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The Perfect Prefect?



A Self Study Booklet

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

If you are reading this book because you have been selected as a school prefect, congratulations!

Different schools have different approaches to choosing their prefects. Some are more democratic than others, but however you have been chosen you have been given an advantage in life over those students who were not selected. Research¹ shows that many successful business people held positions of responsibility whilst they were at school. Some had been prefects; some had been captains of sports teams and some had been both.

This research, however, does not show that being a school prefect is a guarantee of career success. Whilst being a prefect gives early experience of having responsibility, there are two other factors that greatly affect later success in life.

Firstly, nearly all successful people would tell you that their achievements were based on a great deal of hard work. Secondly, they would tell you that they had experienced lots of failures but somehow learned from them and moved on. In other words they were hard working and resilient.

Before you start reading this booklet, please bear in mind that no-one can give you a set of instructions about how to be a successful prefect. As you are about to find out, because being a prefect means largely dealing with people, you will be operating somewhere between art and science and no-one, no-matter how experienced, can give you all the answers. Other people can guide you, but in the end you will have to work out what works for you, based on your personal qualities, skills, values and beliefs.

Being a school prefect will enable you to have experiences that you would otherwise not get at your age. You are now on the first rung of a long ladder of leadership and responsibility and if you think that being a school prefect is a bit scary, wait until to climb higher!

For now, I suggest you make the most of the opportunity that has been given to you and working through this booklet will give you a great start.

Chris Cordery

¹ This was undertaken by MORI for Development Dimensions International and was reported in January 2005.

Chapter 2

ROLES OF SCHOOL PREFECTS

Activity

Before you read this chapter, write down in this space what you consider to be the roles of a school prefect.

Although all schools are different it is important for you to have a good understanding of what is expected of prefects at your particular school.

At some schools prefect roles are written down and at others you are left to work them out for yourself.

In broad terms, roles fall into five categories:

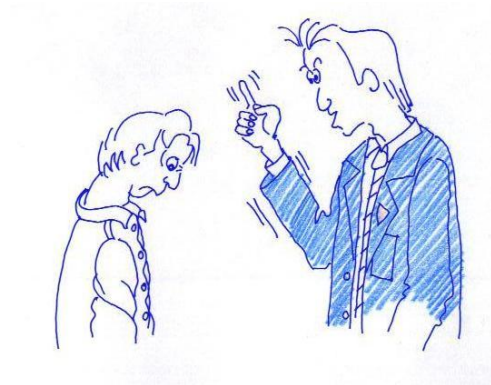
- Maintaining Discipline
- Helping Staff
- Supporting Younger Pupils
- Organising Events
- Representing your school in the community

Let's now look at each role in detail

Some of them overlap but it is helpful to consider each one separately.

Maintaining Discipline

Maintaining discipline is perhaps the most obvious role for prefects, but it does not apply to all schools. If it applies in your school you may find yourself needing to know your 'school rules' or 'code of conduct' very well indeed. You will be expected to be a guardian of the standards that are written in these documents and you will need to be prepared to challenge pupils who break the rules. This is sometimes easy to do if those who break the rules are younger than you, but more difficult if they are in your year. We will look at some examples in Chapter 4.



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Organising Events

In some, but not all, schools prefects organise or help staff to organise events. This can range from assisting with a sports day, chairing the School Council, producing the school magazine, showing new parents, teachers or visitors around the school and organising the Christmas or summer fair. In some schools prefects attend Governor meetings to represent the views of pupils. The full list can be wide and varied.

Representing your school in the community

The school you attend is an essential part of the community in which it is located and how the school is viewed by local people is important to your headteacher, governors and staff. With this in mind, some schools require their prefects to be 'ambassadors' and ask them to participate in, or help at, local events. In such cases prefects need to be appropriately turned out (dressed) and behave in ways that bring credit to their schools.



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Chapter 3

SKILLS AND PERSONAL QUALITIES

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At Appendix 1 to this booklet you will find a list of skills and personal qualities. If you see some there that you wish you had thought of, go back to the previous page and put them in. This is not an exam, so you are not cheating.

You will probably have found that some skills, such as communication, and personal qualities, such as confidence, are contained in more than one role. These *common* items are particularly important if you are to become an effective prefect.

There may be some concepts that seem to



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Here are some suggestions

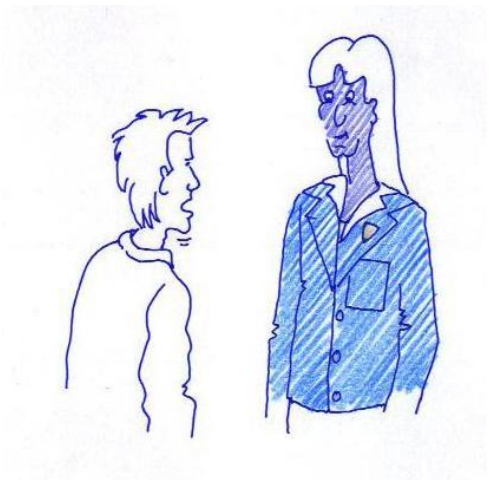
The things you are good at have probably already been recognised. The chances are that you were chosen to be a prefect on the basis of good skills and personal qualities that other people have already noticed in you. You owe it them and yourself to keep doing them. In other words, keep doing the things you are already good at and try to become excellent at them!

We are now going to look in some detail at two particular skills, which are of utmost importance to school prefects:

- Communication
- Assertiveness

Communication

The first thing to know about communication is that it is a two way process. For effective communication to take place, a message must be understood as it was intended to be understood. So, when talking to people, it is important to speak clearly and confidently, using words that are easily understood. Some people are natural at this and others need to learn and practice how it should be done.



When speaking to one person or a small group informally, choose a tone that is appropriate to the context. If, for example, you are telling off a group of boys you will need to speak firmly and directly, giving lots of direct eye contact. On the other hand, if you are providing support to a younger pupil who is upset, your tone will need to be softer and, overall, you will need to adopt a more compassionate attitude.

If speaking formally to a group of people (for example, visitors to the school or an audience at Prize Giving Day), stand evenly on both feet and do not shuffle or move your weight around from one leg to the other (this would make you look nervous). Keep your head straight and stand upright but try not to be rigid. Use your hands occasionally to emphasise certain points but do not fiddle with your fingers or something, such as a pen, that you might be holding. If you feel the need to use notes, try to resist reading from a script. Instead, make a list of key points on a small card so that if you lose your way you can refer to it.

Assertiveness

The skill of assertiveness is fundamental to being an effective prefect. If you are not naturally assertive, you will find being a prefect quite challenging and you will need to work on this area.

Before we tackle this subject, let us be clear what being assertive is not! Being assertive does not mean being aggressive, nor does it mean being weak or subservient.

You can think of assertive as being on a continuum (a line) between aggressive and subservient



Subservient

Assertive

Aggressive



As a prefect, you somehow need to avoid being at either end of this spectrum. Let's us now look at what this means, again by considering the ends of the spectrum first.

Subservient

A subservient person trying to be an effective prefect would:

- appear to be timid
- show lack of confidence (in their body language and speech)
- avoid tackling situations that were likely to lead to confrontation
- be easily talked out of their point of view
- turn a blind eye
- be seen as a soft touch, a weak personality with a lack of credibility
- be indecisive

Aggressive

Assertive

An assertive person trying to be an effective prefect would:

Activity

This activity will require more thought than writing, but if you want to make some notes then do so in this space

A fight is starting to break out in the playground.

- How would a subservient prefect be likely to react?
- How would an aggressive prefect be likely to react?
- How would an assertive prefect be likely to react?

A Year 7 girl has been receiving some unpleasant text messages from some other girls in her year. She wants to talk to an older pupil about what she should do and has been advised to ask for help from a prefect.

Assuming that she doesn't know any prefects personally, what sort of person is she likely to approach and why?

You will be able to compare your thoughts and notes with two of the scenarios that follow in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

APPLICATIONS OF SKILLS AND PERSONAL QUALITIES

Scenario 1 - Maintaining Discipline

It is the end of the day and as you are making your way out of the premises you notice that a small crowd is gathering near the school gate and a fight seems to be breaking out.

What should you do?

There are a number of ways in which you could react to this situation, but it is worthwhile applying some principles. Firstly, do not place yourself in danger of physical injury; secondly, make every effort to ensure no-one else is endangered; thirdly, if you can avoid it, do not tackle this situation alone and fourthly, before you react yourself send for a member of staff.



Your role in this situation is to be a calming influence and to separate the people engaged in the fight. You must not, under any circumstances, wade in with your own fists. Instead, take the minimum actions needed to get physical separation between the people fighting and then calm them down. This gives you time to decide what to do next. You must remain calm yourself and, if the situation has not become too serious you can send the people at fault on their separate ways. Alternatively, if the fight had become serious first aid treatment may be necessary, in which case a member of staff will need to be involved. Or, you may think it necessary for the people at fault to report to a senior teacher, in which case have them escorted to that person.

Skills you will need: Good judgement, assertiveness beyond the middle of the scale we considered in the previous chapter ... but not aggressive.

Personal Qualities you will need: Courage, ability to remain Calm.

Scenario 2 - Helping Staff

One of the Deputy Headteachers asks you to organise a small team of prefects to show a group of parents around the school during an open evening.

How should you do this?

Sample

Scenario 3 - Supporting Younger Pupils

A Year 7 girl has been receiving unpleasant text messages from some other girls in her year. She approaches you and asks for advice.

What should you do?

This scenario can go a number of ways, so do not jump to any conclusions. It will be essential for you to establish the facts. Who has been sending what? When? How frequently? When did it start? Does the girl know why this is happening? Has she told anyone else? Has she told her parents?

In the worst case, the content of the text messages may make it necessary to involve the police, but this would not be your decision. Although the girl is confiding in you, you may have to let her know that you really will have to inform a member of staff.



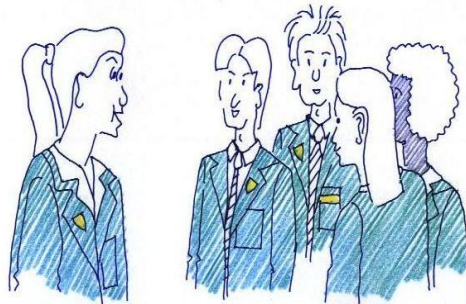
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Scenario 4 - Organising Events

*You are asked to organise an end of term party for your year.
What should you do?*

Hopefully this will be one of your more pleasant tasks as a prefect. It will call upon your more co-operative, teamworking qualities.

Just because you have been asked to organise this event you should not assume that you know what sort of party is appropriate. In this case you may wish to gather together a small group of year representatives so that you get a balance of views as to what sort of party most people will want.



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Chapter 5

LEADERSHIP

You might not see a direct link between leadership and being a prefect, but there is one. In fact there are several.

You will have been chosen as a prefect based on certain skills and qualities that you already have or for the potential that has been recognised in you. Many of these skills and qualities are common with leadership, such as: courage, confidence, decisiveness and the ability to communicate effectively.



Acting Responsibly

At this point it is worth considering more deeply the issue of acting 'responsibly'. Being 'responsible' means taking responsibility for your actions. When you do something or say something, the choice is entirely yours. Let's consider an example. It is somewhat extreme but it makes the point well ...

'Responsible' people, therefore, recognise that they choose what they do and what they say and they act accordingly. This has a major influence on the students who staff select to be prefects and acting responsibly is linked closely with leadership. It is difficult to imagine a successful leader who does not take responsibility.

Leadership Skills

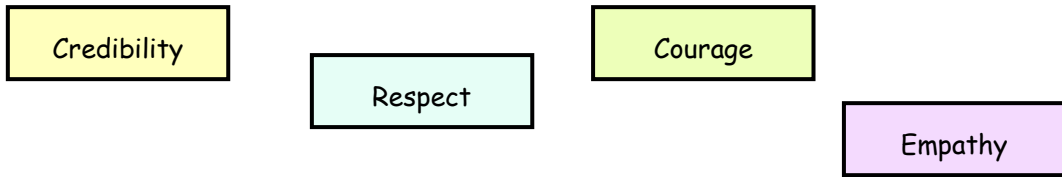
Although it is an arguable point, leadership *can* be learned. Some people believe that you are born as a leader or you are not, but these days this view is not widely accepted. When you analyse leadership you find that it is made up from a number of individual skills that can be learned. Some of these are:

- Ability to communicate effectively (listening, speaking and writing skills)
- Ability to motivate other people
- Ability to delegate effectively
- Ability to co-ordinate the activities of a team

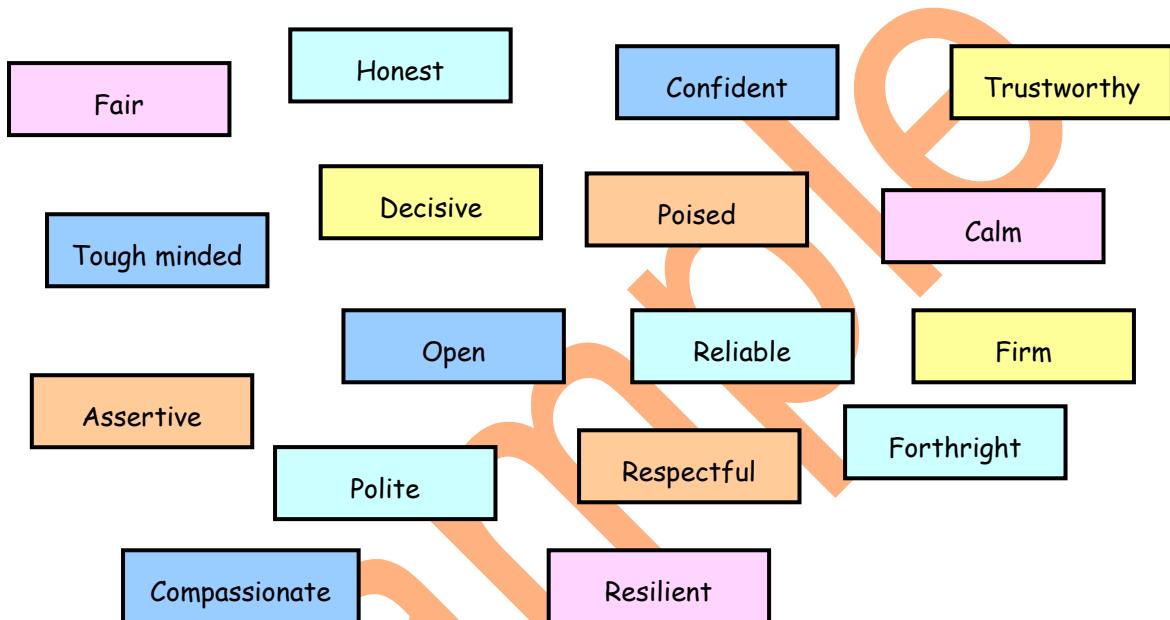
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Compare your answers with our view

A leader needs to have:



A leader needs to be:



If you compare this list with the one in Chapter 3, you will notice the similarity between the qualities of leaders and the qualities of prefects.

The development of leadership skills is a complex business and if you want to develop your own leadership skills there are a number of ways to do this. You can attend courses or you can learn from experience, sometimes with the help of a coach or mentor. If you are interested in taking this further you should speak with a member of staff.

Within this booklet, leadership will be covered in more detail in Chapter 7 - The Role of Head Boy and Head Girl.

Chapter 6

TEAMWORKING

Teamworking is an important and often neglected part of being a prefect. A school or college does not simply have a number of *individual* students who are identified as prefects. There is more to it than that. It has a *team* of prefects who are part of a prefect *system*.

To give a sporting analogy, a football manager does not run a group of individual footballers. He runs a team. He has to choose which players he wants and decide on how their different skills and qualities can be put together to greatest effect. He needs to choose a captain and develop a playing system within which everyone can work together towards a common aim: in this case, winning a football match.

The same applies to being a prefect.

That is why it is important to understand the skills and personal qualities of everyone who has been chosen to be a prefect. That way someone (see next chapter) can choose the most appropriate individuals to undertake certain roles.

In this booklet it is not our purpose to stereotype prefects into particular roles, but it is worth bearing in mind that the most effective prefects will be ones who have a wide range of skills and personal qualities and are able to apply the right ones at the right time.

At the most basic level, good teamworking will be achieved when team members:

- Are clear about their own responsibilities and those of others
- Show initiative and don't wait to be told

In a prefect team this translates to:

- All prefects knowing their own and each others' roles and responsibilities

Activity

Read again the eight bullet points immediately above. For each one consider the extent to which this applies in your prefect team. Give a score of between one and five (five being the best).

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 6. |
| 2. | 7. |
| 3. | 8. |
| 4. | 9. |
| 5. | |

Where are your prefect team's strengths and weaknesses?
What could be done to make improvements?
Compare your answers with those of some fellow prefects.

Belbin Team Roles

Belbin's Team Roles provide an interesting way of looking into teamworking in more detail. Research has shown that in any given teamworking situation the team members will have certain preferred roles. Under the Belbin's Team Roles methodology there are nine roles:

Plant - creative and innovative

Implementer - good at turning ideas into practical actions

Completer Finisher - very keen indeed to get something finished

Shaper - keen to shape the task and how it is achieved

Teamworker - sees it as important to keep the team together

Co-ordinator - inclined towards co-ordinating activities (usually a good chairperson)

Resource Investigator - knows who to speak to and how or where to find resources

Monitor Evaluator - constantly checks progress and is concerned about standards

Specialist - has the specialist knowledge and skills needed to get a task completed (for example: IT expert, engineer, artist, sportsman)

Teams normally need a balance of Team Roles if they are to be effective. It would be of little use having a team full of Plants because they would spend all their time thinking of innovative ideas, but no-one would turn them into action. Similarly, a team with too many Shapers would be likely to experience friction as the Shapers competed with each other to influence how tasks were to be achieved.

Whilst the Belbin Team Roles methodology was originally developed for adult teams, there is now a version for young people. You can find out more from

<http://www.aurora-tds.co.uk/belbinforyoungpeople.html>

Chapter 7

THE ROLE OF HEAD BOY AND HEAD GIRL

If you have been chosen as Head Boy or Head Girl, congratulations. Your staff and probably your Headteacher have noticed something in you that is particularly special.

This chapter will be directly relevant to you and useful for other prefects to read so that they too can understand your somewhat unique roles.



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You will often find yourself, as the most senior student representative of your school or college, being involved in visits to the school, prize-giving or speech days and attending representative meetings, such as on the School Council.

Let's now look at the skills and personal qualities that you are going to need.

Activity

You might wish to refresh your memory of Chapter 3 by going back and reading about the skills and personal qualities needed by school prefects.

Having done that, write here what you consider to be the additional skills and personal qualities that are needed by a Head Boy or Head Girl.

Sample

There are some principles of leadership that you should consider before deciding what kind of a leader you are going to be. These apply in any style...

- Look for Better Ways of Doing Things - This means not being satisfied with how things are. If you can see better ways of doing things, seize the initiative and make changes.
- Have Vision - This means that you should look ahead and be clear about how things need to be in the future (linked to Better Ways of Doing Things).
- Gain Commitment - You probably won't achieve your vision on your own so you will need to get the willing commitment of those people around you: certainly other prefects and, perhaps, staff and other students. This will call upon your communication skills and ability to persuade.
- Do the Right Thing - Adolf Hitler was an effective leader, but the way he went about his business was illegal, immoral and unethical by any measures. It is important to have high legal, moral and ethical standards (values) and live by them.

Sample

Activity 2

Review the list that you have constructed above and for each item describe in one sentence how you will demonstrate to other people (in your actions) how you will live up to your values.

The next chapter will help you a little further and if you want direct advice, you should talk with the teacher who is in charge of prefects. He or she should be able to give you feedback on a regular basis, perhaps monthly, on how you are doing. This way you may be able to make best use of the opportunity you have to become an effective leader.

Chapter 8

HOW TO ORGANISE A TEAM OF SCHOOL PREFECTS

Sample

Sample

Chapter 9

NEXT STEPS

This chapter considers what you should do next, but first let's recap.

Sample

We wish you well in the remainder of your time at school or college and in your career too.

If you would like to provide feedback to Aurora Training & Development Services about anything contained in this booklet, or omitted from it, please e-mail

information@aurora-tds.co.uk

PREFECT SELF-PERCEPTION

I already have the following skills that will be useful to me as a prefect:

-
-
-
-
-

I already have the following Personal Qualities that will be useful to me as a prefect:

-
-
-
-
-

Assertiveness & Communication Skills

	1	2	3	4	5
I rate my Assertiveness as					
I rate my Communication Skills as					

Place a tick showing your rating - 5 being the strongest

I believe that my three preferred Belbin Team Roles are:

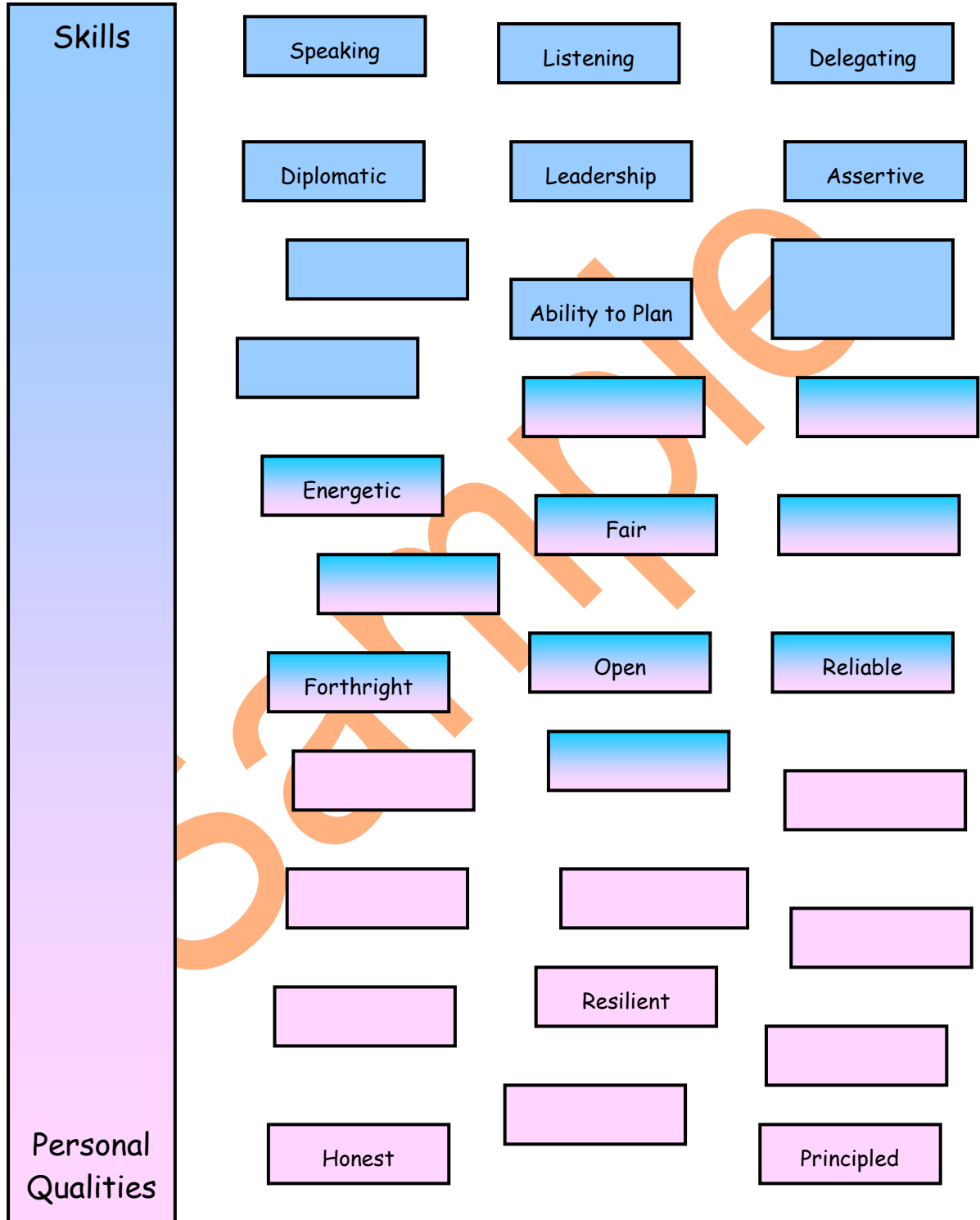
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In the way that I conduct myself as a prefect I will always be:

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Appendix A

SKILLS AND PERSONAL QUALITIES



Further Training and Development

Aurora Training & Development Services Ltd provides the following services for schools and colleges:

- Prefect Training Courses (Basic course, Trained Prefect course, Qualified Prefect course)
- Advice to staff on how to select and develop prefects and organise effective prefect systems
- Conferences for staff and Head Boys and Head Girls
- Courses for students in:
 - Assertiveness
 - Communication Skills
 - Confidence Development
 - Presentation Skills - public speaking - using video feedback
 - Dealing with difficult situations
 - Effective Teamworking - using Belbin's Team Roles for young people

For adults in businesses and all kinds of organisations Aurora Training & Development Services offers:

- Personal Coaching for performance development
- Leadership Development programmes
- Presentation Skills - using video feedback
- Confidence Development
- Team Development - using Belbin's Team Roles
- Courses in a variety of management subjects

Further information can be found at

www.aurora-tds.co.uk

or by calling 0173 376 4179