



Building effective relationships with SLT

Introduction

Many schools have excellent relationships between senior leaders and the science department. However, when there are strained relationships, this can have a significant impact on staff well being, job satisfaction and career intentions. Our work has identified three key areas where relationships between department and school leadership can often be improved, often creating a big impact with relatively minimal effort:

- Mutual understanding
- Clear communication
- Working together

Mutual understanding

If a line manager is not a science specialist, they will not know the features and pressures unique to science teachers e.g. working in laboratories, practical work, teaching out of specialism etc. Explaining this to a line manager and advocating for what makes a science department run well is a good step forward. The ASE has a [Best Practice Guide specifically for senior leaders](#), which you might consider sharing with your SLT. Providing information, evidence or data about the department can be incredibly useful. It is certainly worth considering share the ASE RISE Survey data and your action plan with your line manager, and ask them for assistance in any specific areas you feel might be relevant.

Clear communication

Keeping communication open is critical, as is openness and full-disclosure: sharing the good and the bad. Provide regular updates via email or verbally, depending on your context, and always try to explain why a success has been a success - identifying challenges (which may be avoided in the future) and solutions (that might have application benefits beyond your department. For example *“we have managed to increase practical work in Year 7 and 8, meaning they will be more prepared for practical work in GCSE. This was a challenge due to lack of equipment and space, but we worked with the technicians to rotate the equipment between groups.”*

Working together

- Invite your line manager to a departmental meeting or a session where science teachers are discussion issues and finding a solution.
- Ask for support in dealing with complex issues such as recruitment and retention.
- Work together on actions from the ASE RISE Autumn Survey, perhaps ask for some one-to-ones with staff or a meeting on wellbeing.

Dealing with poor or difficult managers

If your manager is not understanding of the needs of the science department, there are some useful tips [in this article](#). It is business focussed, but gives some useful tips for managing your manager.

The ASE are currently researching how to strengthen relationships between SLT and science departments. More support for RISE Participants will follow from this research during the summer of 2022.