



# CALM LEADERSHIP

**STAYING GROUNDED, STAYING IN  
CONTROL AND STAYING THE COURSE**

**PATRICK COZIER**

## Praise for *Calm Leadership*

Offering a novel approach to taking up the reins, *Calm Leadership* is both an inspiring reflection on overcoming the challenges of leadership and a practical guide to harnessing the power of emotional intelligence in the workplace. Drawing on 20 years of successful leadership experience, Patrick shares not just his own authentic insights but also a deeply human journey to which we all can relate. *Calm Leadership* grapples with issues from imposter syndrome to budget deficits, and shines a light on a better way forward for our future leaders: leading not with an iron fist but with empathy, purpose and perspective. These are qualities that, Patrick argues, are far better suited to the complexities of modern working life than the hard-line approaches of old. Against a backdrop of high head-teacher turnover and stubbornly poor ethnic representation in senior roles, *Calm Leadership* offers an antidote to the self-doubt and insecurity that plague too many of us. It provides a breath of fresh air that our schools – and our society – have desperately needed.

**Rt Hon. David Lammy, MP for Tottenham, Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor  
and Secretary of State for Justice**

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Patrick's book, like the man himself, is more than just calm. It is wise, compassionate, sensible and revolutionary. Patrick is a rare voice in the world of education, and the communities he serves benefit everyday from his compassionate and aspirational leadership. We are at a critical moment in time: enormous change, multiple crises and the appeal of leadership is declining. Patrick's timely book is a call to arms for leading in a more human and sustainable way – never have we needed his voice more than now.

**Keziah Featherstone, Headteachers' Roundtable, WomenEd, Executive Trust Leader**

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This book is a gift – not only to the education profession, but also to leaders in every sphere of life. I have had the privilege of knowing Patrick for many years, first meeting him when we worked together as coach and coachee in his early years of headship.

What he has accomplished in this book is truly remarkable. With every page, you can feel Patrick's calm presence: in his words, his stories and in the quiet wisdom he shares so generously. His reflections are not abstract theories but lived truths, grounded in years of authentic leadership experience.

*Calm Leadership* is more than a book; it is a manifesto for our times. Patrick challenges the outdated tropes of leadership as heroic, untouchable or unrelatable, and instead offers an alternative: leadership that is humane, person-centred, compassionate and, above all, calm. In an era often defined by noise, urgency and burnout, this perspective feels both refreshing and essential.

Drawing on nearly two decades of headship, Patrick writes with rare honesty and insight. The wisdom he imparts could only come from someone who has walked the path with courage, learned deeply from both triumphs and trials, and emerged with a clarity of vision that can inspire others.

This book is a remarkable achievement: practical, profound and interspersed with humour. I would unreservedly recommend it to leaders at any stage of their journey. As Patrick reminds us, leadership is never a finished project; it is a continual process of growth and learning. For anyone committed to leading with integrity, purpose and calm, this book will be an invaluable companion.

**Viv Grant, author and Executive Coach, Director at Integrity Coaching**

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*Calm Leadership* is exactly what the education sector needs right now. In his warm, practical voice Patrick Cozier shows that it is possible to have a long-standing, high-profile career and remain grounded and positive. In giving advice to his younger self, Patrick provides a roadmap and commentary on how to find the balance between being robust and kind, between having hard conversations and being compassionate. At its heart, Patrick reminds us that leadership is primarily about people; that we have the capacity to remain focused and optimistic even under pressure and that it's possible to create a calm, caring environment where all can thrive. Great advice for all leaders in education.

**Mary Myatt, education writer and speaker**

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I was drawn immediately to Chapter 5: Strand 4 – Embracing the Difficulty of Leadership. It's a natural instinct for me to look for advice or solution to the challenges of leadership first. Patrick said the following – I stopped and was comforted:

'Leadership has felt less challenging for me – not because it gets easier, but because I am becoming better.'

The book is full of wisdom that comforts the soul of a leader and points a way to the potential of your 'better self'.

*Calm Leadership* is access to quality support for the heart of leaders. I love reading this.

**Diana Osagie, Founder and CEO at Courageous Leadership**

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Patrick Cozier's *Calm Leadership* is a wonderful book on many levels. It's a searingly honest and personal account of his own 20-year journey as a school leader, exploring his emotional journey as a rare Black male head teacher in a demanding London comprehensive school and his gradual acknowledgement and acceptance of the difficulties this entails. Beyond the challenges, however, Patrick's story is brimming with optimism; it's an inspiring story about finding joy in headship through being your authentic self. The CALM structure that underpins the book provides a brilliant framework for new and aspiring head teachers to explore their own feelings about the pressures of headship. It's rare to read something so insightful, and so open and honest about leaders' feelings in the role and I'm sure this will inspire many people across the profession.

**Tom Sherrington, Director at Teaching WalkThrus International**

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Patrick Cozier's *Calm Leadership* is a timely and essential contribution to the literature on school leadership from one of the few Black head teachers of African-Caribbean heritage in the country. From his honest admission that he edited himself to avoid certain stereotypes about Black people to his ability to maintain a healthy perspective on things after his mother's passing, Cozier provides a genuine, humane and inspirational take on running a school. A mix of autobiography and hard-won professional learning, *Calm Leadership* is a heart-warming, practical book which will help any leader to train themselves to think calmly and avoid the tendency to 'awfulise everything in leadership'. One of the few books I recommend all school leaders should read.

**John Tomsett, writer, speaker and erstwhile head teacher**

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This leadership book hits differently. It's not filled with verbose strategy, political opinion or random soundbites; the pages contain leadership lessons that are relevant to leaders at any stage in their careers. My highlighter has never worked so hard – marking paragraphs of Patrick's sage advice as I reflected on my own leadership. This is one book I will be advising any leader that I coach to add to the top of their reading list.

**Amanda Wilson, head teacher, coach, author and  
publisher of *Letters to a Young Generation: Aspiring School Leaders***

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**PATRICK COZIER**



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# Preface

A message to my younger self:

Dear Young Patrick,

You are about to embark on the journey of a lifetime. It is going to be difficult in ways that you cannot fathom, and that is okay.

You are going to suffer moments of insecurity, uncertainty, overwhelm and fear – and that is okay.

People are going to question you and doubt you; you will sometimes succumb to this and doubt yourself – and that is okay.

You are going to fail over and over again. You will not be a stranger to getting things wrong – and that is okay.

You are going to be extended like never before because the learning curve for leadership is steep – and that is okay.

It is going to look like other people have 'got this thing sorted' while you feel like you are struggling to grasp leadership at its most challenging – but know that this is all in your head – and that is okay.

However:

You are stronger than you imagine – you will succeed.

You will take every hard lesson learned and turn it into an opportunity for growth and development – you will succeed.

You will overcome the fear of failure as you recognise that very few failures are final – you will succeed.

Leadership will feel easier over the years, not because it gets easier, but because you will be getting better – you will succeed.

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You will develop the ability to manage your emotions, stay strong and focused, and maintain your values, purpose and enthusiasm even through the tough times – you will succeed.

You will get to a stage in your career where you feel you have learned enough and grown enough to be able to share your experiences and learning with those who will follow you – you will help them to succeed.

The absolute best of luck, Young Patrick. Stay strong, stay humble, keep fighting, keep caring – and Lead Calmly.

Yours sincerely,

Big Patrick

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## Introduction

'Ooh, you've upset someone this morning!'

I was having a morning catch-up with my PA in the first few days of my headship and had no idea what she was talking about. I had not interacted with any member of staff that morning, so how could I have upset anyone? It turned out that this was the problem. I had walked past one of my staff members in the car park and not said good morning! I had no recollection of this. Then the reality hit me – everything I do or do not do now counted. After all, if this had been a few weeks earlier, when I was a deputy head, I am convinced that nothing would have been made of it.

Welcome to being the leader, Patrick Cozier!

## Why Am I Writing This Book?

The simple answer to the question posed above is that, after many years in leadership, I believe I have something to say about the experience of being a leader that is of value to others. I want everybody who is interested (and maybe some who are not) to know about Calm Leadership. I believe that becoming a Calm Leader is beneficial to all those in leadership, or those aspiring to leadership, who want to stay in the job for a long time to create lasting impact. Leadership is tough, irrespective of your context, and I am writing this book to make it okay for you to acknowledge it, accept it and ultimately relish it.

I am not a writer. Well, at least I have never considered myself to be. Maths is my 'thing'. However, as a head teacher since 2006, I have begun to recognise that I have something to offer the profession, way beyond the boundaries

## CALM LEADERSHIP

of my own school. I have a story to tell and experiences to share that may or may not help colleagues in their own circumstances – but for me they are worth sharing.

As an experienced head teacher, I frequently find myself in conversations with newer and less experienced colleagues who are getting to grips with the challenges of the role. Colleagues who are facing some of the unique challenges of leadership for the first time and want some support in how to deal with situations. My conversations with those colleagues tend to follow a similar pattern that leads on to the killer question: 'Patrick, how do you do it? How are you still in headship after so many years, and yet able to maintain your energy and enthusiasm?'

We know that this is not an issue that is specific to the colleagues that I have spoken to. Leadership in the education sector is a challenge, with many colleagues simply not seeing this role as one that they are prepared to do in the long term. The incentives for new head teachers to stay in the job are low and consequently many do not stay beyond the first few years. The fear of accountability is significant. Published data in the form of league tables pit schools against one another in ways that encourage secrecy and competition rather than collaboration, leaving head teachers feeling isolated. Schools in areas of high deprivation typically 'lose out' in the comparisons. The looming threat of an Ofsted inspection is never far from the mind of a head teacher. Even if you are doing well as a school, there is always a worry that a lead inspector may become focused on a particular area of weakness in a disproportionate way that affects the outcome of the whole inspection negatively. An unfavourable Ofsted report can lead to forced academisation by the DfE (Department for Education).

The upshot of all of this is the very real fear of losing one's job, and potentially one's career. Never has headship felt more akin to being a Premier League football manager – except most of the managers who lose their jobs in that field end up back in other jobs relatively quickly! With that in mind, I can understand the reluctance of my younger colleagues to stay in headship – the pressure is very intense. It also provides some context to the relevance of that key question (referred to above) that I am often asked.

The intriguing thing from my perspective was I did not actually know the answer to the question that I was posed. I had no idea! Here I was, faced with new head teachers in the first three to four years of their headship questioning how long they could sustain the job for, reaching out to me as

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a long-standing head looking for answers, and I did not have a clue! I knew it was possible but had no grasp as to why.

It got me thinking about what it was. What was the reason that I have been able to grow into headship over the years? Why is it that my enthusiasm for the job has not just remained but grown over time? It is true to say that I probably enjoy the job more now after nearly two decades in post than at any time previously. I decided that if I were to help others, I would need a way of trying to figure this thing out.

Another motivation for writing this book is my own reflections of what it was like when I first stepped into leadership and eventually headship. What are the things that I wish someone had told me?

I started my first headship in September 2006, just 18 months after I had first become a deputy. It was sooner than I had anticipated, and it was scary. I knew that I wanted to be a head teacher – this was my ambition from my early days as a teacher – however, I was not expecting it quite so soon. And the truth is, I was not ready for what I was taking on. In the first three years of the job, I think I feared my own shadow! I was confident that I could learn quickly (and boy, did I have to!), but the journey was an incredibly challenging one and extended me in ways that I did not imagine possible. In those early days, I certainly was not calm.

I was an internal candidate. I applied for the job because I wanted to take advantage of the experience of applying for headships and going through the process. I applied because I was convinced by those around me that I would be a good candidate for the job. I applied because I wanted to compare myself to the competition. Never (and I mean, ever) did I imagine I would get the job, until the second day of interviews when I was down to the final three candidates from over 30 applicants. Then it hit me. This was *real*! After I was successful on day two and I was offered the job, I responded by asking the chair of governors, 'Are you sure?' In hindsight, that was a silly (albeit honest) thing to say based on how I felt at the time. His answer was, 'We are, if you are!' – and that was that!

I was excited but also petrified. To talk about 'imposter syndrome' would not do how I felt at the time any justice. I remember saying to my coach (who was a very experienced ex-head teacher) that I just could not get used to the feeling of constantly being on the edge of my comfort zone. It was just not something for which I was prepared. I remember in the early days

feeling like everything I did attracted a level of scrutiny that I simply was not accustomed to. It was a sharp and immediate contrast to my experience of being an assistant head or a deputy head.

I had great support from a range of coaches who I saw in my first few years in post, and each helped me significantly in vastly diverse ways. As well as the need to feel like I was worthy of the job, I had the added pressure of being one of the very few Black head teachers in a secondary school at the time, and the challenges that that presented (more on that in Chapter 3). I learned a lot from my coaches. They helped me make sense of my experiences and supported the development of perspective that I honed over time. However, my early struggles were tough – and I always felt that more could have been done to have made that time more manageable and (dare I say it) calm. Looking back now, as I reflect on what today's version of Patrick Cozier would say to the 2006 version of Patrick Cozier, I arrive at Calm Leadership.

That is what this book is about. Calm Leadership is a summary of what I believe to be my approach to leadership, honed and crafted over many years. I believe that my ability to be able to deal with the highs, lows, pressures, challenges and demands of leadership can be explained by the way that I have approached my role mentally, emotionally and psychologically.

I am not suggesting in any way that my way is the right way. I fundamentally believe that there is no right or wrong way to be a leader. It is a matter for each person individually to find the approach that works best for them. What I am trying to achieve in writing this book is to explain and share my way – the Calm Leadership way.

## Why Is This Book Important?

Leadership is often seen as a burnout job. This is a problem – a big problem, particularly in educational leadership. I have already talked about the nature of the conversations that I have with some of my colleagues who are newer to leadership. In addition, it is startling how many middle leaders I

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speak to have no desire to move on to senior leadership, despite having the evident potential to do so. However, this is not just rhetoric and anecdote.

**'More than one in three secondary school leaders in England and one in four primary school leaders left at some point in the five years after their appointment in 2015, the official Department for Education (DfE) statistics showed.'**<sup>1</sup>

Sally Weale

This statistic represents a key challenge for the future of school leadership. There is a clear sense that for many younger and newer heads, the job is just not seen as a job for the long term. Most of the colleagues who have left the role have been able to go on to other things successfully, such as starting their own consultancy business providing leadership development or school-improvement services. Some work for local authorities or other education service providers. Some leave through a promotion to more senior jobs as part of a multi-academy trust (MAT). The route that one takes is, as you might assume, very dependent on the specific circumstances in which you leave the role. It can be a very challenging time, and some colleagues really struggle to find a role that meets their personal career aspirations or their financial commitments. This is something that we need to address as a profession so that we can ensure we have a keen, equipped and well-resourced new generation of educational leaders coming through to pick up the baton and do an even better job than we have done.

To achieve this, we must find ways of making leadership accessible and appealing. In my view, it is the responsibility of every one of us who holds positions of leadership to encourage and develop those in our charge to become great leaders. A phrase I often use in this respect is 'Each one, teach many!'

As a Black leader it particularly concerns me that Black colleagues often do not get into the positions of leadership at all, let alone get there and then leave soon after. The data for my demographic is worrying in terms of the under-representation of Black people in leadership positions in schools in the UK. This is illustrated in Table 1 on page 6.

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1 S. Weale, School leader retention rates in England declining, DfE data shows, *The Guardian* (26 April 2022). Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/apr/26/school-leader-retention-rates-in-england-declining-dfe-data-shows>.

Table 1<sup>2</sup>

Ethnicity	% of the Working Population	% of Classroom Teachers	% of Deputies and Assistant Heads	% of Head Teachers
Black African	1.9	1.0	0.4	0.2
Black Caribbean	1.2	1.1	1.0	0.7
Black Other	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.1

The numbers make miserable reading. There are many theories for why the numbers of Black leaders are so low. These include (but not exhaustively):

- Poor/biased recruitment processes.
- Insufficient opportunities for development of our Black teachers in schools.
- Black teachers do not want to apply because:
  - they do not believe they will be given an opportunity, or
  - they do not see leadership/headship itself as an attractive prospect, or
  - they feel the situation of leadership/headship for a person of colour is precarious as they will be judged harshly if things go wrong.

All of these beliefs and emotions are sadly familiar to me and also represent many of the conversations I have had with Black colleagues. We have to do something about this.

I see Calm Leadership as a positive vehicle to use as a means of changing the mindset of all colleagues when either considering or already experiencing leadership. We have to find ways to encourage people into leadership roles,

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2 Department for Education, School Workforce in England (2019). Available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

give them the support they need to be equipped for the role and provide strategies for dealing with what leadership feels like.

### Who Will Benefit?

This book will benefit leaders at all levels. Although most of what I will refer to will draw upon my own personal experiences as a head teacher, the learning from those reflections could apply to anyone with leadership responsibility in an educational setting, be you a head of department, head of year, subject leader, phase leader, assistant head teacher or deputy head teacher.

In fact, one may go further and assume that the lessons that I have learned and experiences that I share could go beyond the field of education and can be applied elsewhere. My belief is that leadership is generic in many ways and the broad scope of challenges faced by leaders all share remarkably similar characteristics, albeit within different contexts.

When I reflect on some of the most influential books that I have read on leadership, often they have nothing to do with education, but the thinking and the application of what is being shared can be applied to my own role without too much of a leap. I think of examples like *The Barcelona Way* by Damian Hughes,<sup>3</sup> *Leading* by Sir Alex Ferguson and Sir Michael Moritz,<sup>4</sup> *Turn the Ship Around* by L. David Marquet<sup>5</sup> and my absolute inspiration, *Quiet Leadership* by Carlo Ancelotti.<sup>6</sup> These are but a few, but there are many others that I could cite.

This book will benefit those in leadership irrespective of the stage that you are at. My journey is a long and ongoing one. I have been a leader for over two decades (including middle and senior leadership prior to headship). I have been the inexperienced one at the beginning, the very experienced one now and everything in between. This is reflected in the journey that I take you through during this book.

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3 D. Hughes, *The Barcelona Way: Unlocking the DNA of a Winning Culture* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2018).

4 A. Ferguson and M. Moritz, *Leading* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2016).

5 L. D. Marquet and S. R. Covey, *Turn the Ship Around* (London: Penguin, 2015).

6 C. Ancelotti, *Quiet Leadership: Winning Hearts, Minds and Matches* (London: Penguin, 2017).

I identify four key phases to achieving what I describe as Calm Leadership. Although leaders will not necessarily go through these different phases in a pre-determined order, you will see that each of the four phases will largely reflect the different stages of your leadership journey. So, whether you are aspiring to leadership, new to leadership, an experienced leader or you are heading towards the end and wondering if you can keep doing this leadership thing – this book is for you!

### **What This Book Is and What it Is Not**

If you are looking for a book about leadership theory, drawing on extensive research and data, then this is not the book for you. If you want to read about styles of leadership, organisational effectiveness or securing accountability through processes and systems, then this is not the book for you. If you want to read and learn about the ways in which you can run a school or a business in the most efficient ways through a tight cycle of plan, implement, monitor and review (and repeat), then this is not the book for you.

I am not saying that any of the above are unimportant – quite the contrary. Being a successful leader requires a wide range of skills, expertise, attributes, knowledge of leadership theory and the specific subject expertise of your field. You will find lots of books that talk about these things in great depth – but this is not one of them.

This book is about my journey. It charts the key learning that I have faced throughout my career to date and shares my reflections about how we can sustain ourselves as leaders over a prolonged period. It is about the emotional awareness, communication skills, positive mindset, morals, ethics, values and interpersonal attributes that one needs to possess and adopt to confront and deal with the challenges that face leaders and keep them moving forward.

This book is about the ways in which leaders are able to build resilience, maintain a positive outlook and keep things in perspective when experiencing the highs and lows of the journey. If you want answers to the following questions, then this book is for you:

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How do I do this?

How do I manage emotionally?

How do I overcome imposter syndrome?

How do I lead with honesty and integrity and stay grounded and true to my values?

How do I lead with humanity in my heart while still being able to take tough decisions?

How can I be a leader that lasts?

In authoring this book, I am trying to address the challenge of how leadership feels. I have always believed that you can be technically prepared for leadership in terms of the skills and abilities that you have, but the one thing that is exceedingly difficult to prepare for is how it feels to experience being in charge. The impact on one's thoughts, emotions and insecurities are areas that are very difficult to understand without experiencing them directly.

If you have not had the opportunity to experience them personally, the next best thing is to consider them through the eyes of others. That is what this book is. It is a reflection of how leadership feels through my eyes and experiences. I hope that this will resonate for you and help you as you travel through your own leadership journey.

## By the End of This Book

By choosing to read this book, you open the door for me to share from the outset what I hope you will get out of it.

Firstly, you will have developed a thorough understanding of the concept of Calm Leadership and how achieving a state of calmness will contribute to your ability to deal with the diversity of emotions that leadership exposes us to. In addition, you will be able to develop a mindset and an approach that will enable you to overcome the stresses of leadership.

Secondly, you will have had the opportunity to learn and try out some practical techniques and strategies for achieving calmness in your leadership.

## CALM LEADERSHIP

As mentioned already, this book is less about theory and much more about experiences and practical applications.

Thirdly, you will have a deep appreciation and acceptance of the fact that leadership is difficult, because it is supposed to be. Once you have embraced this, you will find that you are able to maintain an enthusiasm and desire to tackle the biggest problems faced within your organisation – because someone has to deal with them, so who better than you?

Finally, and for me most importantly, you will be able to see that leadership does not have to be a burnout job. You will see the privilege that leadership is and feel enthusiastic and optimistic about taking on the leadership challenge and giving service, which in my view is the ultimate purpose of leadership. You will understand and be able to utilise (should you choose to) the Calm Leadership approach to enable you to commit for the long run – to become a leader that lasts.

I very much hope that you enjoy your first journey into Calm Leadership!

Both an inspiring reflection on overcoming the challenges of leadership and a practical guide to harnessing the power of emotional intelligence in the workplace.

**Rt Hon. David Lammy, MP for Tottenham, Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice**

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In *Calm Leadership*, Patrick Cozier draws on 24 years of experience to offer a candid and personal account of his school leadership journey. Since first taking on the role of head teacher in 2006, and as one of the few Black school leaders in the UK at the time, Patrick has navigated through the complexities of the role – and learned to do so calmly.

At the heart of the book is Patrick's Calm Leadership model, shaped over many years of practice:

- Confronting uncalm feelings.
- Adapting to the feeling of leadership.
- Leading people with humanity and understanding.
- Maturing into the leader you are meant to be.

This framework assists leaders with managing stress, staying well, maintaining a positive outlook and therefore sustaining their roles long term. The central message of this book – presented by Patrick with clarity, passion and heart – is that leadership doesn't have to mean burnout: with the right mindset and strategies, it can be a source of joy, fulfilment and lasting impact.

## **Essential for current and aspiring school leaders at all levels.**

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Patrick's timely book is a call to arms for leading in a more human and sustainable way – never have we needed his voice more than now.

**Keziah Featherstone, Headteachers' Roundtable, WomenEd, Executive Trust Leader**

For anyone committed to leading with integrity, purpose and calm, this book will be an invaluable companion.

**Viv Grant, author and Executive Coach, Director at Integrity Coaching**

*Calm Leadership* is exactly what the sector needs right now.

**Mary Myatt, education writer and speaker**

A wonderful book on many levels.

**Tom Sherrington, Director at Teaching WalkThrus International**

This is one book I will be advising any leader that I coach to add to the top of their reading list.

**Amanda Wilson, head teacher, coach, author and publisher of *Letters to a Young Generation: Aspiring School Leaders***

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**Patrick Cozier** is an experienced head teacher. He leads Highgate Wood School in Haringey. In addition to his day job, he is a member of the Headteacher's Roundtable, who consult and advise senior officials on national education policy. He serves as a trustee of the national charity Show Racism the Red Card (of which he is co-vice chair). More locally, he takes a leading role in the work of the Haringey Racial Equity Group (part of the Haringey Education Partnership), with its focus to reduce racial inequality and improve the outcomes and experiences of children of colour. As a member of the Black community, he is passionate about seeking equality, justice and fair outcomes for people of colour.

