

HMC Senior Leadership Programme (SLP) 2026 - 27

Overview

This document provides an overview of the HMC Senior Leadership Programme (SLP).

The year - long SLP is designed for senior leaders in HMC schools (in the UK and internationally) who are aspiring to a role in the senior leadership team (SLT), with a view to ideally securing their first SLT position within the next 18 months.

It is also designed for those who have recently secured an SLT position or who are SLT designates.

The programme complements other HMC Professional Development provision, including the freestanding 'Preparing for Senior Leadership' days, and courses such as those focusing on presentation skills for senior leaders, managing relationships with parents, leadership coaching etc.

The SLP sits between the middle leadership programmes (The Independent Schools Qualification for Academic Managers, ISQAM, the Pastoral Leadership Qualification, PLQ) and the HMC Aspiring Heads' Programme (AHP).

Aims

The HMC Senior Leadership Programme aims to:

- Prepare participants to be successful in role, building confidence with respect to making the step up from middle to senior leadership. This will include providing a focus on personal readiness for the role and personal wellbeing to support participants in making the step as positively as possible
- Support participants as they explore what it means to be a strategic leader of change, including setting clear goals, managing complexity and conflict and taking financial considerations into account
- Develop participants' understanding of what is entailed in being part of a team supporting the head in leading the culture and organisation of the school, equipping participants to respond positively to the challenges of motivating others and holding them to account
- Provide insight into the range of roles at SLT level and what these encompass
- Encourage and support diversity and inclusion – both in terms of the diversity of the next generation of school leaders, and in the culture of their current schools
- Develop participants' understanding of governance and accountability

- Develop participant's understanding of leadership of the organization at SLT level, including HR, critical incidents, compliance/inspection, EDI, safeguarding and finance
- Encourage due consideration of AI and using action research to make evidence-informed decisions

Structure

The SLP is a modular programme that takes a year to complete.

Module 1

From middle to senior leadership; making the step up effectively

Leadership of self, self-review, professional readiness and personal wellbeing strategies, understanding the key differences between middle and senior leadership, being part of a team and leading as a member of SLT – how this differs from Middle Management roles.

Module 2

Leadership of people and culture

Leading by example, motivating others (including presentation skills), leading team wellbeing, leading on EDI, managing underperformance in others/challenging conversations, leading change - including setting clear goals, managing complexity and conflict such as strategic and operational tension.

Module 3

Leadership of the organisation

Leadership of the organisation including HR, critical incidents, understanding SLT role in compliance/inspection, safeguarding and finance, understanding governance and accountability.

Module 4

Making informed decisions in leadership

Making evidence-informed decisions, using action research and taking finances into account, using AI to support the work of the school and to support decision-making, the importance of teamwork in decision-making, taking the whole school into account

Module 5

School-based action research

Planning and undertaking a research project in school, ensuring it is aligned with an aspect of the school's strategic or operational plan, gathering robust data, presenting the project outcome formally to a group, receiving feedback from the Head or member of SLT.

Delivery

The SLP provides a high-quality practical programme at a low cost to schools and includes a strong element of active learning with support and mentoring from fellow professionals.

The 'tuition' component is provided in five ways:

Face-to-face training sessions

Delegates will take part in two face-to-face training days in the autumn and spring terms: the first covers modules 1 and 2 and an introduction to the key principles underpinning all the modules. The second day (in the Spring term) covers modules 3 and 4.

Online and distance-learning resources

In addition to the core modules (1-4) delivered face-to-face and Core module 5 (school-based action research), there are several optional modules to be completed as independent study using online resources.

The modules available are:

- Exploring the role of Deputy Head Academic (or equivalent role): leadership of teaching and learning – including supporting curriculum development and using AI (pre-recorded online session)
- Deputy Head Pastoral: leading a safeguarding team, leading on pastoral care (pre-recorded online session)
- Head of Sixth Form: managing the balance between academic and pastoral while preparing students for life after school (pre-recorded online session)
- Deputy Head Co-Curricular and Operational: leading on the co-curricular life of the school (pre-recorded online session)
- Personal and school-wide professional development (reflective portfolio task)
- Managing complaints, grievances and investigations and avoiding pitfalls (online recorded discussion)
- Leading high-impact meetings (live online session delivered by expert)
- Using effective communication to influence outcomes: interviews/presentations/written comms (live online session delivered by expert)

Participants select the optional modules best suited to their SLT role.

All participants also complete an electronic portfolio of evidence of work completed in response to readings, tasks and webinars as well as reflections on the face-to-face days.

Mentoring

The SLP provides a structure and support for mentoring from an experienced member of SLT or the Head if time allows. Structured reflection based on the mentoring will encourage the participants to process their learning and include their observations in the portfolio.

It is a **requirement of the programme** that participants have a mentor (normally a member of their current SLT) and regular mentoring sessions throughout the year.

Participants need to **discuss the course with their Head before booking a place** and must have secured the endorsement and support of their Head and agreed who will mentor them.

SLT experience

Participants will have an opportunity to attend SLT meetings in agreement with their own Head, and they are invited to set up a visit to another HMC school to explore SLT roles there.

Participants should discuss this aspect of the programme with their Head before registering for a place.

Presentation and interview skills:

As part of Module 5, participants will complete a project related to an aspect of their school strategic or operational plan and will then give a presentation to an appropriate group in school followed by feedback from the Head or a member of SLT.

Practice interviews may also be offered by the participant's school where it is possible for them to facilitate this.

Reflection and response

All portfolios should be submitted by 31st July. Portfolios will be reviewed by an experienced former HMC Head and certificates of programme completion will be sent to the participant in September.

Registration information

To register for the SLP, please click [here](#)