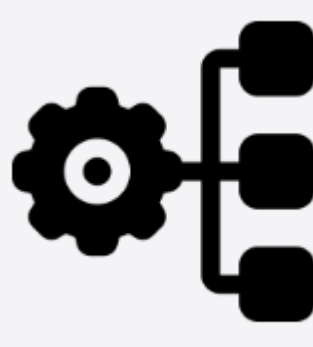
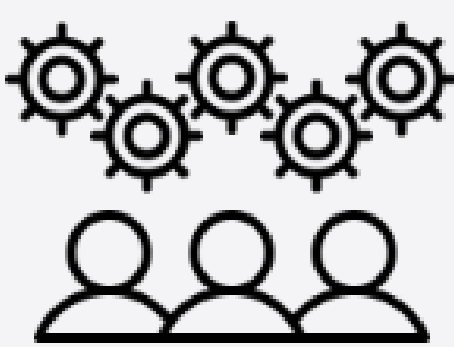


# How do specific subject leaders act strategically to make a difference to children’s learning?

This study found that in line with [Ofsted school inspection handbook](#) expectations, subject leaders at are collectively not only richly aware of their subject curriculum expectations but passionate about making a difference to the school community. Across all subject areas this is underpinned by effective action planning for future development and diligence in ensuring that appropriate resources are in place to deliver a rich and challenging curriculum. It resounded across this research enquiry that subject middle leaders are united in the vision to ‘aspire to developing the potential of each child with high expectations, support and encouragement along the way’. In terms of acting ‘strategically’ this has been categorised into two sections within current practice; ‘how do’ and the ‘barriers’ they at the time of this project faced. This project found four key themes encapsulated within these:



Networking | Time | Structure | Teamwork

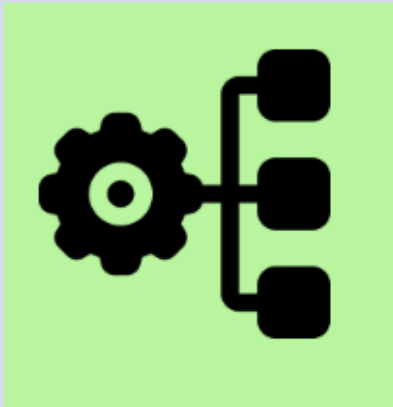
## How do?



- Core & Statutory Subjects are drawing upon support from subject specific networks/associations.
- These subjects spoke specifically about up to date and regular networks they are currently attending which are supporting their current strategic leadership.
- The impact of these networks were discussed particular in terms of how they support these leaders in being both ‘up to date’ with policy and in line with other ‘contexts’ within their subject expectations and visions.



- Leaders use time to QA and delve into their curriculum area.
- QA methods were consistently conducted across all subjects, with pupil voice being at the heart.
- SLT have developed specific subject focus weeks, which subject leaders find helpful in terms providing a timely QA structure.
- However, the time which is allocated is heavier towards core curriculum areas.



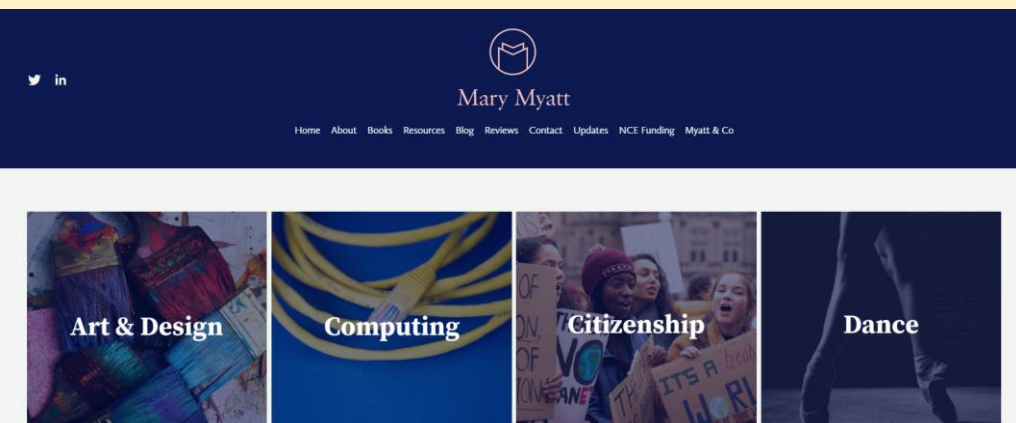
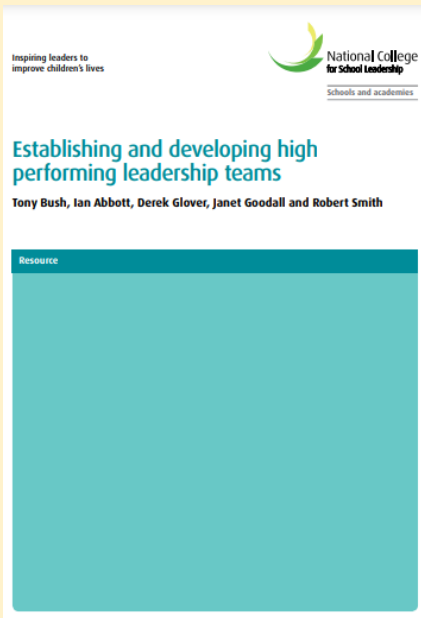
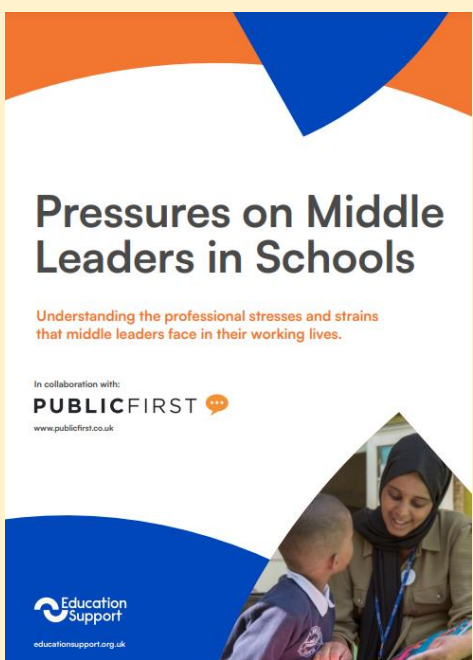
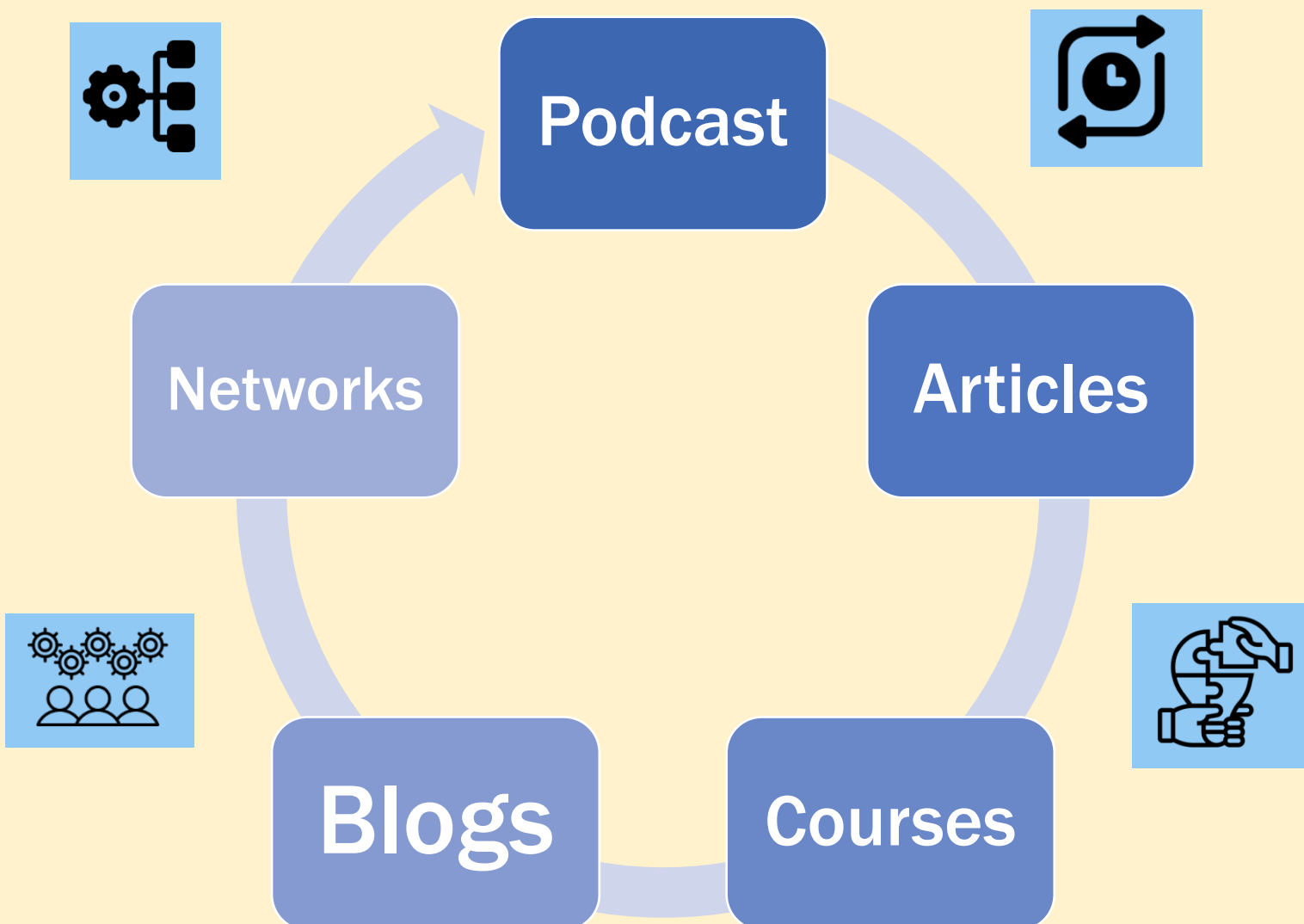
- It was discussed how SLT effectively support subject leaders in being strategic by having action plans / shared vision.
- Staff spoke positively regarding the level of the support they get from SLT in ensuring they have the systems in place to ‘be strategic’.
- There was strong evidence across all subject leaders about being ‘child centred’ and it was clear that they shared the vision of contributing to a curriculum which ‘developed the potential of each child’ (depicted within their school values).
- Leaders situated within the arts and wellbeing mentioned how they both contribute to and support the wider community. The discussed how they use their subject to support addressing social issues such as cultural capital.



- Working collaboratively to make change was expressed by subject leaders as what they viewed as ‘powerful practice’.
- Where subjects had been handed over, there were stories shared regarding how these collaborative ways of working had offered opportunities to reflect upon and react to the emerging needs of the subjects; that having an extra pair of eyes was invaluable.
- Some subject leaders discussed how good practice had been shared across subjects, for example the development assessment procedures.
- These collaborative conversations between more experienced / less experienced leaders were pinpointed by some as being beneficial CPD and further supported them in acting strategically.

## Implications for future practice?

Here are a multitude of resources which could be drawn upon to address some of the emerging barriers as found within this study



- 1.National curriculum importance statements
- 2.Authentic sources
- 3.Subject associations
- 4.Twitter communities



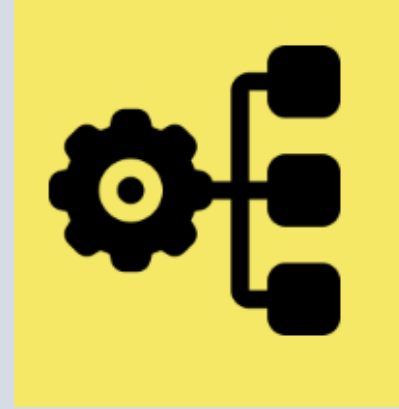
## Barriers...



- Foundation curriculum subjects expressed wanting a chance to network with other schools and be involved with specific subject associations.
- Across both core and foundation subjects, it was stated that they wanted the opportunity to work with other schools/experts to check in with their knowledge and cross reference best practice.
- There was some concerns raised whether or not their approaches were consistent, and subject leaders who were not part of a subject association/network appeared to be more worried about the experience of an Ofsted deep dive.



- Subject leaders united in wanting more time to do the job well, expressing that they felt at times there isn’t enough time.
- Core subjects referred to being more aware that their subject is no longer the priority and that there needs to be space made for others to implement their visions
- Foundation subjects spoke about needing physically more time to QA and some had not observed a lesson in their subject area due to these restraints
- Holistic subjects (arts, wellbeing etc) spoke about ensuring time is made within the teaching and learning curriculum capacity to ensure that their subject is taught weekly. Some referred to how they are trying to hook it onto ‘core subjects’ to ensure this, which humanities subject leaders stated as something they had done previously.



- It was discussed whether some of these ‘umbrella’ QA approaches/structures are right for all subjects?
- The arts and wellbeing subjects discussed how these plans sometimes ‘miss the point’ of their subject and at times are not holistic enough. They described how these plans can limit their personal visions as they are trying to ‘evidence gather’ rather than reflect and react to the emerging issues they are noticing within the subject and the emerging needs of their school community.



- Across all subjects there was a strong theme of feeling isolated at times, and whilst being the most passionate in their subject they are not the expert in terms of what that subject could/should look like within each year group/phase.
- Many spoke about wanting to develop subject teams, where they could share practice and support each other with QA eg) doing deep dives in ‘peer groups’.



Nottingham Trent University in collaboration

