



APPLICATIONS WITH IMPACT

**A guide to completing senior leadership
applications**

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**The hints and tips you need to know that
will make your application stand out!**

By Jacqueline Baker BSc



Before you start- Identify your Unique Selling Point

There's no point in applying for a role for which you aren't suitable, most Job Descriptions list the requirements of the vacancy, so please do your homework and MAKE THE MATCH. Key aspects can be grouped under the competencies listed below. Check the Person Specification as well.

Before starting a letter or supporting statement, list any evidence of your skills and experience under each point below, then match what you can offer to the requirements and consider which in particular are relevant to the post and use these to inform your supporting material. These can be prioritised according to the challenges the post-holder will be facing. The headings are for guideline purposes and should not be treated as a template for your statement. *Evidence you record can be used for interview answers as well.*

If you identify any gaps, then use this to inform your future Performance Management objectives and aim to gather some appropriate experience. **Remember, no one else will have the unique blend of skills and experience that you do.**

Areas of leadership	Your skills and experience – plus clear, relevant evidence of impact
Leadership Aspirations/Aims Vision Outward facing	
Strategic planning Self-improving school systems	
Staff management – appointment, development, appraisal, capability	
Learning & teaching Impact on attainment Curriculum development SEN	
Stakeholder relationships – governors, parents, staff, sponsors	
Managing systems & resources (Finance & budgets)	
Accountability Challenge	
Community: cohesion, inclusion etc Partnerships: best practice etc	

Application Guidance (Education)

This document includes guidance for educational professionals on completing:

Application Forms

Supporting statements or letters

A Curriculum Vita

In general the following guidelines apply to all documents:

- Follow all the instructions – if you disregard what you have been asked to do, then prospective employers will make an inference that you will perform the same way in your job
- Type, in this day and age it will be expected, otherwise write legibly
- Don't rely on a spell check, this will not pick up the difference between Principal and principle (a second pair of eyes can really help)
- Unless there is a form to complete, keep your CV and supporting material to 2 sides of A4 each, choose a plain 12-point presentation format
- Ensure it reaches the designated recipient before the deadline.

During the process of application, if you view this as a time-consuming chore you can be sure this will be reflected in the final paperwork. If a school, academy or college have paid money to advertise a vacancy and organise resources for the selection procedure, they are looking for someone who is special, not someone who cannot be bothered to make an effort. Generic applications stick out a mile and rarely make the shortlist.

Your application is your personal 'billboard', your chance to present your skills and attributes in the most positive, persuasive and relevant manner possible.

Remember, with reference to that last point: **prospective employers want the added value that you can provide**; they want to hear how their school, academy or college will benefit from your presence. Panel members are not mind readers!

If you can point this out to them, backing up your claims with examples and evidence, then those candidates whose applications are best tailored to the requirements of the post and meet the essential criteria will make the shortlist.

Employers use forms to compare candidates more easily – so use them! If you just put 'see CV' and you can't be bothered to take the information out of your CV, why should they?

Finally – before you apply – do your research. Trawl through the website, Ofsted report, visit the data dashboard, read press comment and if possible visit the school/academy. Use what you learn to inform your application answers. If the requirements don't match your skill set – then think twice about applying; don't set yourself up to fail.

Application Form

Virtually all forms are now completed online. One essential preliminary step – save an online version of the blank form for a draft, it's the best place to make your mistakes and iron them out before filling in online boxes.

Follow the instructions: if it says use black ink/font and capital letters, do exactly that, look for an indication on the length of a supporting letter or statement and stick to it!

Aim to keep your answers in the boxes provided unless there is an instruction to complete on a separate sheet. Note: the boxes are that size for a reason.

Work History – do not leave gaps, with the emphasis on Safer Recruitment procedures, they will be spotted at some point and raise doubts or invite questions, either way it doesn't do you any credit.

Details on **Professional Development**: list the most recent and relevant first. If your list is extensive, unless it stipulates details of all training, consider listing 5/6 in detail and then include a timespan indicating the type of training received during a previous period, eg 1999–2005 Curriculum development training and ICT refresher courses. If you have received specific training e.g. as a Child Protection Officer, that should be part of your detailed list.

Use the '**Interests**' section as an opportunity to enhance your application – if possible indicate how something has contributed to developing your leadership qualities or required you to be particularly proactive or take the initiative. Equally if you have developed a skill you have been able to transfer and use in the school environment, mention this as a benefit. It also demonstrates you can achieve a work/life balance.

If you cite **referees**, be courteous and ask their permission in advance, (if necessary send them details of the role). You should clearly state connection / relationship to a referee e.g. Current Head or Chair of Governors. Additionally indicate whether they can be contacted without further reference to you.

Save a copy of the final version for reference.

Submission

If you submit this online, and if acknowledgement is not automatically sent, request a delivery receipt or call to ensure the school has received your application. If shortlisted it is likely you will be required to sign your form at interview.

If posting your application, include an SAE to ensure confirmation of delivery.

- Remember, **DON'T**:
1. Waffle
 2. Make vague statements, be clear with comparative facts
 3. Litter your statement with jargon or acronyms
 4. Use the wrong name of the school/academy or Chair/Head
 5. Make spelling or grammatical mistakes
 6. Send a generic statement and expect to be shortlisted

Finally:-

Don't make the application unless you want the job!

Covering Letter / Supporting Statement

Letter: If you are sending both with an application form, keep the letter brief and informative:

- Find out the chair's or headteacher's name (as appropriate) and title and address it to them personally
- Use a plain 12 point presentation format, 10 font absolute minimum
- If the instructions include a reference number, state it clearly on the letter
- Use the vacancy as the title of the letter
- As this is a formal approach, use 'Dear Mr / Mrs / Dr' and end 'Yours sincerely'
- The content should indicate clearly your interest in the role and **no more than 3 concise points** as to why you should be considered (*not what you are looking for but what you can offer*)– excite their interest to read your CV or application and supporting documentation
- Do not repeat what you are going to say in your statement word for word

A strong, succinct letter will encourage them to read the rest of the application.

Supporting Statement

This is your opportunity to really sell yourself and should cover no more than 2 sides of A4 (unless stipulated), in 12-point presentation font with clear paragraphs and margins.

- Ensure your name and any reference is on each and every page
- Be clear, concise and relevant in your examples
- Follow any instructions regarding content and length
- Use the details from any job profile or the Job Description and Personal Specification to show how you meet the criteria sought
- Headings and clear paragraphs help the panel/reader considerably
- Tailor your application to this particular vacancy – using a generic statement with the school's or college's name inserted a couple of times is easy to spot and doesn't make a good impression
- Back up claims with evidence – use 'I' not 'we' when appropriate
- Use comparative data – an isolated example of results will not show the impact you have had
- Indicate what benefits you can bring to the school or college
- Don't pad out your words with educational jargon and discuss educational philosophy unless you have been asked to do this.
- Use your USP! Mention your skills not just the operational details.

Online Hints and Tips

- Rename attachments to include your name, preferably at the start
- Open and close emails with formal terms eg 'Dear' and 'Yours sincerely'
- Make sure the body of the email is your 'covering letter'
- Use standard fonts
- Remove any witty or amusing signatures from your email
- Don't leave the subject line of the email blank – be explicit it's an application
- Consider a separate email account for applications, retain your own individualised and comical email addresses for personal use; don't forget to check this for replies!
- Check your Sent Items to be sure it has gone and request a read receipt.

Curriculum Vitae (Creeping back in with academy status)

There are various templates that you can download from the web, but whether you choose to use one or develop your own style, the following example content is indicative of a Performance CV, used when seeking roles in line with past experience, and should include the following details:

Personal Information

- Name
- Address
- Telephone contact (day and evening)
- Email address if confidential and personal to you
- Date of birth is optional but can usually be assessed from other details so don't make it difficult for the employer
- Essential data, e.g. DfE reference no., confirmation of DBS check, etc.

Profile

A 5-6 line summary of your capabilities:

- skills (eg leadership, motivational, analytical, initiative, good communicator)
- experience (include main responsibility/area in which you've worked eg Deputy Head, Secondary, Technology)

Achievements

3 or 4 notable achievements you wish to bring to attention, eg a significant project or initiative in which you have had a major, preferably leading role. It is beneficial to evidence this with quantifiable examples, eg raising standards – using comparative data.

Experience (Aim to show a planned progression in successive roles)

Starting with the most recent and ideally include the following:

- School, Academy or College name, (NOR, phase and authority also useful)
- Dates with this employer, month and year
- Your title or role, salary if on leadership scale
- Main responsibilities
- Principle achievements (3-4 bullet points with brief evidence of impact)

Training

Any relevant training courses, if this is more than 5 or 6 then select those courses which have had the most impact on your career or are crucial to the vacancy.

Qualifications and Education

Starting with the most recent first, include dates and grades where appropriate.

Additional information

Clean driving licence, unusual ICT skills, language skills etc.

Interests

Be specific, don't just write sport but indicate if you are part of a league, if you play competitively or have captained a team, or coached others etc. These items are indicative of other areas where you may be able to make a contribution, if you have used them in school, and then show the connection.

Referees: Only give contact details if you have pre-arranged this with the referee.

When in hard copy, preferably use good quality paper, ideally 100g, with clear headings, appropriate breaks and white space for good visual impact.