credible, it will not be meaningful or serve a useful purpose. One of the purposes of a vision is to inspire those in the school to achieve a level of excellence, and to provide purpose and direction for their work. A vision that is not credible will accomplish neither of these ends.

Attractive: if a vision is going to inspire and motivate those in the school community, it must be attractive. People must want to be part of this future that is envisioned.

Future-focus: the education vision needs to be future-focused and adaptable to respond to emerging trends and the ever increasing pace of change.

A vision that is a realistic, credible, attractive, and future focused for the school can accomplish a number of things.

It attracts commitment and energises people. This is one of the primary reasons for having a vision: its motivational effect. When people can see that the organisation is committed to a vision – and this entails more than just having a vision statement – it generates enthusiasm about the course the organisation intends to follow, and increases the commitment of people to work towards achieving that vision.

It creates meaning in the lives of members of the community. A vision allows people to feel like they are part of a greater whole, and hence provides meaning for their work. The right vision will mean something to everyone in the organisation if they can see how what they do contributes to that vision.

A vision serves a very important function in establishing a standard of excellence. In fact, a good vision is all about excellence. The standard of excellence can also serve as a continuing goal and stimulate quality improvement programmes, as well as providing a measure of the worth of the organisation.

It bridges the present and the future. The right vision takes us out of the present, and focuses on the future. It is easy to get caught up in the day-to-day business of a school and to lose sight of where you were heading. A good vision can orient a range of stakeholders to the future, and provide positive direction.

Creating the vision

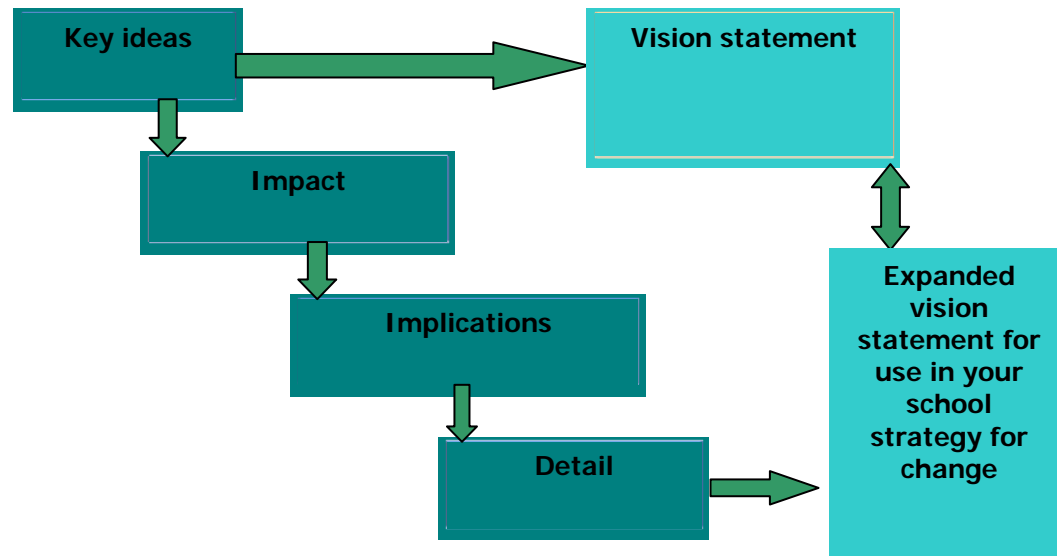
Successful education institutions engage in thoughtful processes to define their shared vision. This requires taking all the time that is needed to ensure complete agreement and understanding among all partners.

The objective is to obtain consensus, not compromise, so that all partners are signed up to the vision and enthusiastic about the work that lies ahead. If all involved are committed to the same goals, then they are better equipped to negotiate the inevitable differences of perspective and opinion that arise as they work together. Likewise, if the goals are held firm, the school can be flexible in how they are accomplished. Flexibility is essential to accommodate political, economic, leadership or other changes, and clear goals help guide the partnership as it evolves over time.

In addition to staff in the school, other partners and stakeholders should be included in the group developing the vision statement.

The visioning tool

This visioning tool will help you move forward from an outline comprising a number of headlines or key ideas through a consideration of the consequences of these, then some thoughts about the further implications of these and finally to more detailed writing on the implications of the vision.



The key ideas should lead to a succinct vision statement. The more detailed writing should expand on these and provide sufficient detail to communicate how staff see the school moving forwards via an expanded vision statement.

For example, where schools see 'learner focus' as being an important characteristic of any future development – a key idea – they might consider that this has specific impacts on self-assessment, peer assessment, mentoring, learning styles and personalisation.

The further implications of these are then developed, setting these against the seven headings:

1. culture and ethos
2. curriculum
3. pedagogy
4. organisation
5. parents and community
6. workforce
7. leadership

So, in the case of 'learner focus', this might include: developing processes and criteria for self-evaluation, mentors, developing the role of teaching assistants, support networks and their leadership, as well as design issues such as interview rooms, multi-use social spaces and so on.

The tool then takes each impact in turn, together with its implications, and requires a statement that expands in prose form on the further implications noted down. This can be in note form to begin with and turned into continuous prose later if desired. When this has been done for all of the key ideas, the statements together form an expanded vision statement. This does not need to be too detailed at this stage but should provide more information than the vision statement to illustrate the thinking behind it. It might be helpful to include some consideration of accommodation and service issues that have stemmed from the design heading in the further implications. Later this should lead to a detailed consideration of the sorts of physical spaces that might be needed to enable this to happen.

The expanded statement should represent more detailed thinking on the key ideas and may well require you to revisit the vision statement to check out how well the two documents correlate and make any necessary adjustments in each document.

Reviewing and revising the statement

As you work towards agreement on a vision statement, the following questions can help guide discussions:

- Is the vision statement bold enough to inspire, yet credible enough that stakeholders believe it can come true?
- Is the vision focused on the future?
- Does the vision spark and sustain enthusiasm?
- Does the vision clarify your direction and instil a sense of common commitment?
- Can the vision see you through the hard times as well as the good?
- Does the vision act as a living reminder of what is important and what can be achieved?
- Does the vision statement build loyalty by providing an ideal that is valuable to all members?

Example grid

Our values	Entitlement, inclusion, equality							
Key ideas	Project-based learning	Schools-within-schools	Project-based learning	Relocating learning	Staggered start times	Cambridge Pre-U	Mobile learning	All through schools
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enriched curriculum Improved pupil motivation 							
Implications								
Culture and Ethos								
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More collaborative and group learning Learner-focused outcomes 							
Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Totally remodelled curriculum New approaches to assessment integrated learning activities 							

Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for staff on new approaches • New approaches to learning 								
Parents and community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Use of community for context and expertise 								
Workforce									
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New curriculum leadership roles • New role for overall curriculum leadership 								

Step 1: Write down the values that you have agreed.

Our values	Entitlement, inclusion, equality							
Key ideas								

Step 2: Enter the agreed headlines or key ideas that characterise and summarise your vision.

Our values	Entitlement, inclusion, equality							
Key ideas	Project-based learning	Schools within schools	Project-based learning	Relocating learning	Staggered start times	Cambridge Pre-U	Mobile learning	All through schools

Step 3: Write a succinct vision statement for sharing with all stakeholders – based on these key ideas.

Vision statement

Step 4: Consider and note down the impact of each key idea.

Our values	Entitlement, inclusion, equality							
Key ideas	Project-based learning	Schools within schools	Project-based learning	Relocating learning	Staggered start times	Cambridge Pre-U	Mobile learning	All through schools
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enriched curriculum Improved pupil motivation 							

Step 5: Consider the further implications of the key ideas and impacts and note these down against the six scenario headings.

Our values	Entitlement, inclusion, equality							
Key ideas	Project-based learning	Schools within schools	Project-based learning	Relocating learning	Staggered start times	Cambridge Pre-U	Mobile learning	All through schools
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Implications								
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Curriculum	More collaborative and group learning Learner-focused outcomes							

Pedagogy	Totally remodelled curriculum New approaches to assessment integrated learning activities							
Organisation	Training for staff on new approaches New approaches to learning							
Parents and community	Communications Use of community for context and expertise							
Workforce								
Leadership	New curriculum leadership roles New role for overall curriculum leadership							

Step 6: Develop the entries, made in steps 4 and 5 into more detailed notes or prose that can serve as an expansion on the key idea for the expanded vision statement

Key idea	Project-based learning
Implications	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative and group learning • Learner focused outcomes • Remodelled curriculum • New approaches to assessment • integrated learning activities • Staff training • New approaches to learning • New curriculum leadership roles • Communications • Use of community for context and expertise 	Expanded statement

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Step 7: Collate your work for each key idea into an expanded vision statement.

