



CHAPTER TWO

Checklists: Forming an ethos

Y – When agreeing a vision for the department, ensure you:

- Meet with team members individually and ask what they value most about the subject and its purpose.
- Consider the current strengths and weaknesses of the department before deciding on priorities.
- Identify the core values that you want to shape classroom decisions across the department.
- Involve the team in discussing what the department should stand for rather than presenting a finished vision.
- Ensure the vision is specific enough to guide actions, rather than remaining a collection of vague aspirations.
- Discuss how the vision will benefit students, staff and the wider school community.
- Agree a small number of clear priorities that everyone can understand and remember.
- Record the final vision in a place that can be regularly referred back to.

W – To keep the vision alive and remind your team, try to:

- Refer to the agreed vision regularly during department meetings.
- Link new initiatives, systems and decisions back to the agreed purpose of the department.
- Highlight examples of staff and students demonstrating the department values.
- Use corridor conversations to reinforce the behaviours and decisions that support the vision.
- Share examples of resources, teaching or student work that exemplify the department ethos.
- Provide clarity when staff are unsure how a decision connects to the wider direction of the department.
- Ensure new members of staff understand the vision and how it influences daily practice.

T – To turn vision into team actions, regularly check you:

- Identify the specific behaviours that demonstrate each department value.
- Translate broad aspirations into concrete classroom expectations.
- Review department systems to ensure they align with the agreed vision.
- Ensure curriculum, assessment and teaching decisions reflect the department priorities.
- Remove practices that contradict the values you are trying to establish.
- Be explicit about what successful implementation looks like.
- Model the behaviours you expect from others.



Five Steps Ahead

T – To keep the vision alive and visible in your own actions, try to:

- Revisit expectations and standards regularly with the team.
- Challenge behaviours that undermine the agreed ethos.
- Celebrate examples of staff consistently demonstrating department values.
- Discuss whether systems are supporting or hindering the agreed vision.
- Encourage accountability for agreed expectations across the whole team.
- Review whether students are experiencing the vision consistently across classrooms.
- Check that professional development opportunities align with the department priorities.

W – To keep the vision alive and visible, try to:

- Allocate dedicated meeting time to review the current department vision.
- Evaluate which elements of the vision have become embedded in daily practice.
- Gather feedback from all members of the team, including newer colleagues.
- Consider changes to students, staffing, curriculum or whole-school priorities.
- Discuss whether the current vision still serves the department effectively.
- Refine and update the wording where necessary without completely rewriting the vision.
- Ensure all staff feel ownership of any changes made.
- Relaunch the revised vision and communicate how it will influence the year ahead.