

Thinking of becoming an SLE

What is an SLE?

SLEs are outstanding middle and senior leaders in positions below the head teacher, with at least two years' leadership experience. They 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 support leaders in other schools. They have excellent interpersonal skills, are able to work sensitively and collaboratively with others and have a commitment to outreach work. They understand what outstanding leadership practice in their area of specialism looks like and can help other leaders to achieve it in their own context.

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.

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.

There are now over 8,000 SLEs designated to date across the country and they are part of 'system leadership' in schools. The NCTL hold a register of SLEs and each SLE will be attached to a Teaching School. If an SLE changes LA they can move to a Teaching School in that area.

How to become an SLE

To be successful in your application, you should have:

- a successful track record of working effectively within your own school and/or across a group of schools, or working with a range of leaders within a single school
- evidence of successfully using coaching and/or facilitation skills to bring about sustainable improvements
- excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- a good understanding of what constitutes 'outstanding' in your field of expertise and the ability and confidence to communicate this
- a good understanding of how your specialism and skills can contribute to wider school improvement goals
- an analytical approach in identifying and prioritising needs
- the ability to set and establish new and innovative working practices
- the ability to grow leadership capacity in others

Time commitment

The role lasts for 4 years, at which time there'll be a review. The types of placements will vary. For example, one might be a 2-day diagnostic exercise, while another might require a 3 month, full time support role. Time may be taken as a block of consecutive days or spread over a longer period.

There's no minimum or maximum time commitment. You and your school will need to think carefully about capacity and negotiate your availability together.

More Information

The DfE has a useful section on SLEs and the link is:

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