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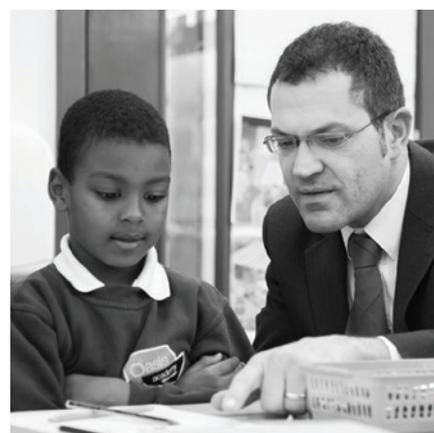
HEADS UP

Meeting the challenges of headteacher recruitment



Contents

Introduction	2
England's headteacher shortage	3
Views from the sector	5
Professor John Howson Tracking headship: The importance of preparation	5
Emma Knights A governor's most important task	6
Brian Lightman Headship: Addressing the myths	7
Sir Michael Wilshaw The most rewarding challenge	8
Russell Hobby Making a headteacher	9
Jan Renou The value and future of headship	10
Overcoming the hurdles	11
The hurdles to headship	11
Leadership competencies	12
On the ground: Views from headteachers	13
Matt Butler Building competencies from business to headship	13
Rimah Aasim Developing self and others	14
Sarah Ramsden Collaboration in headship	15
Nichola Smith Empowerment through leadership	16
The importance of networks	17
Sir Michael Barber Inspiration, consistency and a golden age ahead	17
The Future Leaders network	18



Introduction

Great school leaders are vital in ensuring that children from poorer backgrounds get a great education. The Future Leaders Trust was founded because leadership is something that can be developed; through our programmes we give participants the motivation, tools and opportunities to grow their leadership skills and competencies.

While we focus on leadership in challenging schools, we are keenly interested in the state of the education sector more widely. Today our focus is set squarely on two issues: the insufficient supply of senior leaders willing to become headteachers; and the negative view of headship that has developed. Both must be addressed.

It is true that being a headteacher is a challenging role – but so is being the CEO of a business. Headship is hard but it is by no means impossible, and it is tremendously rewarding.

The often-negative attitude of the press and teaching profession towards headship has contributed to the fact that too many headteacher vacancies go unfilled for too long through lack of appropriate applicants. If our children are to succeed we need more people to be willing to take on the responsibility of leadership.

Our role is to find and develop people who are passionate about working in, and eventually leading, challenging schools. But for all children to have the great education they deserve, we need the entire sector to function effectively. If the number of headship vacancies continues to rise – and evidence points to an even steeper increase over the next few years – it will be the challenging schools and our most disadvantaged students who will suffer most.

As an organisation dedicated to the next generation of school leaders, we hope to lead the way in changing how people think about headship.

This report includes surveys about the challenges that schools face in recruiting headteachers and features reflections from leading figures across the education sector on why headship is not something to be avoided, but is rather a challenge to be prepared for and – for those with the requisite talent, resilience and passion – embraced.



Heath Monk
Chief Executive Officer, The Future Leaders Trust



“As an organisation dedicated to the next generation of school leaders, we hope to lead the way in changing how people think about headship.”

England's headteacher shortage

“Rarely... has there been as much concern over finding the next generation of school leaders as there is now.”

Professor John Howson

As school recruitment expert Professor John Howson writes in this report, anecdotal and empirical evidence show a decline in the supply of people who want to become heads, while a number of factors mean that demand may increase over the next five years.

Declining supply

Sources agree that schools are finding it hard to recruit a headteacher.

In January 2013 Education Data Surveys¹ found that 26% of the 261 primary schools advertising for a new headteacher had to re-advertise within two months. This was an 11 percentage point increase compared to the same period in 2012.

According to a National Governors' Association survey² from September 2015 the situation has not improved. Forty-three per cent of 4,383 respondents reported that it was difficult to find good candidates when recruiting senior staff. Some geographic areas may also be harder hit than others. For example, Schools North East³ reported in June 2014 that many governors they worked with were not getting the applications they needed.

This decline is likely to continue due to the number of heads leaving headship. A report for the Mayor of London⁴ found that over 50% of headteachers in the capital are aged 50 or above and approaching retirement.

In a survey⁵ of 286 headteachers conducted by The Future Leaders Trust and *Times Educational Supplement (TES)* 28% of respondents said they were planning to leave headship within five years. More sobering was that over half said they did not expect to be a headteacher in ten years.

Other research suggests that positive attitudes towards headship have declined. A 2015 survey of school leaders by The Key⁶, an information service for school leaders, found that 86.8% of respondents believed headship was less attractive than it was five years ago. This is an increase of 12 percentage points since 2014.

This suggests a clear decline in positive perceptions since 2009, when the last National College of School Leadership annual opinion survey⁷ found 92% of heads thought being a head was 'a great job' and 86% would recommend it to their staff.

In a 2015 survey by the National Governors' Association, **43%** of respondents reported that it was difficult to find good candidates when recruiting senior staff.

In a 2015 survey by The Key, **86.8%** of school leaders believed headship was less attractive as a career choice than it was in 2010.

A 2015 survey of headteachers by The Future Leaders Trust and *TES* saw less than half of respondents saying that they planned to still be a headteacher in ten years.

¹ *Times Education Supplement*. 2013. 'Ratcheting up of pressure drives worst primary headteacher recruitment crisis in 13 years'.

² National Governors' Association. 2015. 'NGA comments on the findings from the biggest governance survey of the year'.

³ BBC News. 2014. 'Headteacher recruitment "increasingly difficult" warning'.

⁴ Anna Trethewey and James Kempton. 2015. *Building the Leadership Pool in London schools*.

⁵ The Future Leaders Trust/*TES*. 2015. 'Headteachers Survey'.

⁶ The Key. 2015. *State of Education Survey Report*.

⁷ National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services. 2009. *School Leadership Today*.

Increasingly negative attitudes

A body of academic work explores the specific reasons that lie behind school leaders not applying for headship roles. Some relate it to perceptions of the role; it is associated with high levels of stress⁸ and workload due to school accountability measures or administrative responsibilities⁹.

Some believe that female¹⁰ and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicity (BAME)¹¹ leaders may be discouraged from headship because of a perceived bias in the selection process.

Others say that people are less likely to apply and relocate for headteacher positions in particular schools, for example those in areas or communities deemed to be unattractive¹². Relatively isolated or economically deprived areas are thought to be less attractive because there are few jobs for partners and longer travel times for those who commute. We explored these issues in our report on coastal schools, *Combatting Isolation*¹³.

Taking up a headship in a challenging school with a poor Ofsted judgment is seen as a career risk because failure to improve the school quickly may be seen as failure and lead to being replaced¹⁴.

Unsurprisingly it's disadvantaged students in areas with relatively few opportunities, in schools that must improve, who are most affected significantly by these negative perceptions of headship.

Future pressure

It is also possible that demand for headteachers will rise. Plans to create 500 new Free Schools, the creation of new CEO and executive head roles in multi-academy trusts and the conversion of schools into sponsored academies could add new vacancies to an already over-stretched labour pool. Our initial estimate is that this could result in over 1,000 additional vacancies over the next five years.

Current work

The Future Leaders Trust is dedicated to developing new headteachers for England's most challenging schools. It recruits and trains high-potential school leaders who are committed to improving the schools where disadvantaged children consistently underachieve. As of January 2016, we have supported 159 leaders to headships in challenging schools.

The aim of this report is to change perceptions of headship more widely. The accounts of Future Leaders later in this report show that being a headteacher is challenging but achievable and is a role that brings significant autonomy and fulfilment.

Read more about Future Leaders at www.future-leaders.org.uk



⁸ Peter Earley et al. 2009. 'Future leaders: the way forward?' *School Leadership & Management*. 29 (3), 295-306.

⁹ John MacBeath. 2011. 'No lack of principles: leadership development in England and Scotland'. *School Leadership & Management*. 31(2), 105-121

¹⁰ Marianne Coleman & Rosemary Campbell-Stephens. 2010. 'Perceptions of career progress: the experience of Black and Minority Ethnic school leaders'. *School Leadership & Management*. 30(1), 35-49.

¹¹ Joan Smith. 2014. 'Gendered trends in student teachers' professional aspirations'. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*. 43(6), 861-882.

¹² Richard Maloney. 2010. 'School leadership: heads on the block?'. *Journal of Education Policy*. 25(1), 111-113.

¹³ The Future Leaders Trust. 2015. *Combatting Isolation: Why coastal schools are failing and how headteachers are turning them around*.

¹⁴ Steven J Courtney. 2013. 'Head teachers' experiences of school inspection under Ofsted's January 2012 framework'. *Management in Education*. 27(4), 164-169.

Tracking headship: The importance of preparation

Professor John Howson

Director, TeachVac and Honorary Norham Fellow,
University of Oxford

Over 30 years ago, in the mid-1980s, I started tracking headships and the turnover amongst school leaders because I was aware of the importance of headteachers for school success. At that time nobody seemed to be collecting the information. Rarely since then has there been as much concern over finding the next generation of school leaders as there is now.

New schools; new leadership roles, especially within multi-academy trusts; concerns about the nature of headship and the support available to school leaders. These are just some of the reasons the labour market for headteachers is not functioning effectively.

Add the fact that half of all teachers are below the age of 40, many with young families started in their thirties, and a pattern of rising demand that has met a falling supply, and you have the recipe for a crisis.

Challenging schools often have the most difficulty recruiting when there are shortages; candidates can be concerned that failure to improve outcomes might lead to their removal. Unlike football managers, for whom being sacked is no bar to being appointed by another club, taking on a challenging school can be perceived as a career risk. That shouldn't be the case.

Nevertheless, the challenges of headship are very real. Although schools have leadership teams, the role of the ultimate leader can be a relatively lonely one. You are privileged with information nobody else may know, often about other people. Decisions, even if talked through with others, ultimately rest at your door.

That is why the role of headship needs preparation. The strategic overview function and the need to take frequent

decisions while designing longer-term strategic plans for the school, all with Ofsted potentially about to descend, creates an uncertain climate that isn't helped by the fact that too often nothing proposed by government seems permanent enough to become part of the day-to-day running of the school. Headship needs someone who has developed a set of personal and professional skills.

Grappling with uncertainty is at the core of all leadership. Successful leaders prepare for this fact and manage the consequences. We need to ensure that others recognise this and also appreciate that introducing change can take time, especially when resources are constrained and staffing a real challenge.

Leading a school will only become an attractive career option again once it is accepted that leaders themselves need support and recognition for their work. Increased support will attract greater numbers willing to take on the role, but we also need to implement early identification, support and training for *potential* headteachers – especially if we are to fill vacancies in the most challenging schools.

For while headship offers great challenges, it also gives those who step up the opportunity to shape the careers of all the school's staff, and more importantly the learning and life chances of all their students.



“Unlike football managers, for whom being sacked is no bar to being appointed by another club, taking on a challenging school can be perceived as a career risk. That shouldn't be the case.”

A governor's most important task

Emma Knights

Chief Executive, National Governors' Association

Recruiting a headteacher is likely to be the most important task of a governing board and yet it hasn't had the spotlight it deserves. Governors and trustees know it is a great responsibility, but it is made far more difficult by the fact that we don't see the number of good candidates that we need.

There has been significant concern about the shortage of recruits for senior leadership positions, particularly headships, for at least a decade. There are also some types of school where the recruitment of headteachers has been particularly difficult: small, rural or with a religious character where the headteacher is required to practice the faith. However, more recently the shortage of candidates has extended into other areas.

The National Governors' Association (NGA) carries out an annual survey of governors and trustees with *TES*, in 2015, of the 4,383 respondents who had recruited to a senior leadership post over the past year, 43% agreed that it was hard to recruit. This was similar in different types of schools ranging from 44% in primary to 40% in special schools, but there were significant regional differences, with most problems reported in the South East and London.

We don't know as much as we should about how this compares with other fields or about the causes of the problem. Headship can be pressured and potentially lonely, and maintaining a healthy work/life balance can be difficult. Although a good chair and governing board will support the head, this is the nature of top leadership posts. Is school leadership less attractive because of the data-driven accountability? Or could it be that teachers don't seem to move around the country as much as other professionals?

Has the shortage got anything to do with the fact that teaching is a female-dominated profession but women are under-represented in headship? NGA is working with other organisations this year to encourage more women to put themselves forward for leadership, and we need to encourage arrangements such as job-shares.

A contributing factor could be teachers' lack of experience in applying for jobs. Many governors have experience of recruiting in their professional lives, and the first time they are involved in school recruitment can be surprise: the quality of some applications is shocking.

Another unknown is how good governing boards are at identifying the best candidates. NGA provides advice but actually there is limited intelligence available on which exercises work best as part of the assessment process. We are involved in a small-scale study with the University of Bath looking into this.

We need to re-double the efforts in succession planning and preparing talented people for leadership, while supporting and valuing those great teachers who want to stay in the classroom. We need to be more creative and braver: does every school actually need a traditional 'headteacher'? Groups of schools – federations and multi-academy trusts – give the opportunity for different roles that could help the recruitment problem. Allowing a head of school to lead teaching and learning, without the full business responsibilities of running an organisation, could be an all-round win.



In a 2015 survey by the National Governors' Association, **43%** of respondents reported it was difficult to find good candidates when recruiting senior staff.

Headship: Addressing the myths

Brian Lightman

General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders

My experience of headship is two-fold; first through 16 years as a headteacher in two schools, and second through speaking to many headteachers as ASCL General Secretary. There are certainly challenges to being a head – but there are also myths we must dispel.

One of these challenges is the sheer scale of the job: as a headteacher I managed finances, premises and a large staff of more than 150 people, as well as the education of my students. In addition, some pupils come from really challenging backgrounds and need enormous support and encouragement.

As ASCL General Secretary I have seen headteachers go through a particularly challenging time over the past five years. There has been a non-stop flow of reforms, all implemented in a great hurry, alongside new high-stakes accountability measures and ever-increasing expectations.

But across the country headteachers are rising to these challenges and going into work each day with the resolve to make a difference. As a head you have an unparalleled opportunity to shape a school. There are few other jobs in which you can make such positive difference. My core belief as a headteacher was that every child can succeed at something, and that motivated me in even the most difficult of moments. The other great positive is being surrounded by a tremendous team of staff and governors who are all rooting for these young people.

The very real challenges of headship aside, there are some myths which we must dispel.

One of these is that becoming a headteacher means that you lose the classroom. I don't agree. As a headteacher you have the opportunity to

lead the education of thousands of young people – the whole school is your classroom. You are in constant contact with pupils through events, assemblies and school councils, as well as visiting classes, discussing work with students and much more.

Similarly, there is a view that modern education is soulless. This would be true if a head just responded to the latest government policy – but that's not true headship. Headship is about leading the vision and values of a school, and there's nothing more *soulful* than that. It is your responsibility and opportunity to be creative, proactive and set out a framework for the future that is rich and inspiring.

Another anxiety is that headship is isolating – but that doesn't have to be the case. You have ultimate decision-making responsibility, yes, but heads work in close partnership with leadership teams and have many different conversations in a day. You are constantly surrounded by colleagues, provided, of course, that you lead your team in ways which empower them to do this. Another way to tackle isolation is through professional networks; there's no-one better to support a headteacher than another headteacher.

So is the role of headteacher easy? No. But is it do-able? I believe it is. Headship is a fulfilling vocation in which you lead a team to do the best you can for the young people in your care. Overcoming the challenges adds to the enormous job satisfaction of headship.



“There’s no-one better to support a headteacher than another headteacher.”

The most rewarding challenge

Sir Michael Wilshaw

Chief Inspector, Ofsted

Good leadership in a school is absolutely fundamental to delivering good education for children. In the course of my 46-year career, I have met a lot of great headteachers. All of them had different ideas and leadership styles, but the best heads do share some qualities and skills. First and foremost, they are all passionate about raising standards for their students.

They need to be resilient, both mentally – because it is a high-pressure job – and physically, because heads need to be up and about, and visible around their school.

That visibility should carry with it a certain presence – as a head you are not only a teacher but a leader, and respect for good leadership must be part of school culture. At the same time, headteachers need to be able to get on with the staff, pupils and community who will help make a school successful.

Great heads are often competitive, and that's a positive thing: they want their school and students to be the best they can be. I've never met a good head who didn't want to have the best results in the area.

The key pleasure and satisfaction of headship is working with young people every day. Young people can be creative, lively and are constantly surprising – it's the head's job and privilege to help shape them into happy, successful adults and good citizens in their communities.

I became a headteacher after my head at that time pointed out a vacancy in a local school and urged me to apply. I had learned a lot from working alongside other leaders, and that made me a good deputy. Great headteachers aren't born, although some have more innate skills than others. As with teaching, you can learn the craft of leadership by observing what others do, seeing what works and adapting it to suit your own

style. With formal training and access to mentors, that process can be improved and accelerated. I have no doubt that I would have been a better head earlier in my career if I'd had access to training programmes.

That's why heads must encourage their leadership teams to develop, whether through in-school opportunities or external programmes. It's incumbent on all leaders to plan for succession and develop potential within their teams in order to ensure a positive future, not only for their school but the wider sector.

Ofsted may be regarded with trepidation by some, but we exist to support heads and schools. One of Ofsted's hardest and most important jobs is to recognise capacity for improvement as well as ability. When we see a headteacher in a struggling setting who has a clear plan to improve both their school and their own leadership, we are there to support them. As a headteacher, Ofsted challenged me to improve. Its role is to do the same in every school across the country, to raise standards and give our children better lives.

That's the main goal of education. To change lives is a bold aim – it demands bold plans. Great headteachers have a thoughtful approach but are also very practical. They need to be visionaries and pragmatists who are able to deliver. After all, without a defined plan a headteacher's vision is nothing but warm words and rhetoric that won't help any child succeed.



“It’s incumbent on all leaders to plan for succession and develop potential within their teams in order to ensure a positive future, not only for their school but the wider sector.”

Making a headteacher

Russell Hobby

General Secretary,
National Association of Head Teachers

It is tough to recruit headteachers at the moment, so it's natural to ask whether and how we could widen the pool of applicants. Are all the potential heads already 'out there', ready and waiting to step up? Or are there people who could become great heads but who currently lack some of the skills and attributes necessary to thrive in the role? People we could find, encourage and develop.

I believe that many leadership attributes can be developed and that people who are not currently ready to lead can become so. Even people who *are* ready to lead can become better over time.

Developing these attributes is not easy, and is sometimes impossible, because they are based on deep habits and preferences. It is not as simple as teaching someone how to do it; they have to want to do it, choose to do it and do it the right way.

Take performance management. You can read a book on the basic procedures. But do you follow them? More than that, do you make feedback and coaching on performance part of your daily routine? Do you still do it when it is unpleasant, when the feedback you have to offer is challenging?

That said, learning these new habits is possible. Sir John Jones describes one example of a colleague who learned to tackle the parts of the job he didn't enjoy and would often put off – tasks he compared to 'eating a frog'. He established a new routine: when he had a frog to eat, he would do it before he did anything else. In such manner are new leadership habits built.

How can we help more people to develop as leaders?

The first step is to create a positive environment. Some environments support emerging leaders better than others. In general, the more structure we provide, the earlier someone can start practicing leadership. Too often we drop people straight into headship with insufficient structure, and they struggle.

The second step is to help people clarify what matters to them. Habits are not changed without sustained effort. This only happens if people really believe they matter, and this stems from their values. If you hate confronting people under any circumstances, for example, and do not see its value, then you are going to struggle in almost any leadership role.

The third step is to help people to see themselves as others do. Leadership habits are often an unconscious web of automatic behaviour and instincts. We need to encourage reflection; feedback from people you lead is an effective tool to do so.

Every leader has strengths and weaknesses. That's fine. As head you don't need to be perfect, but you do need to know your strengths, address the weaknesses that matter, and build a team around you that supports you to lead effectively.



“I believe that many leadership attributes can be developed and that people who are not currently ready to lead can become so.”

The value and future of headship

Jan Renou

Regional Schools Commissioner for the North

The best heads galvanise a school around a vision which they consistently model in their own behaviour and relationships, keeping a focus on children and bringing coherence to complexity. This fact will remain, even as the nature and demands of school leadership change rapidly.

A great head creates a dynamic school that continuously improves to reach coherent objectives and has a vision to which all staff contribute. Such schools take a positive and proactive approach to challenge. They create an environment that is secure and which celebrates children's daily success, and where sound record-keeping focuses upon student progress. Finally, great heads lead schools that continually push the limits of possibility.

Developing great teams demands both devolved responsibility and strong lines of accountability, giving staff a range of experiences to develop and grow – helping to retain outstanding teachers! Much of a head's value to their community is in succession planning and growing a new generation of leaders to secure future success.

School leadership is moving into a new era with different structures, expectations and contexts. Groups of schools working together can offer more to students, staff and parents by keeping each other on track with accountability and support. Multi-academy trusts still face the same challenges as other schools but they have many more resources to draw upon – creating outcomes which are greater than the sum of their parts.

For future school leaders, the emerging career ladder offers exciting opportunities around well-defined roles: head of school, headteacher, executive headteacher and now chief executive officer (CEO). These latter roles offer late-career heads an increasing

challenge to grow leaders of the future. Developing a head of school by giving them more space and time than can be found in a deputy post allows them to learn the ropes with a focus on teaching and learning, and provides them with a 'safety net', a mentor, and time to reflect.

When talking to heads and those 'in waiting' I am keen to discuss the changing role of school leadership with an imperative on collaboration through multi-academy trusts, federations and teaching school alliances. The role is becoming more complex whilst leaders are continually required to do more with less. Critical engagement with challenges and threats is a major part of the job – but along with personal resilience a head can draw on networks of external support, strengthened internal structures, and positive and challenging governance to secure consistent levels of insight and self-evaluation which will pre-empt any external judgement.

The demands on school leaders are changing at a pace. This is an exciting and dynamic phase in the history of headship with the profession seeing an increase in autonomy and influence over the development of the educational system as a whole. We must continue to promote and encourage our future leaders to continue this transformation so that every child is able to attend a good school with committed teachers energised and supported by their leadership. Successful leaders are the key to this new landscape.



“This is an exciting and dynamic phase in the history of headship, with the profession seeing an increase in autonomy and influence over the development of the educational system as a whole.”

The hurdles to headship

As the experts above have reflected, being a headteacher is complex yet rewarding. However, its challenges are often simplified and over-represented, and circulated within the sector and in the media. These are the hurdles to headship that research shows often put people off applying to become a head, particularly in challenging schools.

No work-life balance

57% of teachers would leave for a better work/life balance (NUT/YouGov October 2015)

15% of heads say work/life balance is their biggest challenge (TES/The Future Leaders Trust November 2015)

Leading a school means taking a strategic view of an organisation that works with at least hundreds of children and scores of adults with the budget of a small business. In a sector where many already report feeling over-worked, headship is seen as a more intense and demanding role due to the quantity and intensity of the work.

Modern education is soulless

“The current obsession with data and exam performance is undermining education rather than enhancing it” (TES 4 October 2014)

The increased significance of accountability and inspection has not only been seen by some as creating a difficult context in which to work, but a style of education that is focused on exams and progress rather than excellence and engagement. Data is seen by some as a tool that has taken an over-important role in education culture, and becoming a headteacher would mean being driven by performance measures they do not believe in.

You lose the classroom

“Is it possible to balance leadership with time in the classroom?” (Guardian 3 February 2015)

Most people who work in a school began their professional life as teachers, and moving into leadership results in a shift away from the classroom and students, and towards working with adults throughout the school. Some fear that becoming a leader and then a headteacher means abandoning the classroom and those close relationships with students.

Lonely at the top

“The job is all-consuming and I feel so alone. There seems to be no one I can go to when things go wrong” (Guardian February 2015)

The responsibilities of the role and its workload are seen by some as isolating. Leadership is represented as an endeavour that is embarked upon alone and where there are few or no people who can support or understand, increasing the role's intensity again.

Career ‘suicide’

“Disadvantaged schools are ‘career suicide’ for headteachers” (Independent 16 April 2014)

Becoming head of a challenging school means being responsible for the education of many young children who come from poorer backgrounds, while meeting government accountability measures and Ofsted scrutiny. It is believed that negative judgements result in significant pressure on heads, and those who find themselves leaving a school after a bad set of exam results or inspection can find it difficult to find a new job.

These hurdles are real but they can be overcome by people who possess or are willing to develop the necessary competencies. The Future Leaders Trust has identified the competencies that great leaders possess and supports members of the Future Leaders network to develop these personal qualities as much as their sector expertise.

Leadership competencies

Over the past ten years, The Future Leaders Trust has worked to identify the key competencies needed to lead a challenging school. These are the ways of thinking, acting and being through which Future Leaders headteachers make an impact in their schools, and overcome some of the hurdles outlined on the previous page.

Moral purpose Acts in principled ways built upon a clear set of personal values and is energised and motivated by making a positive difference to the lives of children and families. Believes schools have a crucial role in changing lives and improving life chances. Makes decisions with the best interests of children at heart.

Curiosity and eagerness to learn Has a willingness to acquire new knowledge, skills and experiences regardless of the challenges involved. This includes making the most of opportunities despite being outside of one's comfort zone. Enjoys discovering different ways of doing things.

Developing others Proactively looks to develop and empower colleagues through mentoring, supporting, championing and guiding to bring out their best.

Holding to account Empowers staff by giving them clarity about expected results and standards. Delegates by ensuring that individuals have the information and resources they need to do a good job, and that the expected standards are both challenging and realistic.

Impact and influence Has a positive impact on students, colleagues and the wider community through bringing others round to their perspective. Understanding others' perspectives and priorities enables individuals to tailor communication to their audience.

Inspiring others Intention to lead through motivating and energising students and colleagues, uniting them around shared goals or objectives. School leaders bring their communities together through articulating a compelling vision.

Personal drive Sets own targets and achieves the highest standards. Self-motivated, energetic and willing to take on new challenges to improve own performance. Makes decisions having assessed what will be in the best interests of students and school.

Resilience and emotional maturity Remains tenacious and focused when faced with increasingly challenging circumstances. Responds appropriately, manages uncertainty and bounces back even in the most trying of situations.

Relating to others Able to build relationships through picking up on and understanding the thoughts, emotions and feelings of students and colleagues, identifying reasons for why others behave the way they do.

Self-awareness Aware of strengths and areas for future growth. Understands how own behaviour impacts on others. Aware of own emotional triggers and identifies ways to manage these. Takes ownership for what they can do and shares out responsibilities when others are better placed to accomplish particular tasks. Sees themselves as a leader.

Strategic thinking Able to spot patterns between potentially unrelated concepts, drawing on past experience to understand a situation. Simplifies complex issues, is highly innovative, takes a broader view and brings in additional information to create clarity and provide direction. Thinks beyond current circumstances in order to plan for the longer term.

The following pages contain reflections from Future Leaders about how these competencies have helped them in their work as heads.



Building competencies from business to headship

Matt Butler

Executive Principal, Oasis Academies North Bristol

Matt Butler became a headteacher after many years working for a leading airline. Here, he describes both the pressures and satisfaction of headship, and the competencies and support that keep him going from strength to strength.

I joined teaching in 2004 after an 11-year career in industry. From the outset I had set my heart on becoming head of a challenging school, a vision that was fired by my desire to drive up equality in our country and by the only superficial feeling of fulfilment that I was getting in my previous job.

With such a passion, I don't think I ever stopped to consider the challenges that lay ahead. In hindsight, I am quite glad of that, because if I had dwelt on those challenges I might have been more daunted.

After my first year of headship, my school delivered some less-than-pleasing results. For the first time, I truly realised the exposed position all heads are in. It's never going to go well all of the time and headship can be a lonely place. But Future Leaders helps you to develop your **Resilience and emotional maturity**; in my view the most fundamental traits of successful heads.

Headship presents many other challenges. It requires that you have a clear work/life balance, and that you weight that balance a little more towards work than is many people's preference. It requires you to make hundreds of complex decisions each day – decisions that no one else can make. So it can be draining! These decisions can't always please everyone – especially as the high-running emotions of young people are an occupational hazard – so as headteacher you must accept some resentment. You have to get used to the fact that, as the saying goes, you can please all of the people some of the time, or some of the people all of the time.

And yet it is the most rewarding job I can think of. Part of that is because overcoming those challenges is rewarding – but mainly because the fulfilment of getting it right is phenomenal. The impact that turning a school around has on lives is a legacy any person could be proud of. Few people can say that about their jobs!

I am eternally grateful to The Future Leaders Trust for its support. I brought with me to headship many competencies from industry including **Holding others to account**, communication skills, **Developing and inspiring others** and **Self-awareness**, but the programme's focus on school-specific strategic development and the clarification of my moral purpose were invaluable. Future Leaders gave me the confidence and courage I needed to take risks to achieve my goals – and my students have benefitted.

You need back-up when setting out for headship. The Future Leaders network has provided that for me.



“The impact that turning a school around has on lives is a legacy any person could be proud of.”

Developing self and others

Rimah Aasim

Headteacher, Worth Valley Primary School, Bradford

Being one of the youngest headteachers in Bradford can be a challenge. But with a focus on building strong relationships and a sense of optimism Rimah Aasim is making an impact in her school.

I've wanted to become a headteacher since the age of six. Mr Pendlebury, my primary school headteacher, was inspirational, taking the time to get to know us and making school such a lovely place to be. I have vivid memories of going into the school aviary and feeding the budgies at lunchtime! This experience has stuck with me and I want to create similar memorable experiences for everyone at my school.

Before taking up my post quite a few people told me that headship can be a lonely place. This worried me a little but I decided to carry on because headship had always been my ultimate goal. I am a reflective person, so decided that I had to ensure that this would not happen to me.

Strong relationships are important so I have put in the effort with all pupils, staff, parents and carers. I specifically thank my colleagues for their work, I take the time to check in on those coming back from sick leave and at Christmas I served dinner to all my staff and students. Headship has to work for me and for the young people whose lives will be positively affected by my leadership.

During the past year I have been improving the competency of **Developing others**. I've always believed in supporting colleagues but our students need us to be the best that we can be. So I've had to learn more about supporting my staff and knowing where they are on their learning journey.

I'm working to ensure that we are all reflective and understand what we need to do in order to make things even better for our children and their families. Good heads create more leaders.

An existing strength that I've been able to draw upon is **Resilience and emotional maturity**. There's been so much to do and as one of the youngest headteachers in Bradford I've had to show others that I can do this job, whilst changing the community's perception of the school. But I always use positivity in the face of adversity – and the school has changed so much in just a few months.

The Future Leaders Trust has been extremely supportive and provided training, time and resources. If I need anything I know exactly who to contact. As a first-time head it can be daunting but with the Trust's support I have not felt alone.

Being a headteacher is the best job in the world for me. I have so much drive to make a difference and know I am affecting young lives and creating citizens of the future. It is a huge but rewarding role.

Working in challenging schools in disadvantaged areas is tough but all children deserve an education no matter where they come from, and it is our duty to provide it. We need to believe in them as many people will not. We must champion our children!



“I always use positivity in the face of adversity – and the school has changed so much in just a few months.”

Collaboration in headship

Sarah Ramsden

Principal, The Blyth Academy, Northumberland

Sarah Ramsden describes how she stepped up to face the often-tough work of headship through being clear with others about her expectations and what students need to succeed.

I didn't set out to be a headteacher. It's been a process that began with me wanting to improve my own teaching and stretch my students. That started in the classroom and gradually changed as I took on more responsibility and I saw the impact I was having.

When I decided that becoming a head was my next step, I set myself to apply for roles and hoped I'd be appointed within the year. It was quite unexpected when I got the first post that I applied for!

My new school needs to change and that's my motivation: it was in Special Measures and had converted to an academy 18 months before I took up post. When I came for interview I had a really strong emotional reaction. Just like when I started teaching, I felt the pull to make change happen for students.

The school's context means I'm in an interesting situation; like all heads I have to report back, gather data, write policies, plan for the range of educational changes that continue to come. We are part of a trust and the academy is regularly visited by our HMI but I feel as though I have quite a lot of freedom.

So much needs to change – finance, behaviour, curriculum, teaching and learning – that I have the opportunity to try new things. Obviously I still have to prove myself through students' outcomes but the academy is moving in the right direction.

One of the competencies that I've worked hard to develop is **Resilience and emotional maturity**. I tend to wear my heart on my sleeve and earlier in my career I sometimes responded to a situation or problem without analysing all aspects. I still express my enthusiasm, optimism and pride in student and staff achievements but it is far less obvious to others when I am faced with difficulties and challenges.

I've also had to develop my **Holding to account** competency. I thrive when I'm working collaboratively, and previously found it uncomfortable to have difficult conversations with staff. But I've learned that with responsibility comes the need to be clear with others about expectations and outcomes. That's vital for the academy and students to succeed.

Despite fearing I might feel alone, I know I'm not. I am supported by fellow principals who are part of the Northern Education Trust (NET) and their excellent team supports me at every stage. I work with senior leaders that I trust enormously and I have about 15 people from the Future Leaders network and NET that I can talk to when times get tough. And they do get tough! But these are peers who offer great advice, not judgement.

Being Principal is the most rewarding career that I can imagine. Seeing students, families, communities and staff develop is precious and I feel incredibly lucky to be able to lead a team to improve the outcomes for such a number of young people and adults.



“So much needs to change that I have the opportunity to try new things.”

Empowerment through leadership

Nichola Smith

Meadstead Primary Academy, Barnsley

Nichola Smith became a head much earlier than she had expected when her predecessor left mid-term. Here she describes her fears before she took on the role, and how, with support, she overcame them on the job.

Ever since I was a young girl I have wanted to be a teacher. Many would assume that this was because of my great education; but for me the opposite was the case. The poor experiences that my brother – who has special educational needs – and I had at school mean I've committed my career to offering an outstanding education to the children who need it the most.

Once in the profession I became disillusioned by some of the constraints placed upon teachers, which can stifle creativity and suck the fun out of teaching and learning. I decided that I wanted to be the one making the decisions.

I had three main concerns about headship: would it be career suicide if I didn't perform well enough? How would it affect my young family? And would headship be lonely?

First, I learned that being a head is a hard job but not necessarily a lonely one if you build a team that you trust, and who share your vision for the school. I am a member of the Future Leaders network, and they have been instrumental in how I have created a supportive structure around me. Besides, I'm too busy to be lonely!

Work-life balance is still something I'm trying to achieve; the nature of headship means you have peaks and troughs of activity, but my children at home need consistency. Surrounding myself with other school leaders and heads who share the same challenges means that I have support when the going gets tough.

The fear of career suicide has, for me, evaporated. As a head I have more

opportunities for development than ever before, especially through Future Leaders where I meet some of the world's best practitioners. Headship has helped me to find a new thirst for knowledge and desire for development. I now realise that failure isn't the end of the road, but a step on the way to improvement.

Headship was thrust upon me much sooner than I had anticipated due to my head leaving mid-term, so I stepped up and had to overcome these worries on the job. During my first months as a Head I've had to develop my **Holding to account** and **Inspiring others** competencies quickly – these are key to providing a world-class education for my students, because I have to influence my team positively and make sure we have the same aims.

Many conversations in the sector are about helping teachers to reach headship, but Future Leaders recognises the need to go beyond that. It's not enough to become a head; I want to be a head that helps every child in my school achieve. That has meant mentoring, shared expertise, and ongoing support. Support doesn't mean leading people by the hand, but empowering them to want to develop themselves.

My aim is to empower everyone in my school, students and staff alike, to be autonomous – the same way Future Leaders empowered me. I want all my students, including those who are most disadvantaged, to have the opportunity to be the leaders of tomorrow. Who knows – they might be the ones teaching my grandchildren.



“My aim is to empower everyone in my school, students and staff alike, to be autonomous – the same way Future Leaders empowered me.”

Inspiration, consistency and a golden age ahead

Sir Michael Barber

Chief Education Advisor, Pearson

One of the great assets of England's school system is the number of truly outstanding school leaders. For almost thirty years, through successive governments, the underlying trends have been on the one hand devolution of budgets and responsibility to schools, and on the other, demand for ever higher standards. With this combination the quality of school leadership becomes decisive and therefore a priority for policy.

In the 1990s, the Major government introduced formal qualifications such as the NPQH. Under Blair, the National College for School Leadership was established and, with Steve Munby's leadership, became an inspiration to many thousands of existing and aspiring heads. It was a voice for headteachers in policy debate and a source of practical and systematic leadership development. It was admired and envied globally. Its legacy is with us still.

One of its effects was to create networks among headteachers – not just within local authorities but across boundaries. Along with developments such as federations of schools, the result was transformative. Schools and chains of schools became engines of leadership development and many were very successful.

While research is important both for individual future leaders and policymakers, the best way to learn leadership is to see it in action and to make learning explicit through dialogue with a mentor or coach. The measure of a great headteacher is that they inspire numerous others to become school leaders. These great headteachers don't just inspire; they exude moral purpose, they really insist on a good education for every single student. Consistency and inspiration go together.

They also know that the difference between success and failure for individual students lies in attention to

detail; consistency in the quality of teaching and marking or in the application of a behaviour policy. The more challenging the school, the more important this consistency becomes, and The Future Leaders Trust has created a network of school leaders dedicated to applying these principles in the schools that need them most.

An apprentice school leader needs to see more than one leader in action in more than one context. So networks are important. Loose networks help but they are unlikely to be sufficiently systematic. Hence the success of the best federations and chains in generating future leaders.

In our contemporary education system a major source of hope is that leadership organisations have understood that future success depends on them and their members. The old role of lobbying government and waiting to see what they do is no longer seen as adequate. Instead they are taking responsibility for the performance of the system and leading rather than following. Together they are creating the Foundation for Leadership in Education, which will drive leadership development for the future, no longer dependent on government.

Maybe the combination of their leadership ambition, a government intent on creating the context for success and the right kind of dialogue between the two could herald a golden age ahead?



“The measure of a great headteacher is that they inspire numerous others to become school leaders.”

The Future Leaders network

The Future Leaders programme

We recruit talented leaders who share our belief that every child can and should achieve. Future Leaders work in schools that serve the country's most economically disadvantaged areas and are supported to make a positive, sustainable impact through:

- Regular training and development beginning with residential leadership development and continuing with regional events throughout the year
- Mentoring and coaching from an experienced current or former head
- Our network of over 500 school leaders who share practice and resources via regular events and our online platform.

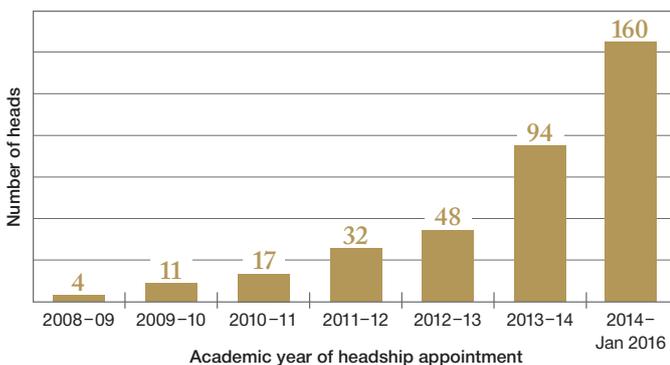
From SLT to CEO

Ten years ago, we began by offering one programme – Future Leaders – but have grown to develop programmes for all stages of senior leadership. All of our participants work in England's most challenging schools.

- **Leading Impact** provides aspiring and current senior leaders with the skills to make a positive difference in school.
- **Headship Now!** provides career support and leadership development for those who are 12 to 18 months from headship.
- **Talented Leaders** recruits exceptional headteachers and supports them to lead the schools that need them most.
- The **Headship Institute** offers heads of challenging schools access to a dedicated network.
- **Executive Educators** provides aspiring and current CEOs of multi-academy trusts with the knowledge, skills and network needed for these challenging new roles.

We have developed 160 headteachers of challenging schools

Progression to headship across our programmes

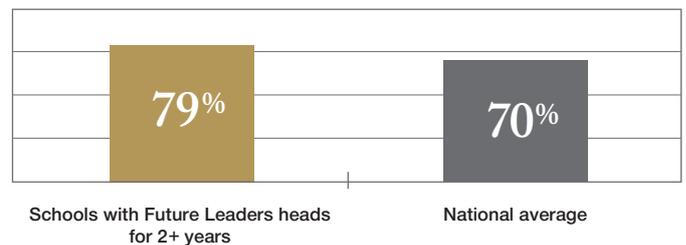


Impact

Primary (2015 data)

Despite having twice the proportion of disadvantaged students compared to the average primary school, students in schools led by Future Leaders heads who have been in post for two or more years achieve above the national average in all subjects. These Future Leaders have, on average, improved their schools' results by 12 percentage points since 2012.

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving Level 4+ in all subjects at KS2

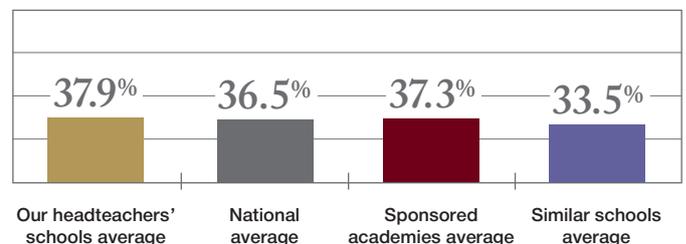


Secondary

(2013-14 data – to be confirmed following January results)

For the third year in a row, disadvantaged students in Future Leaders' schools achieved better grades and made more progress than pupils in our comparator groups.

Disadvantaged pupils attaining 5+ A*–C GCSEs (including English and maths) in 2014



Heads Up: Meeting the challenges of headteacher recruitment

Great school leaders are vital to ensuring that children get a great education but evidence shows that schools in England are finding it hard to recruit a headteacher.

This report addresses the causes of the headteacher shortage, and includes reflections on headship from leading figures in education, descriptions of the skills and competencies that create effective leadership and stories from Future Leaders about how they developed to become better headteachers.

The headteacher shortage needs action from across the country and The Future Leaders Trust calls on serving headteachers to identify the potential leaders in their school and encourage them to consider the role's inspiring possibilities.

To apply for Future Leaders or another of our programmes, contact our Candidate Services team:

E: recruitment@future-leaders.org.uk

To develop or recruit staff, including headteachers, contact our Schools team:

E: schools@future-leaders.org.uk

To discuss funding or to provide other support, contact:

E: fundraising@future-leaders.org.uk

For further information:

T: **0800 009 4142**

W: www.future-leaders.org.uk

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