School Leadership Today

An examination of how school leadership in England has changed over the last decade, its characteristics and context in 2009, and the challenges of leading schools in the 21st century.

Contents

Figures

Dear Colleague

Many things have changed since today's young adults set foot through the school gates for the very first time. One of the most fundamental changes has been the way in which our schools are led and managed. Our school leaders have, over the last 20 years, become increasingly critical to the success of our education system and preparing our children and young people for the future.

The role of headteacher has itself become much more autonomous, bringing with it a greater freedom to lead and set direction. Yet at the same time, accountabilities placed upon schools have increased and public expectations of schools and their leaders have become greater and broader too. Not only has the quality of senior leadership become even more critical to a school's success, but leaders and leadership responsibilities are also emerging at all levels of our schools, as heads empower talented staff to support them in meeting their expanding priorities and in dealing with change.

On the whole, our school leaders have risen and adapted to these changes well. According to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, we now have the best school leaders in England we have ever had. That is excellent news and it shows that progress is being made. But as you will see in this publication, there is still much to be done. A significant variation in standards still exists both within and between many of our schools, and children from poorer backgrounds are still lagging behind in terms of attainment. Meanwhile, many experienced school leaders are reaching retirement and it is critical that we develop enough high-quality leaders for the future if further progress is to be made.

There are numerous ways in which leadership is making a difference within and beyond the school. These include the quality of teaching and learning taking place in our classrooms, the effective use of school budgets and resources, the recruitment of staff and ensuring their professional development and the management of relationships with others from outside the school, for example, children's services, voluntary organisations, businesses, colleges, universities and other schools. The significance of such partnerships has been reflected by the various new models of leadership that are emerging across the country, bringing resources, professionals and leaders together in a way that is responsive to the needs of children and young people. Effective leadership ensures that children and young people get the support they need to enable them to make the most of their school and to reach their full potential.

So much rests on our leaders. That is why growing and developing leadership talent is a major priority, as is making sure that the very best leaders are able to support and develop others across the wider system. Preparing and supporting today's and our next generation of leaders to be as effective as possible will help to ensure that all of our schools can give each child and young person the opportunity to flourish.

I hope that you find this publication an excellent and thought-provoking insight into school leadership today, with perspectives on how it is evolving and succeeding, and the challenges that lie ahead.
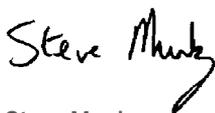
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School Leadership Today

Executive summary

Part 1

1.1 A profession in transition

The quality of school leadership is the best it has ever been - and improving. In 2008, Ofsted described leadership and management as "good or outstanding" in just over two thirds of schools. 77% of parents agree that this is the case at their child's school.

The autonomy and accountability of school leadership has grown in recent years. England has the second most devolved school system in the OECD and leaders have had to retain their focus on standards and learning whilst also delivering and collaborating with other services to provide improved outcomes for children and families.

The nature of school leadership has also changed. Success is being delivered by effective, well-led teams where leadership is distributed across an increasing variety of roles, such as school business managers. There are more school federations, academies and trusts, and executive heads are leading several schools at once. Schools and school leaders are increasingly working beyond their own organisations to support improvements in other schools.

School leadership is not however as diverse as it needs to be. More women are becoming heads but they remain under represented, especially in the secondary phase, and the percentage of BME heads may be as low as 2%.

The profession faces a significant demographic challenge. About a quarter of senior leaders are aged fifty-five or over, with a third of heads expected to retire before 2012. While there are fewer vacancies for headships than eight years ago, the number of applicants per primary post has also fallen and it may no longer be possible to provide one head teacher for each small primary school.

1.2 Attitudes to school leadership and leadership development

School leadership is rewarding. 92% of heads and 82% of other school leaders think they have a great job. Most would recommend it. They are driven by making a difference to others. Their role in ensuring teachers teach properly and those within school understand its values is appreciated by pupils.

School leaders are ambitious and committed to their own professional development. They prefer hands-on learning with experienced professionals, but also recognise the need for traditional course-based training. Leadership development approaches need to cater for a range of preferences, be embedded in the local context and involve schools collaborating with each other.

School leaders feel the need to improve their skills in developing learning organisations, leading learning and leading and implementing change. About half do not feel equipped to work with local authorities to develop commissioned services or to lead environmental sustainability. Significant minorities feel they lack the skills to manage finance and premises, work with governors on strategic development, and collaborate with other schools and agencies.

Heads see their main challenges as raising standards, maintaining a work-life balance, engaging with parents and managing staff. Three quarters are interested in working beyond their own organisation to improve outcomes across the system, for example as Executive Heads, School Improvement Partners or National Leaders of Education.

Most new teachers are intent on progressing their careers. 93% of new teachers aspire to be subject heads or co-ordinators, 57% to be deputies, and 27% to be heads. 85% say their choice of school would be influenced by the availability of leadership development opportunities. New heads and younger middle leaders often have different learning preferences and expectations and are less positive about the quality of leadership.

While many teachers find their heads inspiring, fewer want to become heads themselves because they are concerned about the stress, risk and time demands of the job. Heads need to convince others to follow in their footsteps.

1.3 Making a difference

School leadership is second only to the quality of teaching as an influence on pupil learning. Leaders are pivotal to school improvement and make a difference to behaviour, engagement and outcomes.

Effective leaders are open-minded, ready to learn, flexible and persistent. Success depends on their ability to apply leadership practices appropriately in the context of their school. Depending on this context, effective heads tend to focus on the physical environment and behaviour first, then on shared leadership responsibilities and the use of data, and finally on personalising and enriching the curriculum.

The most effective schools are led by teams rather than individuals. The heads of schools facing serious challenges however tend to distribute leadership after any fundamental changes and improvements have been made.

School leaders are increasingly working to support improvement in other schools, often involving their own leadership teams in the process. National College's London Leadership Strategy and National Leader of Education programmes demonstrate that both schools providing support and those receiving it significantly improve. Schools are also increasingly working with other professions and services, such as social workers, universities and industry, to provide coordinated services that improve outcomes for children and young people.

National College provides a range of leadership development programmes including the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), completed by almost 30,000 school leaders since 2000. Schools that engage with a greater number of National College core leadership programmes show greater rates of improvement in achievement outcomes.

85% of heads now have some kind of financial support, and 38% have access to School Business Managers or Directors. These professionals are providing new skills, additional income, savings and increased capacity. Many are part of their school's senior leadership team.

1.4 Three challenges for the profession

Despite improvement in overall results, the variation in pupil achievement is greater within schools than between them. It is therefore crucial that school leaders focus on how to support teachers in learning from each other.

Disadvantaged groups continue to achieve significantly lower outcomes. Good leadership is vital in overcoming disadvantage and promoting consistently high quality teaching, high expectations and mutual respect.

As the baby boom generation retires and potential future leaders are discouraged by the high workload and stress, there may not be enough school leaders for the future. Also, school leadership is not as diverse as it should be. It is vital that schools, school leaders, the College and our partners continue to work together to develop tomorrow's leaders.

Part 2

The College identifies four priorities for school leadership development in the 21st century.

2.1 Improving standards: the role of middle leaders

Quality of teaching is the most important factor in school improvement. Effective leadership of teaching and learning is crucial. Middle leaders are key but centralised development programmes such as National College's successful Leadership Pathways cannot expect to reach England's 250,000 middle leaders. The College is therefore piloting a self-sustaining approach that will see clusters of schools delivering 'on the job' learning locally, supported by accredited local facilitators and National College materials.

2.2 Beyond the school gate

School leaders are increasingly improving outcomes beyond their own institution. Three quarters of current heads are interested in taking the 'next step' of a system leadership role – School Improvement Partner, Executive Head or

National Leader of Education. The approach has significant support from parents. Research shows that both supported and supporting schools achieve improved outcomes. The College is developing further system leadership opportunities, including a role for experienced heads to act as 'professional partners' to newly qualified heads, a pilot programme for primary heads who want to lead more than one school, and a fellowship programme for exceptional leaders.

More school leaders are working closely with other local services to meet local needs and improve outcomes for children and young people. This work also supports community cohesion by bringing children and families into contact with people from different backgrounds. Development of this 'outward-facing' style of leadership requires the ability to build effective relationships, develop trust between organisations, effectively distribute leadership and rigorously focus on outcomes. Nine out of ten heads feel they would benefit from training in leading collaboration with other partners. The College will continue to build development opportunities in this area.

2.3 Growing leaders

There is a risk of a future shortage of head teachers. Primary and faith schools in particular are finding it hard to recruit new heads. National College's Succession Planning strategy is working to ensure an adequate supply of appropriately qualified future leaders.

Through National College's local solutions approach, National Succession Consultants are supporting collaborations between schools, local authorities, dioceses and others, particularly in areas of greatest challenge. Our Targeted Support provides localities with funding for NPQH graduates who have not yet stepped up to headship, our Be a Head programme helps graduates prepare for headship, and our Governor Engagement campaign – in partnership with NGA and NCOGS – is increasing capacity and awareness.

The redesigned NPQH, now mandatory for all new heads, provides a personalised programme underpinned by the National Standards for Head Teachers. Each candidate has a leadership placement in another school. National College's new Accelerate to Headship programme is aimed at talented individuals with potential to progress to NPQH within three years. Its personalised approach involves challenging experiences within and outside school, plus support from a leadership development advisor. By distributing leadership across their teams, heads also provide valuable development opportunities and nurture talent.

Increasing the diversity of school leadership is a key priority of the Succession Planning programme. National College's Equal Access to Promotion, provided in partnership with the NUT, is helping. The College will continue to work with school leaders, governing bodies, local authorities and its partners to ensure that increasing diversity remains a priority.

The development of new system leadership opportunities can aid recruitment and retention by providing a longer career structure attractive to young teachers and a refreshing 'next step' for experienced heads. System leadership also provides development opportunities for those who 'step up' to take on additional responsibilities while the system leader supports other schools.

2.4 Leading change

Leading change is one of the most fundamental skills demanded of school leaders. Three quarters of school leaders are confident in leading change within their school, but only a third feel equipped to lead broader change beyond their school, such as establishing a federation.

Models of change leadership, such as that developed by National College with the Bridge Consultancy, can help leaders understand what needs to be changed or why change is not happening. To lead change effectively, a head needs resilience and moral purpose, and the ability to communicate a core vision and identify specific strategies that need to be put in place. National College is also exploring what change leadership means for middle leaders.

Conclusion

School leadership is a significant policy priority for governments everywhere. In England it has evolved in the face of significant changes and challenges and is now the best it has ever been - and getting better.

School leaders will continue to face significant change in the future, requiring them to collaborate, adapt, explain, synthesise, model, personalise and localise.

To develop sustainable world class school leadership, we need to maximise the impact of the best school leaders by encouraging them to provide support within and across schools and to develop collaboration between schools and with other agencies. The future may bring further development of executive system leaders, together with the evolution of local children's service leadership.

National College believes the core curriculum for leadership development in the 21st century must focus on leadership of teaching and learning, outward-facing and system leadership, development of future leaders and leadership of change.

Schools should lead the way in identifying talent and developing leaders, supported by leadership development programmes, visits to other schools and contexts, high quality coaching and mentoring, access to new ideas and reflection.

The stakes are high and we have never faced such a rapid pace of change, such an array of tough challenges. But neither have we been so well equipped to deal with such challenges. The ingredients are there to sustain school leadership into the 21st century, to rise to the challenges we face, learn from the best and build our capacity and capability. There has never been a better time to be a school leader.

School Leadership Today

Introduction

The importance of school leadership in ensuring positive outcomes for children and young people has been demonstrated repeatedly in national and international research, and is a key policy priority for governments worldwide. The National College exists to inspire leaders in order to improve children's lives[1].

Schools and school leadership in England have changed rapidly in recent years. The number and variety of roles have grown. Collaboration between schools and with other services have developed. The quality and impact of leadership have improved. And the pace of change remains high.

In this publication, we have used the College's knowledge and learning to highlight some of the key changes that have taken place in school leadership in England over the last decade, what that leadership looks like in 2009, and our view of the challenges that it faces and how it is likely to develop in the future. The focus is on school leadership. Future publications will also include a broader look at the leadership of children's centres and children's services.

This publication is in two parts. Part 1 describes school leadership in 2009. Section 1.1 covers some key developments in policy and practice, and provides some details on the number and characteristics of school leaders. Section 1.2 describes attitudes to school leadership as expressed by pupils, parents and school leaders themselves, including the ways in which they prefer to learn and develop. Section 1.3 describes the impact that school leadership and leadership development are making. Section 1.4 outlines three key challenges that we feel schools and school leaders are facing: reducing variability, narrowing the gap and promoting sustainable leadership.

Part 2 describes the priorities for school leadership in the 21st century as we see them. Section 2.1 describes the importance of developing middle leadership in order to ensure high-quality teaching and learning and reduce variability. Section 2.2 covers how schools will increasingly need to work with each other and in collaboration with others to deliver improved outcomes and build a self-sustaining school system. Section 2.3 highlights the importance of ensuring that there are enough appropriately developed and experienced school leaders in the future. Finally, section 2.4 describes the need to develop understanding and skill in leading change.

Part 3 contains reflections from two of the other organisations that share National College's interest in supporting the development of school leaders: the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), and the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT). Part 4 provides a conclusion. There is a bibliography of sources referred to in this publication at the end.

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[1] NSCL helps make a positive difference to children's lives through the development of world-class school and children's centre leaders. In September 2009, National College proposes to change its name. The new name will reflect the recent extension of the College's remit to offer development opportunities for leaders of children's services.

School Leadership Today

School leadership in 2009

Part 1: School leadership in 2009

1.1 A profession in transition

The past decade has seen big changes in school leadership. There is now more variety in the types of roles that school leaders hold. Many of these roles, particularly that of headteacher, are more demanding than they were. But school leadership in England is the best it has ever been, and improving. It remains a highly rewarding career that attracts inspirational and committed individuals who are making a significant difference to the lives of children, young people and their families.

The evolution of education policy through greater accountability and responsibility and new school structures have all significantly raised expectations for school leaders. New policies have required not only new ways of working, but new styles of leadership and new skills. More recently, wider issues and society's demands have been having a greater impact, as schools are increasingly asked to support broader community outcomes.

> According to Ofsted (2008), the quality of school leadership is the best it has ever been, and improving.

This changing policy environment has led to the development of a new type of leader and a focus on the super team rather than the super head. Subject and pastoral leaders play a greater role and many schools now have business managers. Some heads run several schools and an increasing number are part of federations.

Many heads are approaching retirement, a fact that requires effective planning for their successors. Teachers are becoming leaders at a younger age. Some heads, deputies and assistant heads have come from outside teaching. But even though women outnumber men as teachers, their numbers are not yet reflected in headships. And too few black and minority ethnic teachers are in leadership roles.

This is the profile of a profession in transition. In this first section, we present an overview of the changes in the last decade and look at where school leadership is today.

Improved leadership, increased accountability

According to Ofsted (2008), the quality of school leadership is the best it has ever been, and improving. Leadership and management are judged 'good or outstanding' in just over two-thirds of all schools, with the proportion of secondary schools with outstanding leadership rising from 17 per cent in 2006/07 to 20 per cent in 2007/08. Leadership and management are inadequate in only 2 per cent of schools (Ofsted, 2008).

Figure 1: The effectiveness of leadership and management in schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008 (percentage of schools)

	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	40	55		4
Primary schools	15	52	31	2
Secondary schools	20	46	30	4
Sixth forms	19	49	31	1
Special schools	27	54	17	2
Pupil referral units	9	56	29	7
All schools	16	51	30	2

Legend:
- Outstanding
- Good
- Satisfactory
- Inadequate
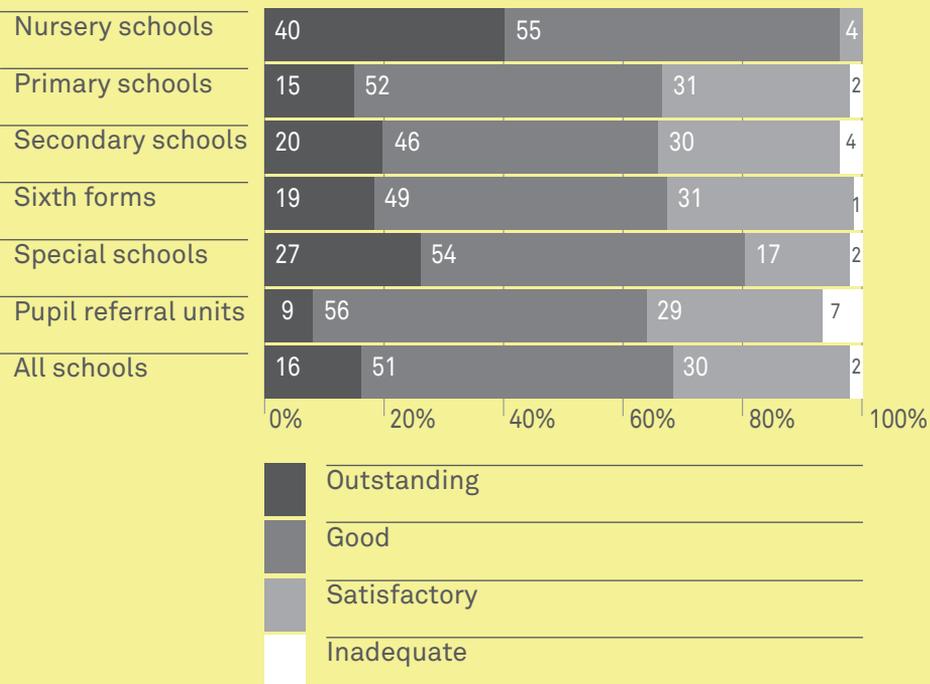
Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those schools that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Source: Ofsted, 2008

This positive view of school leadership is shared by parents, 77 per cent of whom view the leadership of their child's school as good or outstanding. At the same time, parents recognise the increased pressures placed on school leaders in recent years, with 79 per cent viewing it as more demanding than when they were at school (BMRB, 2009)[2].

This achievement is even more significant when considered in the context of the many changes and developments that have taken place in school leadership in the last decade. Since 1988, school leaders have faced an increasing number of responsibilities, some of which are outlined below.

[2] BMRB's survey was based on 1,192 parents of children aged 5 16 interviewed during February and March 2009.

Heads are now more accountable than they ever have been, with responsibility for the national curriculum, targets, testing, performance tables and Ofsted inspections. At the same time, they have more control over their multimillion-pound budgets, and England has the second most devolved school system in the OECD (Pont et al., 2008b).

The centrality of good teaching

Good teaching is one of the most important determinants of pupil progress, as recent international research reaffirms (Barber and Mourshed, 2007)[3]. In England, workforce reforms have improved teachers' pay, increased the number of support staff available to support learning and aimed to give teachers more time to plan lessons. There is now a national ambition that all teachers should achieve a qualification at Master's level during their teaching careers, significantly raising the status of continuing professional development (DCSF, 2008a)[4].

The quality of teaching is already improving through approaches such as Assessment for Learning (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2009a). There have been programmes for gifted and talented pupils and a stronger focus on catch-up for those falling behind, initially introduced as part of the Excellence in Cities programme (DfEE Press Notice, 1999). More recently, there has been renewed focus on personalised education to meet the needs of individual pupils, with more attention paid to how children learn and progress.

> The leadership of teaching and learning within each school therefore remains absolutely central to its success.

Literacy and numeracy remain key in primary schools. Most recently Sir Jim Rose has proposed that traditional subjects be subsumed into broader themes within which national curriculum requirements would be taught (DCSF, 2008a). The national curriculum for 11–14 year olds has reduced prescribed content, as well as introducing more personal skills (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2009b). Key Stage 3 tests have been removed, increasing flexibility for teachers (DCSF Press Release, 2008). Senior and curriculum leaders are expected to continue to improve achievement and provide more opportunities for innovation and creativity.

Research suggests that the impact school leaders have on pupils is largely the result of what happens in classrooms. Good leaders employ good teachers, and help develop their skills (Barber and Mourshed, 2007). The leadership of teaching and learning within each school therefore remains absolutely central to its success.

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[3] The three most important factors contributing to the success of the world's best education system related to the quality of teachers and teaching.
[4] Such an expectation is the norm in Finland, which regularly tops international education tables.

Developing schools for the future

As well as more money for teachers' and school leaders' pay[5], there has also been a big focus on capital investment. Over 1,000 new schools were built between 1997 and 2007, and schools acquired many more computers and interactive whiteboards (DfES, 2007). Building Schools for the Future and the Primary Capital Programme aim to renew or rebuild every secondary school and half of all primary schools by 2022 (Teachernet, 2009c).

But these initiatives have not just been about bricks and mortar. They have given schools and local communities a fantastic opportunity to redefine what learning means and what they want from their school environments. With new buildings, there are new approaches to school organisation, designed to improve learning, behaviour and the interaction between staff and teachers, including new, multi-purpose primary schools and academies (Teachernet, 2009b, Wilshaw, 2008). Schools are starting to integrate new technology into their teaching, although the majority still have some way to go: the schools' technology agency, Becta, estimates that just 20 per cent of schools use technology to its full potential (Becta Press Notice, 2009).

Collaborating with other services

While schools have always played a significant role in their local communities, there is an increased expectation that they will work effectively with other services beyond their school gates to improve outcomes for children, young people and families.

In response to Lord Laming's report into Victoria Climbié's death in 2003 (Lord Laming, 2003), schools have been asked to work alongside other services to keep children safe and healthy, and to contribute to improving outcomes for children, young people and families as defined within the Every Child Matters framework (DfES, 2003). Schools are now expected to provide extended facilities, not just for their own students but for the wider community (ContinYou and DCSF, 2008). In the process, school leadership is now seen to have a wider public value (Mongon and Leadbetter, 2008).

These developments have had a big impact on governmental structures. Nationally, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) was created in 2007, with a Children's Plan to set its course. Ofsted was expanded to reflect these changes (DCSF, 2007a)[6]. Local government departments were merged and the role of director of children's services was created. Children's trusts brought educational services, social services, health and police partners together locally. The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill[7] will introduce a new duty on schools in 2009 to participate in children's trusts, which will involve working strategically with the local authority to commission services.

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[5] OECD (2007) reports that headteachers in England are the highest paid in the world.

[6] The Children's Plan includes measures targeted at improving child and family welfare, safeguarding measures for children, literacy and numeracy support, a new requirement that young people stay in education or training until the age of 18 from 2015, and improved youth services.

[7] This Bill had just passed the committee stage within the House of Commons at the time of writing.

Leadership across schools

The expectations placed upon schools have therefore been significant. They have included:

continuing to improve learning and standards

driving the vision and delivery of schools for the future

improving behaviour and the ways in which pupils are engaged in decision-making

working with other agencies to regenerate local areas and improve the outcomes of the children and young people who live there

This has required the development of new ways of working and of new approaches to increasing leadership capacity.

This can be particularly challenging for small schools. Demographic shifts have led to fewer primary schools, although there is also an imperative against closing small village schools. But one cannot expect a single head for each primary school with fewer than 100 pupils. Steve Munby, Chief Executive of National College, has said: "I am increasingly convinced that the notion of having one headteacher in each small primary school trying to shoulder all the responsibilities is a model that is no longer tenable or sustainable" (Munby, 2008).

New forms of joint leadership across schools can increase leadership capacity, as is already happening in a range of local authorities (National College, 2008f). In many ways, schools have become more diverse in the past 10 years, for example with the development of academies and with nearly all secondary schools having one or more specialism. Yet, at the same time, there has been an increasing recognition that schools need to collaborate to succeed. Many schools have used trust status to formalise partnerships with other schools as well as with universities, colleges and private sector partners (DCSF, 2008j), while others are developing federations with other schools to enable hard-edged partnership working. With the increase in the number of school federations, academies and trusts, there is a growing demand for executive heads to lead several schools. Academies formed by a single partner have developed communities of interest – or distinctive educational brands – across several schools, as demonstrated in case study 1 (Adonis, 2008).

Case study 1: The Harris federation and urban leadership model

The nine Harris academies – the ninth opens in September 2009 – have created a distinctive approach to education in south London, which has produced good exam results and schools that are popular with both parents and students.

Each Harris head is autonomous, but they all benefit from the collective wisdom of their peers and collaboration within a hard federation led by a chief executive officer. This has been crystallised in a Harris Master's degree in urban leadership, developed in partnership with the University of London's Institute of Education and the London Leadership Centre.

The first year of 2007/08 saw 24 aspiring Harris leaders enrolled for the course, which is tailored for the specific challenges of improving tough urban schools.

The Harris model shows the benefits of working together to develop a local approach and share knowledge and experience.

Schools supporting schools

There is an increasing expectation that the best leaders will take responsibility for improvements in weaker schools. This represents a fundamental change in the responsibilities of senior school leaders. Instead of top-down measures or external advice, there is a growing expectation that schools will take greater responsibility for each other's improvement. This recognises that where a school is experiencing difficulties, the best intervention and support can come from a successful fellow head and his or her own leadership team.

Programmes designed to reform urban schools such as the City Challenge initiative, which has been extended from a successful London programme to Manchester and the Black Country, assume greater inter-school co-operation. The leadership strategy for City Challenge, led by National College, uses experienced heads as consultant leaders or Local Leaders of Education (LLEs) and strong leadership training (DCSF, 2008d, National College, 2008b). There has also been the important development of National College's National Leaders of Education (NLEs) who, along with their own national support schools, assist schools facing challenging circumstances. These programmes in which schools support schools have been shown to deliver significant improvements for both the schools receiving the support, and the schools providing the support (see section 1.3).

> ..there is a growing expectation that schools will take greater responsibility for each other's improvement.

National and Local Leaders of Education

A Local Leader of Education (LLE) is a successful headteacher who provides coaching and mentoring support to headteachers of schools facing challenges. The LLE focuses on enabling the partner school to build capacity for sustainable improvement. The precise role of the LLE is flexible and based on context. LLEs are currently available in the City Challenge areas of London, Greater Manchester and the Black Country as well as Leicester, Bristol, Luton, Essex and Sheffield.

A National Leader of Education (NLE) is an outstanding headteacher who, along with staff from his or her own school (designated a national support school or NSS), provides direct support and leadership capacity to schools in challenging contexts. This support ranges from the provision of an executive or interim headteacher, supported by members of his or her staff, who leads on specific teaching, learning and behaviour strategies, through to the provision of advice, guidance and targeted interventions.

New leaders, new teams

These developments have required people with the right skills for the job: a new type of school leader who is entrepreneurial, outward-looking and able to work across schools and with different services such as further education (FE) colleges, social services, health services and local businesses.

The range of expertise required in leadership highlights the importance of building strong leadership teams. The most successful headteachers are sharing or distributing leadership responsibilities across their leadership teams (DCSF, 2007a). There are more roles within these teams. These include an increasing number of non-teaching leaders, including those from business backgrounds. At the same time, greater financial independence has heralded a growth in the number of bursars and business managers in schools.

How many school leaders are there?

As we have seen, today's heads have more responsibilities than their counterparts did 20 years ago. Beyond a traditional focus on managing teaching and learning and ensuring the effective operation of their school, there is now a greater expectation that they will set the strategic direction and ethos of their school, work with other schools and organisations, and develop and manage their staff (DCSF, 2008i). Many heads manage budgets topping £6 million a year. In response to this, the number and variety of school leadership roles have increased.

There are some 22,000 headteachers in English maintained schools (DCSF, 2008h) There are 17,200 in primary and nursery schools and 3,400 in secondary schools. The remaining 1,400 largely lead special schools and pupil referral units. In total, there are 59,300 heads, deputies and assistant heads, amounting to 16.1 per cent of all teachers [DCSF, 2008h].

Figure 2: 'Leadership' as a proportion of teachers, by phase, January 2008

Source: DCSF, 2008h.

The number of primary heads has fallen by 1,400 since 2001 to just 17,200, as primary schools have been amalgamated and closed in response to falling rolls. But while there are also fewer primary deputies than there were, at just 11,900, the number of assistant heads has risen fivefold from 1,200 to 6,000 (DCSF, 2008h).

Secondary schools employ far more assistant heads than deputies, and this number has risen to 11,400 (DCSF, 2008h). The average secondary school now has five deputy or assistant heads compared with 3.4 in 2001.

Since local management of schools was introduced in 1988, English schools have had significantly more autonomy than their counterparts in most other countries (Pont et al., 2008b). This has led many to employ business managers or bursars: their number has doubled to 8,100 since 1997 (DCSF, 2008h). Some 85 per cent of heads now have access to this kind of support, most commonly a bursar (40 per cent) or finance officer (38 per cent) (National College, 2008a). Some 38 per cent have access to a school business manager or director, and as we shall see in section 1.3, these roles are making a significant difference in schools.

While there are nearly six times as many women as there are men working in nursery and primary schools, only 9 per cent of these women are heads compared with 23 per cent of men

Figure 3: Prevalence of school business managers and equivalent staff

Role	%
Finance officer	40
Bursar	38
School business manager (SBM)	31
School business director (SBD)	7
None of these	15
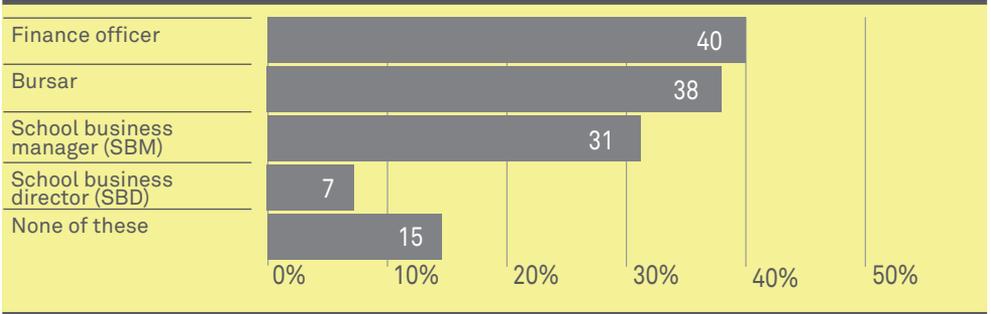
There are other new leadership roles too, many of which have emerged as a consequence of the increased focus on addressing the wider needs of children and families. These include those within over 2,900 children's centres that bring together education, health and other services for young children and their parents (DCSF, 2008f)[8].

How diverse are they?

More women are becoming heads: 60 per cent of heads in 2005 were women compared with 50 per cent in 1997 (STRB, 2008). But, as Figure 4 shows, they remain under-represented. Only 68 per cent of primary heads are women, compared to 85 per cent of the primary teaching workforce, and only 37 per cent of secondary heads, compared to 57 per cent of the secondary teaching workforce (DCSF, 2008h).

Figure 4: Gender profile of teachers and heads, by phase, as at January 2008

Category	male	female
primary - all teachers	15	85
primary - heads only	32	68
secondary - all teachers	43	57
secondary - heads only	63	37
special - all teachers	45	55
special - heads only	61	39
all phases - all teachers	30	70
all phases - heads only	38	62

Source: DCSF, 2008h
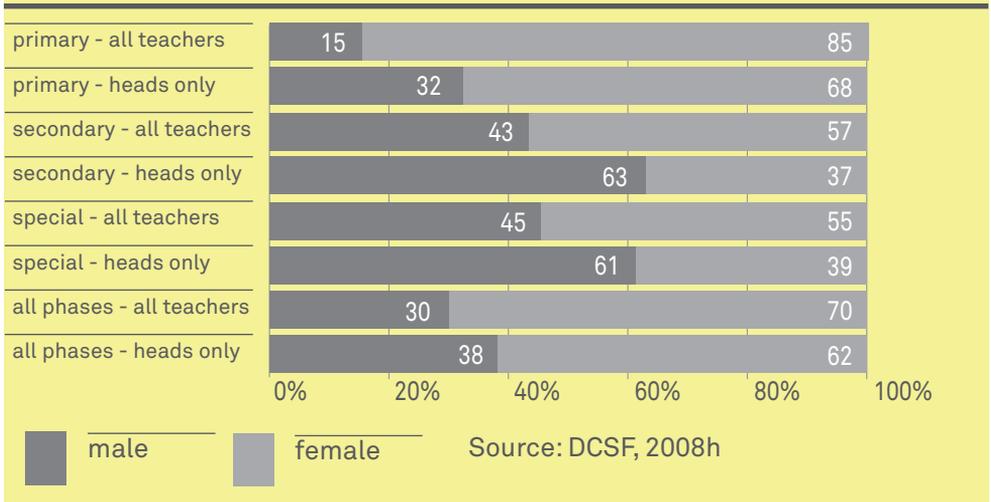
[8] By March 2009, 2,900 children's centres were established, with a planned total of 3,500 by 2010.

There are some signs of change: women accounted for 73 per cent and 41 per cent respectively of successful appointments to headship in primary and secondary schools in 2007 (Howson, 2008). But while more are deputies or assistant heads, a significant gap remains, particularly in secondary schools. Furthermore men working in nursery and primary schools are more than twice as likely to be the head. While there are nearly six times as many women as there are men working in nursery and primary schools, only 9 per cent of these women are heads compared with 23 per cent of the men (DCSF, 2008h). Figure 5 shows that women remain under-represented at all levels of senior leadership across all school phases.

Figure 5: Proportion of women in different school roles. There is under-representation of females at senior levels.

Even within senior leadership positions there is under-representation at the higher rank

	Primary	Secondary	Special
Classroom	88	57	71
Deputies/assistant heads	76	42	64
Heads	65	34	49

Classroom

Deputies/assistant heads
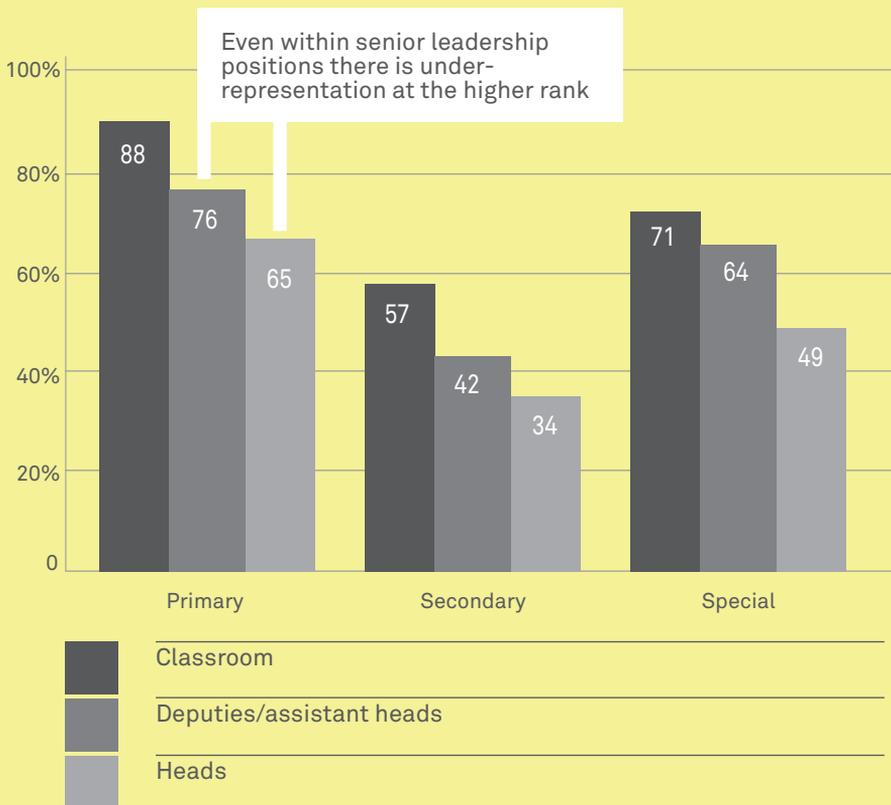
Heads

Source: McKinsey & Company, 2006

Estimates suggest that the percentage of heads who are from a black or minority ethnic (BME) background may be as low as 2 per cent, compared with just over 5 per cent of teachers (DCSF, 2008h)[9] and 9 per cent of the population of England (National Statistics, 2005). Monitoring of the recruitment of headteachers suggests that only 1.5 per cent of primary and 2.2 per cent of secondary headship appointees in 2007 were from non-white backgrounds (Howson, 2008). While there has been more than a twofold increase in the recruitment of BME teacher trainees in the last decade (McNamara et al., 2009 [forthcoming]), the number of non-white headship recruits does not yet show a similar increase.

New research on the career aspirations and experiences of BME teachers for the NASUWT and National College (forthcoming) examines the extent to which BME teachers have ambitions to become head teachers in the future, and explores the experiences of those BME teachers who have realised these ambitions. The research will provide for the first time detailed evidence about the difficulties experienced by aspiring BME school leaders, the impact of school leadership cultures on BME teachers' career progression and the barriers faced by BME teachers seeking to move into leadership roles in schools. The study has important implications for schools, governing bodies, local authorities, Government and other national agencies on promoting race equality to ensure that school leadership is inclusive and draws from all the talents.

What about recruitment and retention?

The profession faces a significant demographic challenge: 64 per cent of heads are 50 years old or older and 33 per cent are 55 or over. Estimates suggest that about one-third of heads are expected to retire in the five-year period from 2008

to 2012. Importantly, almost one-quarter of assistant and deputy heads are also aged 55 or older (see Figure 6 and Figure 7). As a result of the post-war baby boom, there is a risk that not enough younger leaders will be available to take their place.

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[9] In January 2008, 94.3 per cent of teachers were recorded in the white ethnic groups, a decrease of 0.3 percentage points from 2007 and a decrease of 1.0 percentage point from 2006.

Figure 6: Age profile of headteacher population, at 31 March 2007

headteachers

33 % are 55 or over

64 % are 50 or over

Legend:
- Primary
- Secondary
- Special
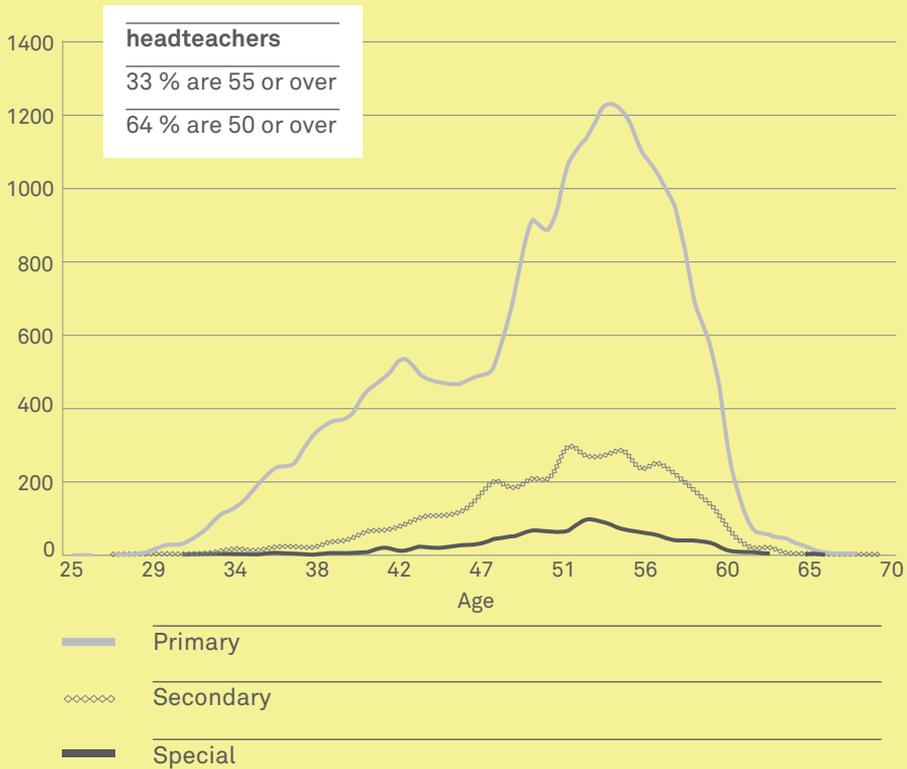
Source: National College analysis of DCSF Pensions Database of Teacher Records.

The number of applicants for secondary headship posts has remained fairly static in recent years, with 15.7 applicants for each post in 2007/8. But there were only 4.6 applicants per primary headship vacancy in 2007/8 (Howson, 2008) compared with 6 in 2003/4 (Howson, 2004).

Figure 7: Age profile of assistant and deputy headteacher population at 31 March 2007

Senior leaders except headteachers

23 % are 55 or over

45 % are 50 or over

Primary

Secondary

Special
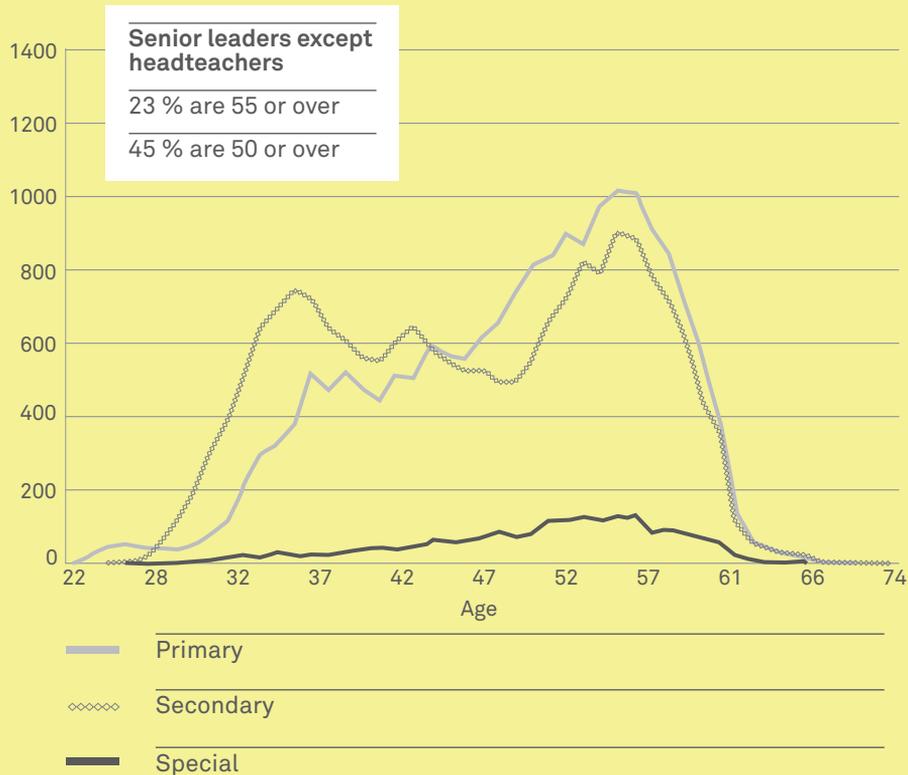
Source: National College analysis of DCSF Pensions Database of Teacher Records

As at May 2009, over 32,000 people have graduated from the National Professional Qualification for Headship since 2000

There is a significant difference between primary and secondary schools in terms of the number of applications per post. The number of applicants for secondary headship posts has remained fairly static in recent years, with 15.7 applicants for each post in 2007/8. But there were only 4.6 applicants per primary headship vacancy in 2007/8 (Howson, 2008) compared with 6 in 2003/4 (Howson, 2004). Despite these challenges, there are some encouraging signs.

Vacancies for headship posts are lower now than they were nine years ago (DCSF, 2009)[10]. Nearly 30,000 people have graduated from the National Professional Qualification for Headship since 2000 (National College data). More teachers are entering the profession later in life: the average age is now 30 (House of Lords Science and Technology Committee, 2006) and many bring experiences that may support today's wider responsibilities for school leaders. These succession planning issues are explored in more detail in sections 1.4 and 2.3.

Conclusions

Throughout this section, we have drawn a picture of a profession in transition, one that has grown in size, accountability and variation in role. We have seen how schools are increasingly working together, supporting one another, and engaging with other professional and organisations. We have described the significant challenges in diversity and recruitment and retention. In the following sections, we look in more detail at attitudes to school leadership, before exploring the difference that school leadership is making and the challenges it faces.

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[10] There were 140 headship vacancies in January 2009, 0.7 per cent of headship posts compared with 0.9 per cent of posts in 2000. There were 260 vacancies for deputy or assistant headships, 0.7 per cent of posts compared with 1.3 per cent of deputy or assistant posts in 2000. A total of 570 posts were temporarily filled.

1.2 Attitudes to school leadership and leadership development

In summer 2008, the College commissioned the market research company Illuminas to explore the attitudes of school leaders to their roles and to examine the learning content and style that they wanted in their leadership development. The purpose was to learn more about the varying views of leaders of different ages, in different roles and at different career stages. The survey explored morale, perceived challenges, concerns, ambition, preferred learning styles and areas for skill development. Illuminas interviewed 1,000 previous users of National College services using an emailed online survey, and 500 non-users of National College services were interviewed over the telephone (Illuminas, 2008). The respondents included headteachers, deputy or assistant headteachers, middle leaders and business managers. The findings have helped to shape National College decisions about the content of its programmes and activities and also how they are delivered.

Further surveys of parents and young people were commissioned in spring 2009 to investigate attitudes towards school leaders and expectations of them. Together these surveys build a picture of an important, high-quality profession that is valued by those it serves and whose members are ambitious and engaged in their own development.

How rewarding is school leadership?

National College's annual opinion survey shows that 92 per cent of heads think being a head is 'a great job' and 86 per cent would recommend it to their staff (National College, 2009b). When asked, 97 per cent relished the opportunity to shape the school as they would like, while 90 per cent believe they could leave a legacy that goes beyond their own school (National College, 2008a).

92 per cent of heads think being a head is 'a great job' and 86 per cent would recommend it to their staff

The broader group of school leaders are also very positive about their role, with 82 per cent of school leaders saying they have 'a great job', and 88 per cent being willing to recommend it to others. A total of 97 per cent felt that their job gives them the opportunity to influence children's lives.

These are extraordinarily high figures and suggest that school leadership is one of the most rewarding of all professions. Research has shown that people are attracted into teaching because they want to help young people to learn, give something back to the community and address important challenges (DfES, 2004). School leaders have a strong commitment to a moral purpose, and, as we shall see in the next section, they are visibly making a difference, and it is this that makes their profession so rewarding.

The main challenges

School leaders see raising standards as their biggest challenge (56 per cent), closely followed by work life balance and personal well-being (50 per cent). Other significant issues include engaging or working with parents (43 per cent) and managing staff (41 per cent) [figure 8].

In terms of the demands of leadership, 54 per cent of headteachers say the job makes too many demands on their time and 47 per cent see the job as being too stressful. These issues discourage their colleagues from pursuing headship: 57 per cent of school leaders who are not yet heads are concerned headship may be too stressful or risky, 41 per cent are concerned that the job would make too many demands on their time, and 40 per cent are concerned that it would affect their work life balance.

Despite these concerns about stress and time, the morale of staff in their school is seen as high by heads. Experienced heads (61 per cent) and new heads (53 per cent) believe morale is very high or high in their school. However, their senior staff members are less positive, with less than half – 41 per cent of middle leaders and 44 per cent of deputy and assistant heads – believing morale is high or very high.

57 per cent of school leaders who are not yet heads are concerned headship may be too stressful or risky, 41 per cent are concerned that the job would make too many demands on their time, and 40 per cent are concerned that it would affect their work life balance.

Figure 8: Key challenges described by school leaders

Challenge	Percentage
Raising standards	56%
Workilfe balance / Personal wellbeing	50%
Engaging and working with parents	43%
Managing staff	41%
Being accountable for school outcomes	40%
Understanding / Communicating new Government initiatives	37%
Managing budgets	37%
Managing bureaucracy	36%
Student behavioural issues	28%
Securing extended school provision	21%
Understanding and communicating research on best practice	15%
Engaging and working with governors	15%
Health and safety	10%
Poor pay and conditions	6%

Source: Illuminas, 2008

How good do school leaders think they are?

Two-thirds of school leaders rate leadership at their own school as 'effective' or 'very effective'. They therefore share Ofsted's overall view of leadership in schools (Ofsted, 2008). Some 31 per cent of experienced heads say the quality of leadership in their school is 'very effective', compared with just 10 per cent of new heads.

New heads and younger middle leaders – often subject heads – tend to be more critical. Only 10 per cent of middle leaders aged under 40 rate their school's leadership as 'very effective', and 24 per cent see leadership in their school as 'quite ineffective' or 'very ineffective' (Illuminas, 2008). Figure 9 shows responses to the question 'How effective would you say the quality of leadership in your school is?

Figure 9: Judgements by senior leaders on the effectiveness of leadership in their school

Total	6%	24%	41%	26%
Experienced Head	3%	18%	45%	31%
New Head	4%	36%	48%	10%
Deputy / Assistant 40+	7%	19%	38%	33%
Deputy / Assistant under 40	6%	36%	39%	17%
Middle leader 40+	5%	8% 24%	38%	24%
Middle leader under 40	3%	20% 27%	39%	10%
Business Manager	7%	25%	33%	34%
Primary	3%	6% 23%	41%	26%
Secondary	8%	25%	41%	24%
Online (User)	3%	7% 26%	39%	24%
CATI (non user)	4%	19%	45%	30%

Very ineffective ← → Very effective

Source: Illuminas, 2008

Aspiration and ambition

Many school leaders are ambitious and the majority are actively looking for opportunities to develop their skills. Most aspire to promotion, an important finding in the light of concerns about future leadership.

A survey of new teachers in 2008 showed that 93 per cent aspire to be subject heads or co-ordinators, 57 per cent would like to be deputies, and 27 per cent already have their eyes on a headship (National College, 2008g). National College's annual headship index survey, which measures the ambition level, shows that 34 per cent of classroom teachers and 29 per cent of middle leaders aspire to be heads (National College, 2008d). Crucially, some 85 per cent of new teachers say that their choice of school would be influenced by the availability of leadership development opportunities (Illuminas, 2008).

This high level of ambition in the teacher workforce can only be realised if it is met with opportunities to learn and practise leadership skills. While 71 per cent of teachers are inspired by their head, only 42 per cent say their head 'inspires them to consider headship' for themselves. And while we have seen that 92 per cent of heads think that their job is 'great', only 56 per cent of teachers and other leaders think that headship is a great job (National College, 2008d). There is clearly more for school leaders to do to inspire more junior staff to follow in their footsteps (National College, 2008d).

Three-quarters of existing heads are interested in a system-wide role, for example as executive heads, school improvement partners or national leaders of education. This is a very high figure. It demonstrates the appetite within the profession for collaboration and support, and the potential for continuing to develop a sustainable, self-improving school system. It also shows the desire for career progression beyond leading an individual school.

The survey also found that 80 per cent of current deputies and assistant heads under 40 are interested in headship, compared with 54 per cent of their older colleagues in the same roles. Younger middle leaders also tend to be keener than their older counterparts to take up a deputy headship. Some 73 per cent of those aged under 40 showed interest in the role, compared with 47 per cent of their older colleagues.

Almost half (47 per cent) of middle leaders are interested in a headship role, and almost the same proportion of school business managers are as enthusiastic, with 45 per cent sharing that ambition – a surprising finding, given that the idea of their assuming headship has only recently emerged as a possibility.

How do school leaders like to learn?

Leaders like to learn in very different ways, which presents a challenge for the College. For example, 51 per cent prefer training that delivers concrete information, while the remaining 49 per cent prefer training that focuses more on experiential reflection.

Experienced heads are split fairly evenly between the two learning styles, but new heads are keener on receiving concrete information. This is reflected in the lack of confidence that 46 per cent of new heads say they have in their ability to do the job (Illuminas, 2008).

A clear majority of leaders would prefer to learn alongside colleagues from their own school as opposed to going on a course alone. But most leaders would also prefer learning by working alongside colleagues in similar roles to their own at other schools, rather than with colleagues from their own school.

Local courses were preferred to learning online by the vast majority of respondents, suggesting a continued need for personal contact, although online learning is an expected element of professional development in the 21st century. There was particular enthusiasm for learning on the job, compared with learning on a course, particularly among new heads and younger deputies. And there is a preference for hands-on learning with experienced professionals, rather than through courses.

Where should learning take place?

These findings emphasise the importance of developing learning opportunities that combine different styles and approaches. They also suggest a preference for school-based learning, but with a chance for leaders to learn from experienced peers in other schools. Evaluations of National College programmes and other activities have shown that people value the face-to-face and networking opportunities in National College programmes, seminars and other activities. However, transporting what leaders have learnt back to their schools is not easy: if one returns with lots of ideas to a school but cannot apply them, then the benefits of learning are lost or diluted.

Almost half (47 per cent) of middle leaders are interested in a headship role, and the same proportion of school business managers are as enthusiastic, with 45 per cent sharing that ambition

Three-quarters of existing heads are interested in a system-wide role, for example as executive heads, school improvement partners or national leaders of education.

To resolve this problem, leadership development needs to be embedded much more firmly in the local context so that it is seen as part of what the school does and not as an added extra for some individuals. The data indicates that schools themselves are receptive to the idea that school-based development programmes should expand and over two-thirds of school leaders think their school is already supportive of teachers in giving them the training and development opportunities they need. At the same time, schools benefit from working in partnership with other schools and agencies to develop approaches that support the sharing of expertise across organisational boundaries.

What kinds of skills are school leaders aiming to develop?

Leaders see 'developing a learning organisation', 'good interpersonal skills', 'leading learning to raise attainment' and 'implementing change and improvement successfully' as their top skill priorities. 'Leading change in schools' was the most popular of a range of hypothetical development programme content that leaders were asked to rate, with 92 per cent stating that they would benefit from a programme on leading change in schools aimed at heads, 91 per cent saying they would benefit from a focus on leading collaborative working, and 90 per cent from a focus on personalised learning Figure 10 shows responses from senior leaders to the question 'How important do you feel that the following skills are for the school leaders of today and tomorrow?'.

Figure 10: Judgement of priorities for skill development by senior leaders

Skill				
Developing a learning culture and organisation		18%	78%	
Good interpersonal skills	4%	20%	76%	
Leading learning to raise attainment	7%	24%	67%	
Implementing change and improvement successfully	5%	28%	66%	
Developing future leaders / succession planning	4%	17%	40%	39%
Adapting your leadership style to the school's culture and needs	6%	20%	35%	37%
Working with governments to strategically develop the school	5%	18%	37%	37%
Forming collaborartive partnerships with other schools and agencies to improve outcomes	5%	24%	38%	30%
Managing finances and premises	7%	23%	37%	30%
Effective project management skills	5%	27%	40%	27%

← Not at all important   Very important →

Source: Illuminas, 2008

Few leaders are confident that they possess all the skills that they need, demonstrating a strong commitment to ongoing professional development. While almost all (98 per cent) felt they had strong interpersonal skills, significant minorities felt they lacked the skills to manage finance and premises (28 per cent), work with governors on strategic development (20 per cent) and collaborate with others schools and agencies (18 per cent). Some 54 per cent did not feel they were equipped to work with the local authority to develop commissioned services. Similarly, 51 per cent feel underequipped to lead environmental sustainability. Figure 11 shows responses to the statement 'Thinking about the future challenges facing schools and school leaders, please indicate how equipped you currently feel you are to meet the following challenges'.

Figure 11: How well senior leaders feel they are equipped for future challenges

	Not equipped	A little equipped	Reasonably well equipped	Well equipped
Leading curriculum reform	6%	10%	50%	34%
Ensuring you school can secure the Every Child Matters 5 outcomes in the light of Ofsted's proposed new inspection attangements	8%	13%	47%	31%
Undertaking a major rebuilding / refurbishment project	13%	24%	36%	27%
Providing formal leadership development provision for leaders from your own and other schools	8%	21%	48%	23%
Improving your own and your staff's worklife balance	7%	22%	52%	19%
Leading the development of integrated working between education and staff from other services	9%	28%	45%	18%
Engaging with your local authority on the development of commisioned service sand provision across your locality	16%	38%	32%	14%
Leading the development of sustainability and increased environmental performance across the school	15%	36%	36%	13%
Leading your school can support raising of the participation age to 18	28%	37%	23%	12%
Ensuring your school can support the raising of the particiption age to 10	38%	28%	22%	12%
Reducing overall costs by developing shared 'back offce' services with other schools	28%	38%	24%	10%

Legend:
- Not equipped
- A little equipped
- Reasonably well equipped
- Well equipped

Source: Illuminas, 2008

Despite their ambitions, fewer than half of middle leaders 49 per cent are confident that their current skills will enable them to fulfil their future leadership ambitions. So, most leaders are looking for training that will help them to develop their skills further. Figure 12 shows that deputies and assistants aged under 40 are keenest (61 per cent) on such training followed by younger middle leaders. New heads are particularly keen to link with other leaders to develop their skills.

Figure 12: Percentage of senior leaders looking to engage in CPD to develop their skills

Role	Not really interested	Not really looking but somewhat interested	Not currently looking but very interested	Currently looking
Experienced head	10%	15%	30%	45%
New head	4%	14%	26%	56%
Deputy/Assistant 40+	6%	12%	30%	52%
Deputy/Assistant under 40		11%	28%	61%
Middle leader 40+	5%	9%	36%	50%
Middle leader under 40	5%	8%	29%	58%
Business manager	9%	16%	24%	51%

Legend:
- Not really interested in such opportunities
- Not really looking for such opportunities but would be somewhat interested in them
- Not currently looking for such opportunities but would be very interested in them
- Currently looking for such opportunities

Source: Illuminas, 2008

This suggests that leaders understandably feel less confident about being ready to respond to the newest demands placed on school leadership, and demonstrates the importance of leadership development keeping pace with changes in the role (see section 2).

What do parents and pupils think?

Over three-quarters of parents – 77 per cent – think that leadership is good or outstanding at their child's school (BMRB, 2009). Nearly half think that school leadership has improved over the last decade, although one-third perceive no improvement (National College, 2008g). Parents think that the most important quality that a good head should have is good leadership skills (61 per cent). Other important attributes cited by parents included the ability to deal with difficult staff or children (41 per cent), the ability to work with parents (36 per cent) and the fact that they must like children (31 per cent).

Some 62 per cent of pupils say that making sure teachers teach properly was one of their three most important tasks as a headteacher. 52 per cent felt that helping those within the school to understand its values was one of the three biggest priorities, with over one-third emphasising the importance of both managing money and staff, and recruiting and managing the school's workforce.

> Some 62 per cent of pupils say that making sure teachers teach properly was one of the three most important tasks for a headteacher.

Pupils broadly agree with parents about the qualities that make a good head, but give these qualities a different priority. Pupils suggest that these qualities are liking children (62 per cent), being able to deal with difficult staff and children (52 per cent), having good leadership skills (51 per cent) and having a kind personality (35 per cent) (BMRB, 2009).

Conclusions

The College's research has identified the issues that matter to school leaders, and their levels of ambition and aspiration. It has highlighted how heads overwhelmingly view headship as a 'great job' and would recommend it to others. School leaders are motivated by their purpose of making a difference to the lives of others. They are ambitious, focused on improvement, and keen to learn and develop. They are valued as good leaders by parents and children.

It is also clear that significant challenges are faced. Issues of work life balance and well-being are a concern for both heads and prospective heads. Although many leaders are interested in making progress in their careers, more still needs to be done to inspire middle leaders and deputies to aim for the most senior roles.

The research reveals distinct groups of leaders with specific needs that relate to their position in schools, their length of tenure as school leaders and their age. The surveys have also shown how leaders like to learn, identifying the importance of learning on the job from experienced colleagues over traditional courses and the additional support that new heads want.

In section 1.3, we examine the difference that school leadership is making.

1.3 Making a difference

While school leadership has become increasingly complex as a result of an expanding reform agenda, it remains second only to the quality of teaching and learning in terms of impact on pupil outcomes. Leadership must continue to both raise standards and to contribute to the reform agenda.

Research evidence and the impact of National College's own leadership interventions shows what successful leadership in schools looks like. Education leaders need to look beyond the school gates in order to continue raising standards and improving broader outcomes for children and families. They must also have a renewed understanding of the changing needs of children and new expectations for schools.

> While school leadership has become increasingly complex as a result of an expanding reform agenda, it remains second only to the quality of teaching and learning in terms of impact on pupil outcomes.

Why does leadership matter?

By providing clear direction, good leaders enable people to give of their best in the service of children and young people, and teachers to be outstanding in the classroom. One study found that school leadership was 'second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning' (Leithwood et al., 2008)2008). The report showed that school leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly through their influence on staff motivation and commitment and working conditions. The authors found no documented case of a school successfully turning around pupil achievement in the absence of talented leadership: 'Leadership acts as a catalyst without which other good things are quite unlikely to happen' (Leithwood et al, 2008:4).

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) regards effective leadership as essential to improving teaching and learning in schools, particularly in England where an increasingly devolved school system further emphasises the importance of strong and sound leadership skills (Pont et al., 2008b).

Research for DCSF on a sample of highly effective and improving primary and secondary schools confirms the impact leadership has on standards (Day et al., 2009). It finds that school leaders are pivotal to school improvement and that heads can make a positive difference to pupil behaviour, engagement and attainment outcomes, regardless of the experience, sector, size and socio-economic status of the school. Successful heads create an aspirational culture that encourages higher expectations in behaviour and academic success.

What is great leadership in schools?

National College has developed an understanding of what effective leadership looks like today, from its own work with education leaders. Leaders need to be clear about the outcomes they want to achieve and the steps towards achieving them. They need emotional intelligence, and effective team-building skills.

But today's leaders also need to operate differently. Traditional line-management roles have evolved as a result of organisational change such as federations and trusts, workforce remodelling and the extended schools agenda. In such an environment, command and control styles of leadership cannot apply. Instead leaders must negotiate, influence and guide others[11].

Research supports this experience, suggesting that variations in leadership effectiveness in schools reflect a handful of leadership traits. The most successful school leaders are open-minded and ready to learn from others. They are flexible rather than dogmatic in their thinking, and they are persistent in their pursuit of high expectations (Leithwood et al., 2008).

> Almost all successful school leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices: building vision and setting direction, understanding and developing people, redesigning the organisation, and managing teaching and learning.

Adapting to a school's context

Almost all successful school leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices: building vision and setting direction, understanding and developing people, redesigning the organisation, and managing teaching and learning. Their success reflects their ability to apply these leadership practices appropriately to their organisation (Leithwood et al., 2008). School leaders also know that success depends on understanding the context of the school (Illuminas, 2008).

Research for DCSF and National College finds that successful school leaders have an acute understanding of their school's history, current performance and intake. So while successful leaders act similarly, they also tailor their response to the particular situation and needs of their school (Day et al., 2009). The researchers also highlight three distinct leadership phases through which all effective schools move: early headship, middle headship and later headship. Within each phase a head prioritises one or two of the strategies above. In the early phase they tend to focus on improving the physical environment and pupil behaviour. In the middle phase, they prioritise sharing leadership responsibilities and use of data. Only in the final phase do they start to personalise and enrich the curriculum. The research describes the way in which heads seed future strategies as they deploy current ones, a point that is reinforced by other research for National College, which suggests that leaders 'deal with the short-term challenges and concurrently build for the future' (Davies et al., 2007:72).

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[11] Based on interviews with National College staff

Case study 2: Lessons for success from Cuckoo Hall

Cuckoo Hall Primary School nestles between high rises and 1950s' council housing in a highly disadvantaged north London community. Many of the school's pupils come from homes where the effects of poverty are profound. The community is ethnically diverse and a significant number of residents speak English as a second language.

When Patricia Sowter became headteacher in 2002, the school had just emerged from special measures and was going through a difficult time. Many of the children were still struggling to make substantial academic progress and many parents were disaffected.

Patricia had a big task, but it was important that her leadership set the right tone from the start. She demonstrated optimism and belief in the children and her staff. She was also immediately clear about what was acceptable and what was not: she and her team were quick to model a new culture of respect and trust and she immediately addressed behavioural issues with fairness and decisiveness.

Patricia worked to achieve quick wins in order to bring people on board and to begin to make her vision for the school a reality. Much effort was also put into improving the school environment, despite the constraints of the 1940s' building in which the school is housed. A well-stocked library and more colourful, vibrant classrooms and corridors are seen by all as a homage to the children's learning and their achievements.

Today the school is a beacon in terms of teaching and learning, inclusion and its relationship with the community. This is testament to the leadership of Patricia and her team. In 2008, all the school's 11 year olds achieved the nationally expected level 4 or above in maths, science and English. Ofsted rated it 'outstanding' in 2006. Patricia and her team are now using their experience to support leaders in schools that are struggling, to the benefit of even more children and young people.

The example of Cuckoo Hall Primary School demonstrates the importance of retaining a long-term focus while also giving regard to short-term outcomes to build and maintain momentum for change.

Sharing leadership has a multiplier effect

As we saw in section 1.1, being accountable for the school's performance does not mean that heads have to do it all. Research for National College suggests that 'school leadership has a greater influence on schools and pupils when it is widely distributed' (Leithwood et al., 2008). However, heads do not have to lose their influence when the power of others in the school increases.

By sharing or distributing leadership with others, schools can have a much bigger impact on the lives of children and young people (DCSF, 2007a). Demonstrating a commitment to distributed leadership is especially important in achieving broader improved outcomes for children and young people (Atkinson et al., 2007). This means abandoning the idea of the heroic head who does it all in favour of encouraging all of a school's staff to assume the mantle of leadership.

Case study 3: Sharing the leadership load in Southampton

Redbridge Community School is set in one of the most deprived areas of Southampton with 60 per cent of pupils entitled to free school meals and having special educational needs. Many arrive at the school with attainment levels well below the national average.

Headteacher Richard Schofield, deputy Lindy Barclay and the senior leadership team are undaunted. Their approach to the leadership of Redbridge derives from their mantra 'relationships and expectations', and that is reflected in the belief they have in their staff and their commitment to developing them and supporting them to give their very best to the school.

Between 1999 and 2008, the proportion of pupils gaining five GCSEs at grades A* C rose from 27 per cent to 60 per cent, and in 2008 the proportion who gained five GCSEs at grades A* C including English and maths reached 32 per cent. Ofsted judged Redbridge to be 'outstanding' in December 2008.

Much of this success is down to the sharing of leadership responsibilities throughout the school. In its inspection report, Ofsted stated that 'the headteacher and deputy headteacher provide exceptionally innovative and determined leadership, with a clear focus on raising the standards and life chances for all the students in a caring and vibrant school community. Together they have very effectively distributed the leadership and management, engaging a large number of very capable middle leaders within the senior leadership team.'

One example of this approach to empowering and developing leaders is a talented foreign languages teacher who had been given responsibility for leading the development of teaching and learning practice across the school. His system of pairing teachers up across departments in order to mentor and advise one another has had a significant impact. Departments are sharing best practice, tackling variation and improving standards across the whole school. This success would have been impossible without harnessing the expertise of this individual teacher. Moreover, this helped the teacher develop his own leadership skills, highlighting his obvious potential as a future senior leader.

Another example was a talented young teacher who was asked to rise to the challenge of middle leadership and develop a new house system soon after she joined the school. It was successful and she put this down to the creative space she had been given, which helped her gain the confidence she needed to take on other school initiatives, while identifying her own areas for leadership development. The school reaped the rewards, and, importantly, the senior leadership team was able to maintain its focus on other areas of the school's life.

But developing and distributing leadership does not end with the teaching staff. The school has a very strong business management and administrative department. The staff there create the time and space for the leadership team to provide the crucial strategic leadership that schools such as Redbridge need to empower others to give their best and ultimately achieve success.

The experiences of Redbridge Community School show how distributed leadership can be used to build leadership capacity across the school, while also releasing staff talent that would otherwise have remained unused. This can help to share good practice and expertise across the whole school.

Research indicates that parents support the distribution of leadership within schools, up to a point. For instance, while a majority of parents were happy for areas such as teaching, data protection and budget management to be delegated but overseen by the head, 7 out of 10 parents felt that the head should take personal responsibility for the core business of ensuring the quality of teaching and for the recruitment of senior staff (BMRB, 2009).
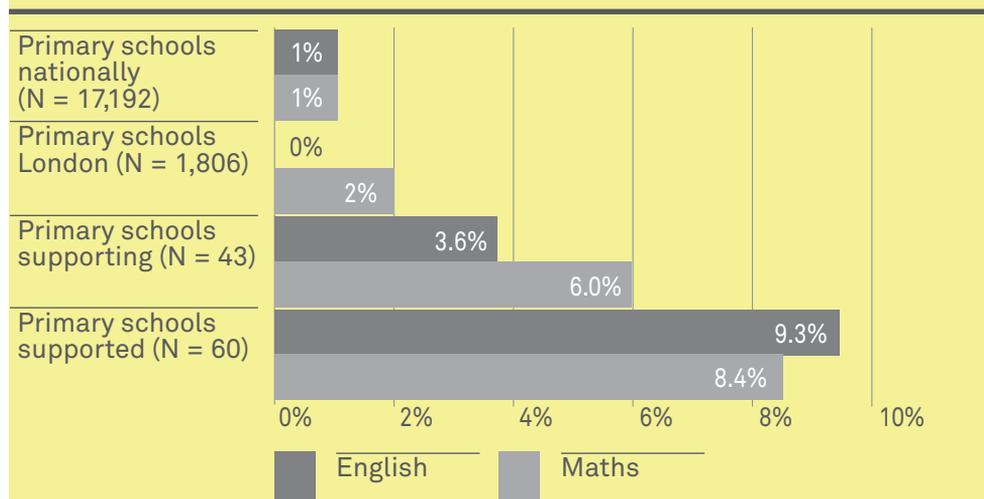
Other research shows that distributed leadership is not usually a preferred strategy in the early days of a new headship or when a school is facing very serious challenges (Coleman, 2008). Leadership is more likely to be distributed a little later, once any fundamental changes and improvements have been made, and starting with members of the senior leadership team before moving on to middle leaders and other staff. Such distributed leadership reflects the confidence that heads have in their staff and their willingness to trust them (Coleman, 2008). Where trust exists, schools are more likely to have a positive ethos, improved conditions for teaching and learning, and sustained

improvement in pupil behaviour and outcomes. Where leadership responsibilities are shared with students themselves, this can have a positive impact on their self-esteem and confidence, leading to improved decision-making and peer-to-peer support (Lepkowska, 2009). However, National College-commissioned research indicates that children still have relatively little opportunity to influence decisions which affect them, with only 16 per cent saying they had experience of this personally (BMRB, 2009).

Looking beyond the school gates

As we saw in section 1.1, school leaders are increasingly being asked to do more than share responsibility within their own school or centre. Many have begun to work beyond their immediate surroundings, supporting leaders of other schools and often involving their own leadership teams in doing so. This is known as system leadership. DCSF research places collaboration at the forefront of leadership innovation. More substantive engagement with other schools, it is argued, will transform the educational system (Day et al., 2009). Several initiatives demonstrate the success of such collaboration. National College's London Leadership Strategy and National Leader of Education programme enabled successful heads to work with schools in need of support. Both supported and supporting schools have benefited and seen standards and exam results rise above the national average. Primary schools benefiting from the London Leadership Strategy saw their Key Stage 2 results rise by 9.3 percentage points in English and 8.4 points in maths between 2006 and 2007. At the same time, successful schools supporting them also saw their results improve, by 3.6 points in English and 6 points in maths (Figure 12). Participating secondary schools have seen similar improvements in their GCSE results (National College, 2008e).

Figure 13: Average improvement in KS2 results (percentage reaching level 4 and above). 2006 to 2007: London

Primary schools nationally (N = 17,192): English 1%, Maths 1%
Primary schools London (N = 1,806): English 0%, Maths 2%
Primary schools supporting (N = 43): English 3.6%, Maths 6.0%
Primary schools supported (N = 60): English 9.3%, Maths 8.4%

English   Maths

Source: 'Making a difference', National College 2008

The Raising Achievement and Transforming Learning (RATL) programme developed by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) engages consultant heads in supporting the identification of appropriate and effective in-school support, drawing on a national network. Schools taking part have achieved significant results. Almost 200 schools were involved in the 2006/07 school year, and these schools improved their results in terms of the percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and maths by 2.1 per cent, which is twice the national rate of improvement.

However, schools themselves can only do so much to reduce the barriers to learning that many children face before they enter the classroom. As we have seen in section 1.1, schools are increasingly working with other professions. Much of the developing collaboration between schools and other services, which is promoting professional respect and trust, seeks to shift the focus from dealing with the consequences of difficulties in children's lives to preventing things going wrong in the first place.

Schools are working with these other professions – including social services, industry, universities and colleges, and the police – to develop a shared local analysis of the needs of children and young people, and so develop improved local services. At the same time, revised guidance from the government includes the explicit expectation that schools will fulfil their duty to co-operate in the development of children's trusts, thereby helping to ensure that children's services are fit for purpose and increasing the partnership demands placed on them further (DCSF, 2008c). A commitment to promoting collaboration within schools and across different services is therefore an increasingly important characteristic of school leadership.

Case study 4: Looking outwards at Limeside

When Limeside Primary School in Oldham went into Special Measures in 2000, the local area was facing high levels of street crime and anti-social behaviour. Many pupils were living in homes that were ageing, dilapidated, and cold. The environment lacked inspiration and did little to encourage aspiration.

When Helen became associate head teacher in 2000 (headteacher in 2004) the senior leadership team and staff set about transforming learning and teaching and the culture of the school. They also knew that to give children the opportunities they deserved and tackle the underlying challenges that are holding pupils back, they had to work with others beyond the school.

One issue that significantly impacted upon the children's own aspirations was the fact that many of their parents lacked aspiration and an appreciation of the worth of education themselves. The team created opportunities for parents to engage with the school, including encouraging them to help out with sports training and holding an annual presentation evening and dinner for

members of the school community in order to break down the barriers. Slowly and surely the parents began to engage. However, few had the qualifications or experience necessary to gain stable employment themselves. The school team looked outwards and began to work with the local College and life long learning to deliver GCSE and NVQ at the primary school for the parents. As a result the parents began to see real worth in the school and indeed in learning itself.

The outward focus has now gone beyond building bridges with parents. The school has been at the centre of a drive to improve the environment and culture of the local area to the benefit of children and their families. A strong relationship has been built between the school and the local housing association, with members of each sitting on the others governing body. Staff at the school have helped families to engage with improvement programmes, which has included providing the children's homes with new insulation and appliances. Community projects have been led by the school, the housing association and members of community— and all residents, including the children developed a real pride for the projects and the ever improving local environment.

One of the most impressive things about Helen and her team is not only their determination to get to the roots of disadvantage and work with others to address challenges, but also to make sure that children get the very best opportunities to prepare them to succeed in the wider economy. Again the leadership team at Limeside has worked closely with others to achieve that. The school has worked in partnership with another local primary school (with a high number of ethnic minority pupils) to put enterprise at the heart of learning. Together they have engaged with both local and national businesses and this has resulted in a rich curriculum that has provided children in both schools with a real desire to learn key work-related skills and look for entrepreneurial opportunities in the world around them. The partnership with the school has also helped to create a strong sense of understanding and tolerance amongst the children and families, in an area with a history of ethnic tension.

The transformation that has occurred at Limeside is quite stunning. The school has been recognised as 'oustanding' by OfSTED and has received awards and commendations for its wide curriculum and community engagement. Meanwhile the area has experienced a 75% reduction in antisocial behaviour since 2003.

Limeside Primary School provides an excellent example of the benefits of community engagement as part of a broader focus on school improvement.

The impact of National College leadership development programmes

National College's senior leadership programmes have been designed to help heads and children's centre leaders respond to their local contexts. For instance, nearly 30,000 heads and aspiring heads have completed the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) since 2000.

This was redesigned in 2008 to focus on identifying and preparing leaders who are ready for headship (National College, 2008e). Similarly 1,654 children's centre leaders have completed the National Professional Qualification for Integrated Children's Leadership (NPQICL) since its launch in 2004. A recent evaluation of participants found that 92 per cent had changed working practices in their children's centre as a result of the programme, while 71 per cent indicated that their involvement has had a positive effect on services for children and families (National College, 2008e).

By April 2008, 96 per cent of secondary schools and 79 per cent of primary schools had taken part in at least one of National College's core leadership programmes (Gu and Sammons, 2008d, 2008c)[12]. Independent research shows that these schools enjoyed significant benefits from doing so:

> Between 2003 and 2006, primary schools that had participated in three or more core programmes achieved a higher rate of improvement in English and maths at Key Stage 2 (KS2) than other schools (Gu and Sammons, 2008b).

> In 2006/07, secondary schools that engaged with two or more National College core programmes saw their rate of pupil progress between KS2 and GCSE rise, while non-engaged schools experienced a fall (Gu and Sammons, 2008a).

> Between 2005 and 2007, the rate of improvement at GCSE for schools most engaged with National College's core programmes was over four times that of non-engaged schools (Gu and Sammons, 2008a).

Evidence from Ofsted reports demonstrates that involvement with National College programmes has raised the quality of leadership in schools (National College, 2008e).

Many of National College's leadership programmes, development activities and strategic initiatives focus on supporting distributed leadership. For example, development opportunities for middle managers such as the Leading from the Middle and Leadership Pathways programmes enable participants to understand their role in leading and delivering sustainable change in school. For Leadership Pathways, 95 per cent of participants said the programme had increased their confidence as a leader and more than 90 per cent said the programme will have an impact in school (National College, 2008e).

School business managers and directors

The College is also encouraging other professionals working in schools to take on a leadership role. As we have mentioned earlier, there has been an increase in the number of school business managers and directors working in schools, with 38 per cent of heads now having access to this support.

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[12]These being Leading From The Middle, Leadership Pathways, National Professional Qualification for Headship, Early Headship Provision and Head For The Future.

School business managers tend to work within one school, while directors operate in larger, more complex groups of schools such as federations, trusts and other formal partnerships including those in cross-phase and multi-agency settings.

Over 90 per cent of graduates from the College's certificate and diploma programmes for school business management say their ability to operate as leaders has been enhanced as a result of their work on the programmes. Among diploma graduates, 77 per cent subsequently became full members of their senior management team (National College, 2008e). National College's annual survey of school leaders suggests that a school business manager can free up to one-quarter of a head's time (National College, 2009b). The same survey shows that directors have provided almost £80,000 on average in additional income for their schools in the last financial year, although the amount of income generated does vary. In addition, school business managers and directors bring additional skills to the leadership team, therefore helping to build leadership capacity in a number of ways.

Case study 5: School business managers making a difference

Michelle Charlton has recently been appointed to the post of school business manager for a cluster of five primary schools in County Durham.

"When I started this job, I naively thought that I would be able to replicate everything I had done in my previous school but across all five. I soon found out it doesn't work like that. However, there are administrative staff in each of my five schools who currently do elements of what I did in my last job. This has enabled me to raise my game and start thinking more strategically about how I can add value to my schools.

"And it seems to be working. For example, I have secured some big savings – about £20,000 – by revisiting service level agreements across the five schools. These will come into force over the next three financial years. We are also making smaller savings by buying in bulk.

"In addition, I am busy raising around £30,000 for a major refurbishment of outdoor areas for early years in three of my schools. The teachers have been able to work with me on their resource needs and say what they think will work for them. My role is to find the money, equipment and expertise to make it happen.

"The training I have received as a school business manager has helped me to take on the bigger role I have here. I originally trained in accountancy, moving on to work for the Royal Mail where I took on a variety of roles including buildings maintenance, payroll and customer services.

"I had just started working in education as a school administrator when Estelle Morris, then secretary of state for education, announced the bursars' enhancement programme. I knew that this was where I wanted to be and

enrolled in one of the first cohorts of the Certificate in School Business Management.

"I then went on to take the Diploma in School Business Management and the BA (Hons) in School Business Management. I am also participating in the pilot programme for the Advanced Diploma in School Business Management. Although I get time off for residential courses, I have to do all my studying at home and in my own time, which can be tough.

"Going back to study after 20 years was a challenge too. It's very different from when I last took exams – we work round tables now rather than sit behind desks. But it has all been worth it. I've received a big uplift in my skills and my confidence. I now know how to take calculated risks where previously I would have followed the rulebook. I realise that there are different ways of doing things and it's not always wrong to do something differently.

"While I don't have a direct impact on teaching and learning, I do have an important indirect contribution to make by working collaboratively with teachers and heads. I am a member of the senior leadership team of each of the five schools I work with and I'm told that, because I am not a teacher, I give a different perspective that is valuable to the schools. I'm also relieving the five heads of many of the facilities duties they formerly had to do themselves, therefore freeing up their time to focus on leading the curriculum.

"As part of each school's leadership team over the coming year, I expect to get to the point where I am developing support staff to take on a bigger business management roles. I hope that by then I will also have generated some fantastic resources for each school that will in turn enhance teaching and learning."

Michelle's experiences highlight the benefits schools can enjoy from employing business managers.

Conclusions

Leadership can and does make a significant difference, but it requires a deep understanding of the context of a school, not just as it stands today but how it has been in the past and how it might look next week, next year and in five years' time.

Research and National College's own understanding of education leadership suggest that the leadership needs of our schools continue to change and evolve. It is therefore vital that education leaders remain aware of this changing landscape and respond accordingly.

In section 1.4, we consider some of the key challenges that leaders face, and where they will need to continue to make a difference in the future.

1.4 Three challenges for the profession

School leaders today face many challenges. Here we consider three of the most important: reducing variations in achievement and outcomes both within and between schools; improving the outcomes of the most disadvantaged students and reducing the gap between these and the most high-achieving students; and the need to ensure that we have the school leaders we need for the future. Meeting these challenges is crucial if we are to continue to raise standards for all students.

Challenge 1: Reducing variability

Standards have improved significantly in England's schools. The proportion of 11 year olds reaching the expected standard at KS2 has risen from 49 per cent in English and 45 per cent in maths in 1995 to 81 per cent and 78 per cent respectively today (DCSF, 2008g). The proportion of pupils gaining five good GCSEs including English and maths is up from 35 per cent to 47 per cent (DCSF, 2008e). Before the GCSE was introduced in 1988, just over one in four youngsters gained five O-levels (Hansard, 1991)[13]. These results reflect Ofsted's judgement that this is the best-ever generation of teachers. As we have seen, inspection results for leadership and management in schools have never been higher (see section 1.1).

> In the OECD's PISA results, 80 per cent of the variation between pupils' achievement lay within schools, four times as much as that between them

But Ofsted has also been concerned about variable teaching quality: 'Too much teaching is dull, lacking challenge and failing to engage pupils' (Ofsted, 2008:9). Through Fischer Family Trust data or value-added scores, the overall performance of individual schools can be compared with that of other, similar schools. Such data has shown how schools with similar characteristics can achieve very different results, spurring further improvement.

But this does not capture a more significant factor in underachievement: variations within individual schools between subjects and teachers. International analysis has shown this to be a particular feature of English schools: in the OECD's PISA results, 80 per cent of the variation between pupils' achievement lay within schools, four times as much as that between them (OECD, 2007).

Further analysis suggests that differences within schools are between 5 and 14 times more important than differences between schools in determining how well pupils achieve (OECD, 2007). In other words, one can have good and weak teachers and departments within the same school. Reynolds (2007) identifies a number of factors which the school can control in relation to this, which include variable teacher competence, unreliable implementation of school improvement programmes and different abilities to cope with pressures of change.

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[13] It was 26.4 per cent in 1987.

His research also shows that the best schools reduce such variation in teacher performance and are 'reliable and consistent', whereas less effective schools show the largest range of within-school variation.

For National College, this means developing programmes that give leaders the capacity to improve consistency in teaching quality. It can mean addressing a teacher's weaknesses in specific subjects in primaries, whereas in secondary schools there may be differences in achievement between subject departments. Between schools, system leadership programmes, such as the National Leader of Education programme or City Challenge, are playing a big part in tackling inter-school variation. But tackling such variations is vital if every child is to achieve their full potential.

Challenge 2: Narrowing the gap

While narrowing differences in teaching quality is clearly a major challenge for school leaders, so is bridging the gap in attainment between pupils of different backgrounds. Despite reforms, disadvantaged social groups continue to achieve significantly poorer results than the most advantaged groups.

Social class differences

In 2008, the gap in KS2 results for 11 year-olds was over 20 percentage points between those on free school meals and others. At GCSE, the gap in those gaining five good GCSEs was 27 points (DCSF, 2008b). There has been some narrowing in the gap: in primaries from 28.4 points to 27.8 points between 2005 and 2008, and the Youth Cohort Study (DCSF, 2007c) shows the biggest gains in good GCSE results since 1999 in those from routine and lower supervisory occupations. Nevertheless, a substantial gap remains.

Minority ethnic achievement

Targeted programmes for some minority communities have made some difference, but significant gaps remain. In comparison with the improvement in the proportion of white pupils gaining five good GCSEs (in any subject) from 47 per cent in 1997 to 58 per cent in 2006, the proportion of black pupils with similar achievements rose from 29 per cent to 50 per cent, of Pakistani pupils from 29 per cent to 52 per cent, and of Bangladeshi pupils from 33 per cent to 57 per cent (DCSF, 2007c). Despite some improvement and taking into account other factors, black boys are still three times more likely to be permanently excluded from school than their white peers (DfES, 2006). In other words, achievement continues to vary by ethnicity.

White working class pupils

One group that performs worst in most analyses is white working class pupils, particularly boys. Class and family income remain one of the most important

determinants of achievement (Mongon and Chapman, 2008). Eligibility for free school meals is strongly associated with low achievement, but significantly more so for white British pupils than for other ethnic groups (Casson and Kingdon, 2007). Such problems start much earlier than GCSE or even KS2: analysis for the Sutton Trust has shown that those from the poorest fifth of households but in the brightest group at age three drop from the 88th percentile on cognitive tests to the 65th percentile at age five. Those from the richest households who are least able at age 3 move up from the 15th percentile to the 45th percentile by age five (Blanden and Machin, 2007).

Good leadership is vital in overcoming such disadvantage. In research conducted for NUT and National College, Mongon and Chapman (2008) identified a series of common factors in schools that were successful in doing so: these included high expectations, a culture of mutual respect, clear lines of authority and autonomy, a good school appearance and attention to detail. As with the findings on within-school variation, a consistently high standard of teaching was also critical (Mongon and Chapman, 2008). As Christine Blower, General Secretary of NUT comments:

> "Poverty can never be used as an excuse but it is the reason for low achievement among many white working class young people. This research demonstrates how schools can tackle the damaging influence of poverty. The leaders in the study show that the goal of a good local school for every child can be achieved through the empowerment of teachers to lead learning and through a total commitment to their communities."

> Christine Blower, General Secretary, NUT

Case study 6: Boosting working class results in Birmingham

A Birmingham comprehensive with a strong white working class intake has moved from fewer than 1 in 10 pupils gaining 5 good GCSEs including English and maths in 1994 to nearly half doing so today. It is in the top 1 per cent of schools on a value-added basis and was judged 'outstanding' by Ofsted in 2008.

Bartley Green, an 880 pupil mixed 11-16 school in one of the most deprived wards in the city, is a specialist school, which became a Foundation School in February 2008. But it is the school's outstanding leadership that has played a key part in its success.

Headteacher Christine Owen received an OBE in the 2009 New Year honours. Her high expectations embrace all aspects of school life. She relies on a talented team, many of whom are home grown and all of whom are expected

to take GCSE/BTEC groups, with a high degree of teaching expertise and attaining high outcomes. These include a former head of science who is now a pastoral leader and others with teaching expertise. The school has also recently appointed a business manager who is a member of the SLT.

Three factors contribute most to the school's success: investment in staff development, a challenging approach to recruitment and retention, and the development of a curriculum that caters for students' diverse abilities. But research has concluded that the school's success reflects a combination of investment in developing teams over a long period and a combination of experience and a good headteacher (Mongon and Chapman, 2008).

Bartley Green demonstrates the importance of strong leadership in promoting a culture of raised expectations and the achievement, regardless of socio-economic background or circumstances.

Challenge 3: Promoting sustainability in leadership

As we saw in section 1.1, 33 per cent of heads are aged 55 or over. About one-third of heads are expected to retire in the five-year period from 2008 to 2012, and their retirement will deprive schools of many experienced leaders. At the same time, there are fewer teachers in their 40s. The supply of new school leaders and heads will need to match the retirement of the baby boomers.

While headteacher vacancies have stabilised, primary schools still find it hard to compile a shortlist. In 2007/08, 37 per cent of primary headship posts were readvertised compared with 26 per cent of secondary posts (Howson, 2009). The vacancy level varies significantly between regions. Catholic and Church of England schools are finding it harder to recruit: among Catholic schools, 57 per cent of those advertising for heads had to readvertise, while for Church of England schools the proportion was 43 per cent. The need to readvertise is a costly business[14] and it is harder to recruit in poorer areas (National College, 2008c).

Traditionally, it has taken a long time to become a head – around 20 years. This can be off-putting to the young and ambitious. The latest crop of graduates to enter teaching are even less likely to tolerate a sluggish career structure which, in their eyes, thwarts their desire for swift progress. And while the majority entered the profession to become teachers, research found that
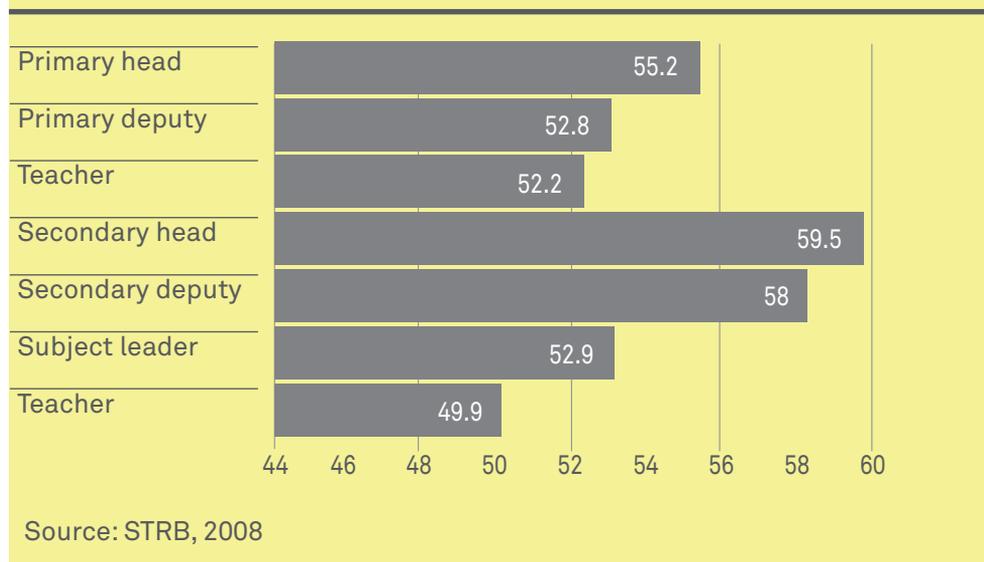
92 per cent of heads say they have 'a great job', most think that morale is high and the level of ambition in schools is generally high. Nevertheless, the issues of stress, workload and work life balance are significant concerns for both existing and prospective heads.

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[14] Estimates produced in 2005 suggest that the readvertisement of headteacher vacancies cost schools in the region of £1 million (National College, 2006).

only 11 per cent were not really interested in leadership development (Illuminas, 2008). It is therefore not surprising that, as we have already seen in section 1.2, their choice of school is influenced by the availability of leadership development opportunities. National College has been working both to encourage and enable younger staff to move up to leadership positions with appropriate development and support. The average age of appointment to a first headship is now around 38 in primary and 41 in secondary schools (National College, 2008h).

As we saw earlier, 92 per cent of heads say they have 'a great job', most think that morale is high and the level of ambition in schools is generally high. Nevertheless, the issues of stress, workload and work life balance are significant concerns for both existing and prospective heads. School leaders work longer hours than classroom teachers, with secondary heads reporting an average 59.5 hour week in term time compared with 49.9 hours for their teachers (BMRB social research, 2008) (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Average hours of work per term-time week

Role	Hours
Primary head	55.2
Primary deputy	52.8
Teacher	52.2
Secondary head	59.5
Secondary deputy	58
Subject leader	52.9
Teacher	49.9

Source: STRB, 2008

The continuing high number of early retirements suggests that there is a need to persuade more experienced leaders to stay longer in post. Management support, shared headship and sabbaticals could provide incentives to stay on. For example, a study for National College (Flintham, 2008) showed that sabbaticals may improve the personal morale of senior leaders, and help retain good people in post. The fact that the average age at retirement has increased from almost 56 years in 2002 to just over 58 years in 2007 may suggest that more heads are choosing to remain in the role for longer (DCSF, 2007b).

The College has also been working to increase the diversity of school leadership. The Equal Access to Promotion programme, run jointly with NUT, aims to address the professional development needs of black and minority ethnic (BME) teachers in leadership who are aspiring to more senior roles and responsibilities. Another programme [National College's Ofsted shadowing programme] provides BME leaders with the opportunity to shadow Ofsted inspections and receive mentoring to ensure that they get the most from this experience. The College is also aiming to increase the number of BME leaders who participate in its programmes. But as we have seen in section 1.1, school leadership is not yet as diverse as it should be in terms of ethnicity and gender. Increasing this diversity is not only a moral imperative but can also help to make leadership more sustainable.

All this presents a big challenge to existing leaders and their school governors. They need to consider which approach to leadership will work best for their school and its future, and in the context of different models of school organisation with trusts, federations and other partnerships now more common – whether to embrace them as part of their development. Within a system where power is devolved to schools, it is vital that those leading schools consider the best solutions for their needs and do so in an equitable way.

Conclusions

Despite the fact that school leadership in England is the best it has ever been, and achievement outcomes are the highest they have ever been, significant challenges remain in the school system. The quality of teaching and learning varies too greatly, and a child's life chances remain too strongly dictated by their socio-economic and ethnic background. The contribution that great school leadership can make to these challenges is clear and continually demonstrated, and some improvements have been made. But ensuring the supply of appropriately developed school leaders in the future remains a fundamental policy objective.

In part 2 of this report, we will turn our attention to the priorities for school leadership and leadership development as it faces these challenges in the 21st century.

School Leadership Today

School leadership in the 21st century

21st century schools

DCSF consulted on the government's proposals for the next stage of its reform of the school system in spring 2009. Following consultation, the White Paper 'Your Child, Your School, Our future: Building a 21st Century schools system', was published on June 30th 2009. The paper places schools at the heart of achieving the objectives set out in the Children's Plan 2008.

The White Paper focuses on five key themes:

Ensuring excellent teaching and securing extra help for each child.

Driving partnership working to ensure the system delivers for children.

Improving every school with strong accountability and rapid early intervention.

Supporting every school through appropriate roles for local and central government.

Developing a well led and highly skilled workforce.

The objectives of the reforms are to create a world-leading system of schooling, reflecting the needs of the 21st century where:

Every child and young person can achieve high standards.

The potential and talents of every child and young person are developed and extended to give them the broader skills, knowledge and understanding they need for success in adult life.

The link between disadvantage and low achievement is progressively broken.

This will be achieved by building on what the best schools and services are already doing, so that we create a system-wide focus on:

Maintaining high aspirations for all children and young people and providing an excellent personalised approach to education and development within and beyond the school gates to ensure that all are able to progress and reach high standards.

Providing a range of activities and opportunities to enrich the lives of children, families and the wider community; and contribute to community objectives such as local cohesion, sustainability and regeneration.

Maximising the opportunities provided through partnerships between schools and other settings, providers and services, including where there is shared governance and leadership and greater collective responsibility for outcomes.

Enabling and supporting schools to play a key role in identifying and helping to address additional needs, working at the centre of a system of early intervention and targeted support, and in close partnership with wider children's services.

Ensuring schools have a workforce which is well-led, highly skilled, motivated and effectively deployed, and increasingly diverse and flexible with a range of professionals.

Reshaping accountability systems to drive and support school improvement for all children and across all 5 ECM outcomes, with strong accountability and rapid intervention when it is needed.

In this system, schools will work with colleges, universities, employers, local authorities and the full range of children's services to offer, between them, a comprehensive, highly responsive and personalised service which focuses on what every child and young person needs in order to succeed and makes sure it is put in place (DCSF, 2008a:7)

Modern schools will be expected not only to ensure high standards and good progress for all pupils, but also wider personal skills and high levels of parental engagement. Drawing on a New York model, the new School Report Card will bring together outcome measures reflecting these expectations (Teachernet, 2009a).

Given this direction in school policy, and the challenges that school leadership faces as outlined in previous sections – reducing variability, narrowing the gap and promoting sustainability in leadership – National College sees four priorities for school leadership over the next five years. These are:

Improving the leadership of teaching and learning through locally delivered development of middle leaders.

Working beyond the school gate to develop self-sustaining leadership improvement and improved collaboration with other services.

Growing leaders and embedding a culture of continuing professional development to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of high-quality headteachers and school leaders to meet future need.

Leading change in a complex environment.

The following sections explore each of these in detail.

2.1 Improving standards: the role of middle leaders

The quality of teaching has been identified in international research as the most important single factor in school improvement (Barber and Mourshed, 2007). It is therefore imperative that improving leadership of learning and teaching in schools remains a priority. Consistently high-quality teaching needs good leadership.

Middle leaders, many of whom head subject departments or lead key stages, clearly play a crucial role in this regard. But as we have seen, international research has shown that there is far more variability in the quality of lessons and departments within schools in England than between schools (see section 1.4). This is why the College is working to help address inconsistencies and raise the standards of leadership of learning and teaching.

What's the problem?

Learning and teaching are at the heart of what schools do. But, aside from it being their traditional role, there is plenty of evidence that it makes the biggest difference to children's lives. As described earlier, classroom teaching remains the key influence on pupil learning, and is the only factor more important than the quality of school leadership (Leithwood et al., 2008). Ensuring a consistent focus on enhancing learning and teaching throughout the school is one of the central means through which school leaders themselves make a difference (Day et al., 2009).

Yet not all children receive the best teaching. Standards vary markedly across the country, between geographical areas, and within schools themselves. In England, variation within schools is well above OECD averages at between 5 and 14 times greater than variance between schools (OECD, 2007), and has proved stubbornly resistant to attempts to tackle it (Reynolds, 2007). Ironing out such variations and raising standards across the board are therefore dependent upon ensuring a consistently high standard of learning and teaching.

We saw in section 1.2 that there is a strong appetite among school leaders at all levels for training and development aimed at helping schools to raise standards of attainment: 56 per cent of leaders see raising standards as a key challenge (Illuminas, 2008). In line with this, Professor David Reynolds has identified middle leaders as the most important drivers of the quality of learning and teaching in schools, noting that 'While it might not be possible to have policies for what happens in individual classrooms, this might be feasible at the subject departmental level or academic Year level in a secondary school or the Year level in a primary school. Targeting these means that policy can get far closer to what ought to be the real focus, the classroom level, than if it only addresses the school level' (Reynolds, 2007).

Headteachers who have been most successful in addressing significant variation between departments in secondary schools have done so by investing in middle leader development, using strategies such as:

> Promoting a shift from middle management to middle leadership; in other words, ensuring a greater focus on agreeing a vision and a direction rather than simply considering how best to get there.

Training middle leaders, particularly in areas such as coaching and mentoring, use of data and classroom observation.

Buddying or matching middle leaders with others specially chosen to transfer skills, attitudes and behaviours rapidly.

Using exemplary middle leaders on whole-staff training days.

Case study 7: The role of middle leaders at a Paignton Primary

Middle leaders play a big role in the life of the 700-pupil Oldway Primary School in Paignton, Devon. Their role is particularly important in learning and teaching, an aspect of school life ranked 'outstanding' alongside the school's leadership and management in a 2006 Ofsted report.

"The job of middle leaders is to be focused on learning," says headteacher Pete Maunder. "Whatever the initiative is, it's saying, 'right, where do we want to go?' and then following it through: motivating other people, influencing them, organising the resources, taking a lead in planning as well as keeping up to date in their own subject areas and being involved in CPD."

One middle leader at this urban primary oversees standards and the quality of learning and teaching in years 5 and 6. She has a role in the performance management of members of her team, in supporting and motivating them, all with the shared purpose of improving pupils' learning experience. She leads mathematics across the school and sits on the strategic team for ICT.

Another middle leader heads the humanities curriculum team, with a role that includes assessment for learning and the move towards a more skills-based curriculum. A third middle leader is adept at sharing good practice in art, her specialist subject, and has helped to develop the skills of other teachers and teaching assistants.

Oldway Primary School highlights the importance of using middle leaders as a means of driving improvements in learning, as well as improving the organisation and day-to-day running of the school.

The College's offer to middle leaders

Since its launch in 2000, Leading from the Middle has been a successful programme for middle leaders. During this time, 46,551 people have taken part in it, the highest participation level for any National College programme (National College, 2008e). However, in its current form, Leading from the Middle is limited in the number of participants it can accommodate: only 5,000 of the estimated quarter of a million middle leaders across the country can attend the programme

in any given year. Even if the College could expand the capacity, schools cannot release their leaders in large numbers to attend. In addition, as we have seen earlier, professional development based within a school's context is likely to be the most powerful.

This is why the College is changing the way it works with middle leaders. The aim is to establish self-sustaining middle leadership development with a strong focus on leading learning and teaching. Programmes will be delivered locally and led by groups or clusters of schools. The aims is for schools themselves to take greater responsibility for leadership development and be less dependent on the use of external trainers.

Leaders will have the chance to learn in different schools across each cluster. There would be a strong element of on-the-job learning, so participants can see good practice in action. The practical approach would be combined with access to materials provided by the College and opportunities for leaders to reflect on experiences with other experienced leaders. Senior leaders within the clusters will be trained as facilitators by National College and will be able to tailor National College materials for local needs.

> In its current form, Leading from the Middle is limited in the number of participants it can accommodate: only 5,000 of the estimated quarter of a million middle leaders across the country can attend the programme in any given year.

A pilot project will work with around 25 school clusters from autumn 2009. These will encompass different types of schools: primaries and secondaries (working together or separately), rural primary schools, chains of schools, clusters around a training school, schools piloting the Master's degree in Learning and Teaching, National Challenge schools and other, existing clusters.

The College has developed this new model in line with the findings of its research into what and how school leaders want to learn (see section 1.2), which highlights the appetite among leaders for training that is personalised and hands-on. This should provide many more middle leaders with the relevant skills and preparation they need to excel in the role. Most importantly, it will place more emphasis on middle leaders learning from each other by sharing their best ideas and experience.

The College's plans to focus on middle leaders in order to raise standards in learning and teaching received the backing of delegates from a mix of career stages and school phases who attended eight regional consultations in autumn 2008: some 86 per cent said they supported the proposition outlined by the College.

Conclusions

While learning and teaching should be at the heart of what schools do, not all children are receiving the quality of education that they need and deserve. The challenge is to address variation between and within schools. By improving the capacity of schools to increase the skills of middle leaders, much more can be done to raise standards and reduce variation.

2.2 Beyond the school gate

This section looks at how school leaders need to continue to look beyond the boundary of their own institution in order to improve outcomes. School leaders are doing this in two different but related ways.

The first involves schools and school leaders working with and supporting other schools – what the College refers to as 'system leadership'. As we have seen, by enabling good school leaders to share their expertise with others, all schools can be helped to improve. The College's National Leader of Education programme and City Challenge Leadership Strategy are making a significant difference. The development of trust schools and federations is also playing an important role in cementing relationships between schools.

The second involves working with local communities and the services that support them, which is sometimes referred to as 'outward-facing leadership'. As we have seen, school leaders are working to improve the well-being of children and young people in the widest sense, promoting the five outcomes of Every Child Matters and raising aspirations. This involves expanding the services offered by or accessed through schools, as is happening with the extended schools initiative. It can also mean forging links with employers, FE colleges and higher education institutions to broaden the curriculum, increase opportunities for vocational training and encourage more young people to achieve their potential. While many schools have a long tradition of working in partnership with their communities and with other providers of children's services, for others this is a newer phenomenon. This is a big part of the wider policy for children's services, as children's trusts seek to bring together the whole range of local services involved in the welfare of young people.

Both system and outward-facing leadership call for a strong vision and a willingness to work with others towards a shared goal. They demand strong communication skills and a collaborative approach. They also require personal credibility and trust between the partners involved. They are key drivers for change, as local analysis of need leads to local approaches to organisation and collaboration. National College is developing a range of programmes to support leaders working with other schools, communities and agencies.

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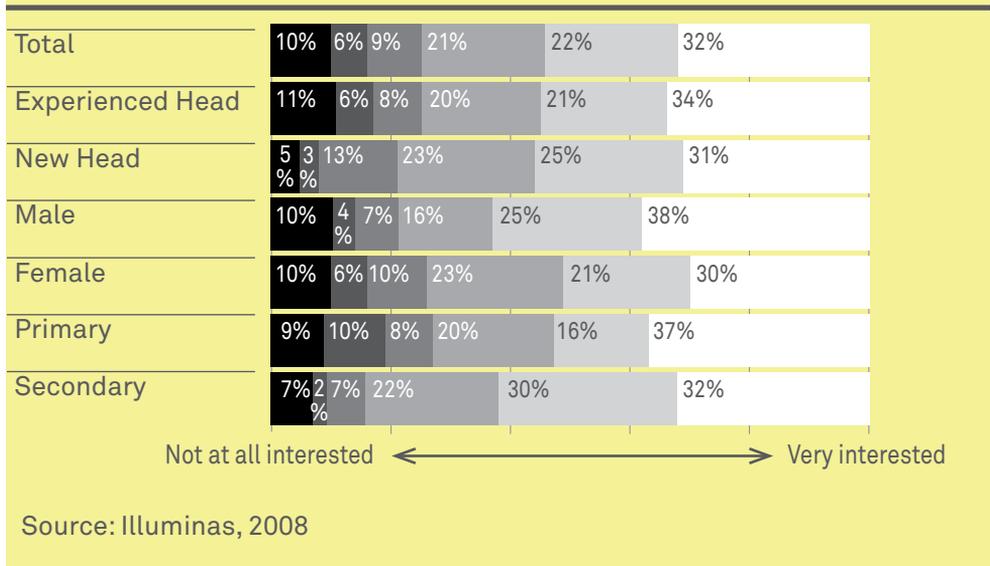### System leadership – Who are the system leaders?

There is a growing number of professional roles that can be defined as system leaders. School improvement partners (SIPs), many of them serving heads, provide professional challenge and support, helping school leaders evaluate performance and identify priorities for improvement. National leaders of education (NLEs) use their knowledge and experience to provide additional leadership capacity to schools in difficulty. Local leaders of education provide advice and leadership expertise to schools in need of support.

Other roles involve leading partnerships: executive heads lead two or more schools in a federation or other collaborative arrangement. Other leaders may work across several schools, including some school business managers or directors and advanced skills teachers (ASTs).

The attractions of system leadership

As we saw in section 1.2, despite the demands of their current role, three-quarters of current heads are more interested than not in a system leadership role. Figure 14 shows responses to the question 'How interested would you be in becoming a system leader, for example a school improvement partner, a national leader of education or a consultant head?

Figure 15: Interest in becoming a system leader

	Not at all interested ⟵					⟶ Very interested
Total	10%	6%	9%	21%	22%	32%
Experienced Head	11%	6%	8%	20%	21%	34%
New Head	5%	3%	13%	23%	25%	31%
Male	10%	4%	7%	16%	25%	38%
Female	10%	6%	10%	23%	21%	30%
Primary	9%	10%	8%	20%	16%	37%
Secondary	7%	2%	7%	22%	30%	32%

Source: Illuminas, 2008

System leadership is not something that heads embark upon solely because other schools need help. It is not just a deficit model. School improvement partners work with all schools, irrespective of their Ofsted grades and circumstances. Trusts between a group of schools may be established to

forge shared educational goals. In addition, as we have seen, a strong school supporting a weaker school often benefits both schools and their leaders. System leadership is a crucial characteristic of a self-improving system.

With concerns about a potential shortage of heads, a wider role beyond schools with appropriate professional development and support could make the role more attractive to those leaders who might otherwise be inclined to move on. Other options such as shared headships could also persuade them to delay retirement. Fulfilling such roles could therefore benefit schools and encourage experienced leaders to remain in the profession.

Does system leadership work?

As we have already seen, pairing high-performing schools and their leaders with weaker ones can support improvement. OECD research has shown that headteachers who play a role in education beyond their own school are becoming an increasingly influential force in school improvement (Pont et al., 2008a). This is borne out by successful programmes in England.

The National Leader of Education (NLEs) and National Support School (NSS) programme was launched in 2006. It initially involved 68 outstanding primary, secondary or special schools supporting schools in challenging circumstances and in special measures (Hill and Matthews, 2008). More than 100 NLEs and national support schools (NSSs) supported more than 50,000 pupils in more than 100 schools in 2007/08 (National College, 2008e). The capacity of senior and middle leaders in the support school was taken into account. By July 2008, the first group of NLEs and NSSs had helped 19 schools to come out of special measures or have their notice to improve withdrawn (Hill and Matthews, 2008). Ofsted reports on these schools highlighted the key role that NLEs and NSSs played. Key stage and GCSE results in 2008 showed a marked improvement in most schools with which phase 1 NLEs had worked for a year or more. An independent evaluation commissioned by National College found the programme to be effective in delivering improvements and in 'pulling a growing number of schools out of Ofsted categories' (Hill and Matthews, 2008:17).

Case study 8: How an NLE helped a special school improve

NLE Brian Hooper, Executive Head of Bournemouth Alternative Needs Federation, has considerable leadership experience from working in all sectors of education. His philosophy, working with staff from his national support school (NSS), is to enable others to reach excellence, rather than dependence.

Longspee Special School in Poole benefited greatly from Brian's expertise and that of his NSS. In November 2007, it was close to crisis point and placed in

special measures by Ofsted. The behaviour of pupils was extremely poor and the quality of teaching and learning was low.

Brian, a qualified coach, says: "Something drastic had to happen if the school was going to survive. Our principle is that we do not want to become an executive head or supplant anyone. What we want to do is empower people to enable them to take control."

Initially Brian spent up to two days a week coaching the new headteacher Sean Pavitt who is an expert in autism but who did not have the same level of experience with children who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Brian spent time with the children and coached Sean and Sean's deputy to develop their capacity as school leaders. All the staff worked together on improving aspects of the curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning. One of the biggest issues was the staffing structure and the need to establish clear levels of accountability and responsibility. Distributed leadership was brought in alongside a complete review of the system, but it was Sean who made the decisions and implemented the changes.

Sean says: "The support provided by Brian Hooper in enabling the school to tackle many significant and long-standing issues has been central to enabling the school to develop a momentum of change. He has provided inspirational guidance when needed but most significantly has facilitated a journey of self-discovery for the entire school community."

The federation has also benefited from the partnership working. Brian adds: "I'm a great believer that networking is the way forward and we've learnt a lot too. We want to become an accredited autism centre and Sean has been able to share so much of his expertise in this area, so it hasn't been one-way traffic."

The future looks much brighter for Longspee. The school was removed from special measures in November 2008, and the inspection report stated that 'outstanding progress has been made in Longspee School ... [which is] especially impressive as at the last inspection nearly every aspect of the school's work was judged to be inadequate ... The most significant [factor in this improvement] is the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and the very clear direction of his leadership team'.

"The difference is palpable: the school is a safe place and much calmer now which means it's a far better place to learn," Brian says. Meanwhile, he and his NSS staff have started supporting Torbay Special School using similar mentoring and coaching techniques.

This case study clearly demonstrates the potential benefits that both supporting and supported schools may gain as a result of their involvement in the NLE programme. Remaining open to potentially unforeseen areas of learning is fundamentally important to this.

Some leaders have been concerned that leaving their own school to work with another could harm their own school's performance. In fact, evidence from the London Leadership Strategy shows that schools that support others have seen their own results continue to improve ahead of national rates of improvement, as well as adding value to their partner schools (National College, 2007). Early indications are that the NLE/NSS programme is producing positive impacts for supporting schools, as well as underperforming ones: the overall average performance of NSSs in phase 1 continued to improve in the period after they started providing support.

Parental support for system leadership

A survey of almost 1,200 parents in spring 2009 showed that a high proportion support system leadership (BMRB, 2009). Parents were asked what should happen if their child's school failed its Ofsted inspection and its leadership was criticised in the report. Only 20 per cent felt that the head should resign and be directly replaced with a new head. Two-thirds felt that the headteacher should remain but receive support from either an experienced, successful head from another successful school (45 per cent) or from a consultant or the local authority (21 per cent). The remaining 11 per cent favoured the identification of an experienced, successful head from another local school to run both schools. This finding shows a clear mandate for programmes that enable school leaders to support each other and to work beyond their own institutions.

The College's plans for system leadership

The College proposes to extend existing opportunities for learning about system leadership by developing a role for experienced heads to act as professional partners to newly appointed heads, providing mentoring and advice. This would create development pathways for experienced heads who wish to step up to system leadership roles.

New heads have different preferences and expectations compared with experienced heads. They would most like to learn from other experienced heads, on the job and with a personalised learning programme, rather than on a traditional training course. They want their learning to support them directly in dealing with the issues they face in their local context. But they are busy and do not want to leave their school in order to attend a training course. There is clearly a need to help them to improve their confidence and to inspire others. National College wants to ensure that they get access to support and advice from experienced headteachers who really understand the realities of leadership: high-quality, accredited mentors who are able to provide advice to new heads on the real issues they are wrestling with in their schools.

> evidence from the London Leadership Strategy shows that schools that support others have seen their own results continue to improve ahead of national rates of improvement, as well as adding value to their partner schools (National College, 2007).

The introduction of development pathways for experienced heads who wish to step up to system leadership roles will help to develop a school system that is genuinely led by the profession and is ultimately self-improving and self-sustaining. There will also be training and accreditation of local leaders of education, complementing NLEs and matching them with schools needing support[15]. A pilot programme is being developed for primary heads who want to lead more than one school, and a pilot Fellowship Programme for NLEs will offer further professional development for a top cadre of exceptional leaders in cutting-edge theory, practice and ideas. These proposals were welcomed in regional consultations conducted by the College in 2008 as a way of building a more self-sustaining approach to leadership and to leadership development.

Outward-facing leadership

The development of a more outward-facing approach

Government policy on schools has shifted in the last decade from promoting competition between schools to an emphasis on collaboration between schools and other agencies. As we have seen, the most important driver has been Every Child Matters, introduced under the Children Act 2004. Lord Laming, whose initial review has led to greater inter-agency working, reiterated the importance of this in his recent review of children's services:

> "Joint working between children's social workers, youth workers, schools, early years, police and health too often depends on the commitment of individual staff and sometimes this happens despite, rather than because of, the organisational arrangements. This must be addressed by senior management in every service."
>
> (Lord Laming, 2009):10 11

Increasing numbers of school leaders are outward-facing, working in close collaboration with other services in their local area. They have been actively encouraged to work together and with others involved in the welfare of children through extended schools, the development of Sure Start children's centres and other initiatives aimed at achieving the five outcomes of Every Child Matters. Involvement in this collaboration has moved beyond the role of headteachers or extended services co-ordinator in many schools. Such roles may in the future involve leadership of a multi-agency partnership or a children's trust.

Community cohesion and public value

Outward facing leadership supports community cohesion. Through partnerships with other schools and agencies, leaders can bring children and families into contact with people from different backgrounds, helping to break down social and cultural barriers. This reflects wider thinking on public value and the notion

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[15] The role of LLEs and NLEs is described on page 31.

that active engagement between communities and public services can deliver improved social outcomes beyond those that fall under the specific remit of each service. Such value may be created 'when educational settings work to improve the wider range of outcomes for their young people by engaging with families and communities in places and processes characterised by equal esteem and equitable authority (Mongon and Leadbetter, 2008:9)'. The changes to accountability, set out in section 3, with the arrival of a new school report card, may also give greater weight to such outward-facing activities.

> Improving outcomes for children and young people requires leaders to develop relationships with individuals from outside the school.

Outward-facing leadership priorities

Research undertaken by National College has identified eight priorities that school leaders should focus on to improve outcomes for children and families (Kirwan et al., 2007). These are summarised as:

Navigating national, local authority and community politics.

Gaining the commitment of students and staff to the school's vision.

Shaping the school's culture around children's needs.

Distributing leadership, and foster trusting relationships.

Remodellling the workforce to make the most of staff expertise.

Prioritising professional development.

Managing relationships with the community.

Ensuring sustainability of commitment, finance and resourcing.

School leaders play an important role in helping others understand the implications of a focus on improving broader outcomes for children and young people. Improving outcomes requires leaders to develop relationships with individuals from outside the school. For instance, developing relationships with the local community and providers of other children's services is essential to ensure that the right services are available to meet local needs and are used by those who need them most. This demands a good understanding of how other services operate and an understanding of how to work effectively in partnership, as well as a clear focus on outcomes for children, young people and families.

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The development of extended services beyond those traditionally associated with schools is likely to require new posts and responsibilities to support this activity. Examples of these include youth workers, family liaison staff, school business managers and a greater use of school counsellors. Therefore, the workforce of the school may change markedly to ensure that additional capacity and support are available to enable teaching staff to concentrate on promoting learning by children.

Case study 9: Working together brings results in Leeds

Garforth Community College nestles in a 1950s' housing estate in the north-east of Leeds, a setting which at first glance belies its 21st-century approach to developing and educating children and young people.

The school is the founding member of a school partnership trust, which links the secondary school with four neighbouring primary schools. The schools have formalised their relationship as a trust with collective aims and expectations.

The vision that the trust and its Chief Executive, Sir Paul Edwards, have for the local area is formidable. His objective is not only to provide first-class education and development for all pupils within the trust, but also to achieve wider community cohesion, to advance the health and welfare of pupils and their families, and to raise aspirations and increase the opportunities available for children and young people, whatever their level.

Sir Paul and his leadership team knew that if they were going to be successful, they needed to look outwards to the wider system and work effectively with key agencies. Crucially, the primary care trust (PCT), a higher education (HE) institution and the local Learning and Skills Council all agreed to be partners.

The partnership with the PCT has helped health and social care agencies to share and gain information on vulnerable families and pupils. The PCT is also providing vocational opportunities and extra-curricular activities within the local community for young people.

Through high-level support from a school business manager and partnerships with HE bodies and business, the trust's leadership has acquired the funds, commercial independence and know-how to give pupils and the community a rich variety of learning and extra-curricular opportunities. This has enhanced pupils' experiences of school and their personal and academic development.

In 2000, 32 per cent of students at the college achieved five good A*–C grades at GCSE including maths and English. By 2008, this had risen to a remarkable 83 per cent. Sir Paul Edwards was knighted and the school has been judged 'outstanding' by Ofsted.

In 2000, the sixth form had 200 pupils, and it now has over 450. Two of the primaries have also been rated outstanding by Ofsted and no child has had to be excluded since the trust's creation.

Garforth's work encapsulates its commitment to ensuring that every child in its community is able to realise his or her potential and aspirations. That moral purpose has manifested itself in the rich and fruitful partnerships and the can-do approach that has made the Garforth such a success.

Heads want to learn to look outwards

These moves towards a more outward-facing and collaborative approach in schools require school leaders to develop a range of particular skills and behaviours. They need to understand the local political context and the broader policy developments. They need to be entrepreneurial in order to identify and use resources, and to make the most of unforeseen openings to pursue their goals. They need a degree of risk-taking. And they need to distribute leadership effectively, as it is impossible for a single, heroic leader to deliver the increased scale and scope of these extended activities in a centralised way.

At the same time, the nature of this work demands that a rigorous focus on outcomes is at the heart of collaboration with other services. For example, many areas are developing early intervention approaches that aim to identify and respond to problems that children and young people face, based on the understanding that this is more effective. This can only work if schools play a strong role alongside other local services.

National College's research shows that heads want formal training and development to equip them with the skills to work beyond their schools. Most heads believe that they lack the skills necessary for such work, with only 12 per cent feeling sufficiently well-equipped to lead the school to develop a trust or federation. Furthermore, 91 per cent of heads say that they would benefit from training in leading collaboration with other partners and agencies, while 87 per cent feel that they would benefit from training in how to work with others on the ECM agenda (Illuminas, 2008).

National College offers a range of support designed to help promote expertise in partnership working. For instance, its National Professional Qualification for Integrated Centre Leadership is the first national programme to address the needs of leaders within multi-agency, early years settings. Similarly, the Multi Agency Team Development programme has been designed to address the challenges faced by multi-agency teams in the delivery of the Every Child Matters agenda and the development of extended schools. Meanwhile, provision such as the 14-19 Leadership and Management Development programme and the Building Schools for the Future Leadership programme also contain a strong partnership focus, recognising the fundamental importance of collaboration in maximising the potential impact of these initiatives.

Conclusions

System leadership and outward-facing leadership are rapidly becoming key components of modern school leadership and something school leaders will need to embrace if they are to fulfil the increasingly complex and wide-ranging demands now made of schools. Collaboration and partnership working are key elements of national policy aimed at improving educational and social outcomes (e.g. DCSF, 2008a, DCSF, 2007a).

System leadership and outward-facing leadership can help meet the three challenges identified in section 1.4: reducing variability, narrowing the achievement gap and improving retention and recruitment. These approaches can also improve the life chances of vulnerable children by sharing expertise with other organisations and agencies, ensuring early intervention and targeting resources at those most in need.

> System leadership and outward-facing leadership are rapidly becoming key components of modern school leadership and something school leaders will need to embrace if they are to fulfil the increasingly complex and wide-ranging demands now made of schools.

Both roles require leaders to have strong negotiation and consensus-building skills. The College already has a strong track record in bringing leaders together to share learning and to collaborate in a range of areas, and has identified outward-facing leadership as one of its key training and development areas for the future. Developing the opportunities involved in these roles will also have important implications for succession planning and shared leadership responsibilities within schools, which is the subject of section 2.3.

2.3 Growing leaders

Where are tomorrow's headteachers?

As we saw in section 1.4, significant numbers of heads are retiring each year and this is expected to continue. About one-quarter of assistant and deputy heads are aged 55 or over. There is a risk that the supply of younger leaders from which the future replacements for senior leaders will be drawn may not be great enough. Some areas are struggling to recruit new heads. These difficulties are particularly acute for primary and faith schools. While headship is a great job, and morale and ambition in the profession are high, issues of workload and stress are a concern.

These trends taken together point to the risk of a possible shortfall in headteachers over the next five years. National College will continue to support schools and local authorities in taking effective action to reduce this risk.

Guiding and supporting succession planning

National College's succession planning strategy was established in 2007 to reduce the risk of a future shortage of headteachers. Its principal aim is to increase the number of new heads available, but it is not just about numbers. There is an emphasis on ensuring those leaders who emerge are of high quality and equipped with the skills necessary for modern headship.

In developing its succession planning strategy, the College decided to take an approach based on local solutions. National College's national succession consultants support the development of collaboration in each local area between schools, local authorities, diocesan bodies and others in order to resolve succession issues. Particular attention is paid to those areas where posts are especially hard to fill, such as inner-city secondary schools and small primary schools. For example:

> Hampshire local authority has used funding provided by National College to create Future Change Makers, a year-long development programme for aspiring leaders. Developed and led by Professor John West-Burnham, it combines six face-to-face days with school-based leadership tasks, personal coaching and enquiry visits to schools, with experienced heads acting as facilitators and coaches.

> Experienced headteachers in Birmingham worked with National College and the local authority to develop a bespoke leadership development programme for aspiring leaders. Existing heads worked with aspiring leaders to tackle weaknesses or overcome a lack of experience. Activities included interviewing applicants, evaluating their progress, and monitoring, mentoring and coaching visits to other schools. Some 22 of the 52 candidates in the first two cohorts went on to gain promotion.

In addition to this local approach, several initiatives have been launched around the country to encourage more deputies, assistant heads and senior leaders to pursue headship. Some examples of these actives are described below.

The Targeted Support programme is aimed at NPQH graduates who have not yet stepped up to headship. The College provided funding to those local authorities with hard-to-fill vacancies, including areas with high readvertisement rates for headships, high house prices, high numbers of faith schools or high levels of pupil entitlement to free school meals in order to develop support for NPQH graduates close to headship. In January 2008, 51 authorities introduced targeted support with a further 20 in May 2008. So far, the programme has involved around 1,150 NPQH graduates, of which 350 had achieved headship by March 2009.

The Be a Head programme seeks to help NPQH graduates identify their own strengths and weaknesses and prepare for headship. The College provides a free service that includes regular newsletters, an information pack taking candidates through the application and selection process step-by-step, access to an email hotline and one-to-one sessions with a career coach.

The Governor Engagement campaign, run by the College in partnership with the National Governors' Association (NGA) and the National Co-ordinators of Governor Services (NCOGS), aims to increase the capacity of governing bodies to plan for leadership succession. As part of the campaign, 50 events were provided for governors in priority local authorities, and were attended by over 1,600 governors. The campaign also provided 10 one-day workshops for local authority co-ordinators of governor services, dioceses and providers of training for governors to enable them to run their own training events for governors. It is estimated that 88 per cent of local authorities will have delivered an event for governors by the end of the summer term 2009.

A redesigned NPQH

NPQH, the mandatory qualification for all new heads, has been redesigned. A key aim has been to make it more rigorous, and to focus on those who are closest to being ready for headship. The programme is more personalised to reflect the diverse backgrounds and levels of experience of these leaders. At the College's regional conferences in 2006, personalisation was cited as a major way of strengthening the appeal of NPQH.

Applicants now undertake an initial two-day assessment during which their individual strengths and areas for development are assessed. This forms the basis of their own personal development pathway, which is geared to their individual needs but underpinned by an assessment framework built around the

National Standards for Headteachers. Through a leadership placement, every trainee headteacher has the opportunity to spend time working in another school to broaden his or her knowledge and experience of schools in different contexts and circumstances from their own. This also enables them to see other leaders in action. In addition, they receive one-to-one coaching, join a peer learning group, have access to high quality online resources and may attend face to face development activities. The graduation board process certifies that individuals are ready to progress to headship.

Distributed leadership

Developing and recruiting more people into headship now and in the near future will only tackle one aspect of the leadership shortage. As we have seen in previous sections, there is a need for leadership roles to be shared more widely within schools. As a study from 2007 stated:

> "Perhaps one of the strongest themes to emerge from this existing literature on effective school leadership (as well, incidentally, as studies on leadership in the private sector), relates to the importance of developing staff, nurturing talent and, related to this, 'distributing' leadership throughout the organisation."
>
> (PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2006:11)

Distributing leadership in this way gives earlier experience of leadership to a wider range of staff, which can help to nurture more future heads and senior leaders. It can also ease the day-to-day workload of the head, perhaps encouraging more experienced staff to stay on in the role and more middle and senior leaders to consider headship for themselves.

Talent-spotting

Opening up opportunities to those with the ability to become heads is one thing, but education needs to be more proactive about nurturing that talent in the first place. Talent-spotting is a standard activity in the private sector but often neglected in schools.

The new Accelerate to Headship programme is one attempt to address this. Due to be launched in spring 2010, it will be aimed at individuals with the potential to progress to NPQH within three years and to headship within a further year. It will offer a personalised approach to professional development, involving a range of challenging, high-quality experiences, within and outside school. Participants will receive personal support from a leadership development adviser who will monitor progress and ensure that they are on track to achieve NPQH within a maximum of four years after joining Accelerate to Headship. The key outcome of Accelerate to Headship will be a cadre of highly motivated, outstanding new heads for schools in all contexts throughout England. These heads will contribute

not just to the development of their own school but to the system as a whole, making a significant difference to the life chances of children and young people. Once appointed to headship, these leaders of the future will be able to operate as alumni, providing support and advice to others who are on the accelerated leadership route, thus supporting the development of a self-sustaining system.

Centrally administered programmes cannot provide the whole solution, however. Education needs to develop ways to identify and nurture potential leaders and to accelerate their development. It means not only providing them with opportunities within school but also, for example, offering them the chance to work in a range of different contexts – urban, rural, multi-ethnic, large, small – so that they emerge as leaders with a breadth of expertise and experience.

Diversifying the talent pool

A further strand in increasing and improving the pool of available school leaders is to encourage more participants from those groups that are under-represented.

As we have seen, despite an increase in the proportion of heads who are women, they remain under-represented.

In common with all occupations, there is a need to continue to ensure that women have access to appropriate development and promotion opportunities. Indeed, the development of new models of leadership such as co-headship is expected to benefit women in particular, as it enables them to make time for family responsibilities while continuing to work at a senior level.

We have also seen that men and women from black and minority ethnic backgrounds are also under-represented in school leadership. Programmes such as National College's Equal Access to Promotion and tools such as the interactive guide *Achieving equality and diversity in leadership* (National College, 2009a) are helping to address this issue. Nevertheless, schools and in particular headteachers and governing bodies – and the College need to do more to ensure that a commitment to increasing diversity in school leadership remains a priority.

New challenges and roles

The development of new opportunities and challenges for experienced heads that we describe in section 2.2 is supporting succession planning activities. System leadership opportunities are now emerging that enable heads to continue to work with children, staff and schools, but forge a new path outside their own institution, share their acquired knowledge and expertise with others, and reinvigorate their own career in the process.

These roles include:

School improvement partners (SIPs) – acting as official advisers to other heads (all heads now have access to a SIP).

Executive heads – assuming strategic leadership of two or more schools where one is struggling or has failed to find a headteacher.

Leaders of federations – leading two or more schools in a formal alliance.

National Leaders of Education and local leaders of education – supporting leaders of other schools in securing improvement.

Working beyond the school in this way can be refreshing for headteachers and therefore has implications for recruitment and retention but also for leadership development further down the school. In the head's absence, deputies, assistant heads and others have the chance to act up, take on more responsibilities and try out leadership roles for size, thereby preparing potential leaders and boosting their confidence and motivation.

Knowing that there is an opportunity to develop a career as a headteacher beyond a single school also makes the role of headteacher potentially more appealing to young, ambitious teachers. Previously, they would have viewed headship of a single school as the final rung on the career ladder. That is no longer the case.

Conclusions

There is a risk that there may not be a sufficient number of appropriately skilled school leaders in the future, and ensuring the sustainability of school leadership is a significant challenge. This challenge is being met through localised support and targeted action, new leadership development opportunities that encourage more people into leadership and offer the chance of more rapid progression, engagement with governing bodies, distributing leadership and nurturing talent, and developing opportunities to take on new roles. National College is continuing to work in partnership with others to ensure that the considerable excellence and ongoing improvement in school leadership in England is sustained into the future.

2.4 Leading change

There are real challenges associated with leading schools in the context of continual change. Changes such as workforce remodelling, Every Child Matters and plans for the 21st-century school all require the right sort of leadership. In one sense, change is the only constant in leadership, yet the nature of change varies from the small scale to the radical and substantial.

The ability to lead change is one of the most fundamental skills demanded of school leaders. While various models of change exist, there is no single approach to suit all needs. All significant change demands leadership that can be both visionary and large scale, yet still focused enough to deal with important details. There is a distinction between leading change and managing change, and good leaders need to be able to inspire and empower others to implement the shared vision. In all cases, establishing and retaining a clear focus without distraction from the aims of change are essential to success.

> The ability to lead change is one of the most fundamental skills demanded of school leaders.

What do we mean by leadership for change?

As the nature of school leadership has become more complex and heads have increasingly been expected to take on tasks beyond their traditional skill range, it is becoming ever more important that leaders understand how to lead radical change. Michael Fullan has written extensively on this theme, emphasising the importance of school leaders being able to face 'adaptive challenges', ie ones that require new ways of doing things (Fullan, 2004).
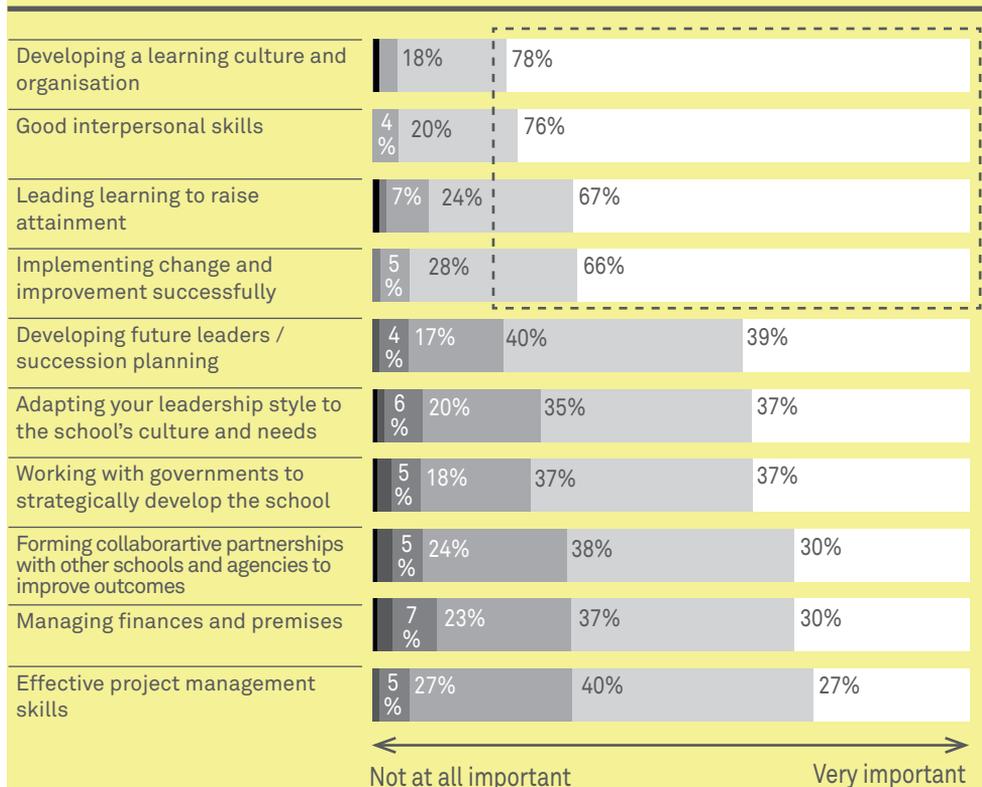
Education policy over the past five years has placed the leadership of change at the centre of school leadership. Workforce remodelling and extended schools have changed the scope of the school day and introduced new areas of professional expertise into school life. Building Schools for the Future requires heads to develop ambitious visions in collaboration with others, and to turn their hands to school design. As we have seen, Every Child Matters is encouraging education leaders to look outside their school and build partnerships with other schools and agencies.

As earlier sections have shown, this rate of change is unlikely to slow down. If schools are to continue to improve, they need to work together to achieve real change to the ways in which all schools operate, not only the best ones. This emphasises the need for heads to be able to adapt and embrace change, and to overcome the challenges that emerge from doing things differently.

The evidence already described in this report shows that many heads understand the significance of change leadership (Illuminas, 2008). Leading change is one of the four skills of a school leader that they regard as most important, along with 'developing a learning culture', 'good interpersonal skills' and 'leading learning'.

The same research found that 94 per cent rate it as 'important' and 66 per cent say it is 'very important'. Figure 16 shows responses to the question 'How important do you feel the following skills are for the school leaders of today and tomorrow?'

Figure 16: Judgement of skills required of senior leaders

Skill			
Developing a learning culture and organisation	18%	78%	
Good interpersonal skills	4% 20%	76%	
Leading learning to raise attainment	7% 24%	67%	
Implementing change and improvement successfully	5% 28%	66%	
Developing future leaders / succession planning	4% 17%	40%	39%
Adapting your leadership style to the school's culture and needs	6% 20%	35%	37%
Working with governments to strategically develop the school	5% 18%	37%	37%
Forming collaborartive partnerships with other schools and agencies to improve outcomes	5% 24%	38%	30%
Managing finances and premises	7% 23%	37%	30%
Effective project management skills	5% 27%	40%	27%

Not at all important ← → Very important

Source: Illuminas, 2008

Research shows that school leaders are also confident about implementing change, with 75 per cent rating themselves as good or better in this regard (Illuminas, 2008). However, this confidence relates to the in-school changes that are a day-to-day aspect of leadership. Only 35 per cent felt that they were equipped to lead broader change beyond their school, for instance setting up a federation.

Case study 10: Developing a soft federation

Resilience is an essential quality of the successful leader of change, according to Lisa Vyas, Executive Head of a soft federation of two primary schools in Manchester, Ladybarn and Green End. She took over Green End Primary School in 2007 to help get the school out of special measures.

"When you put your head above the parapet, you potentially set yourself up to fail – and plenty of people will be looking for that failure" she says

"It happened when I took on Green End; there were plenty of naysayers and cynics who were quite scathing about what I was doing. And I did get an occasional sense of panic when I worried that we might not succeed. Self-doubt is natural, but you have to find ways of taking yourself out of it."

It helped to have a support network of other national leaders of education at both schools. Lisa says, "This sort of support is vital for change leaders, but it has to be informal. When Green End was in special measures, I didn't want to commit myself to attending anything extra that took me out of school. I couldn't afford to spread myself too thinly.

"It's about getting the balance right and ensuring support is available to you in a way that still allows you to focus on the school."

This case study highlights the importance of a range of personal attributes in leading change, including conviction, determination and a strong sense of purpose.

The College is looking more deeply at the role of change leadership in developing potential school and children's centre leaders. It is considering what they need to learn and what processes need to be put into place in order to ensure school leaders are effective leaders of change in an increasingly complex environment.

Modelling change

Recent decades have seen the development of many change leadership models, a number of which have been focused on schools and education. For instance, the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) has developed a model process that many schools have used to implement significant in-school change, notably workforce remodelling. It is a linear model that involves five stages (see Figure 17):

Mobilise – make colleagues and stakeholders aware of the need for change and get the process moving.
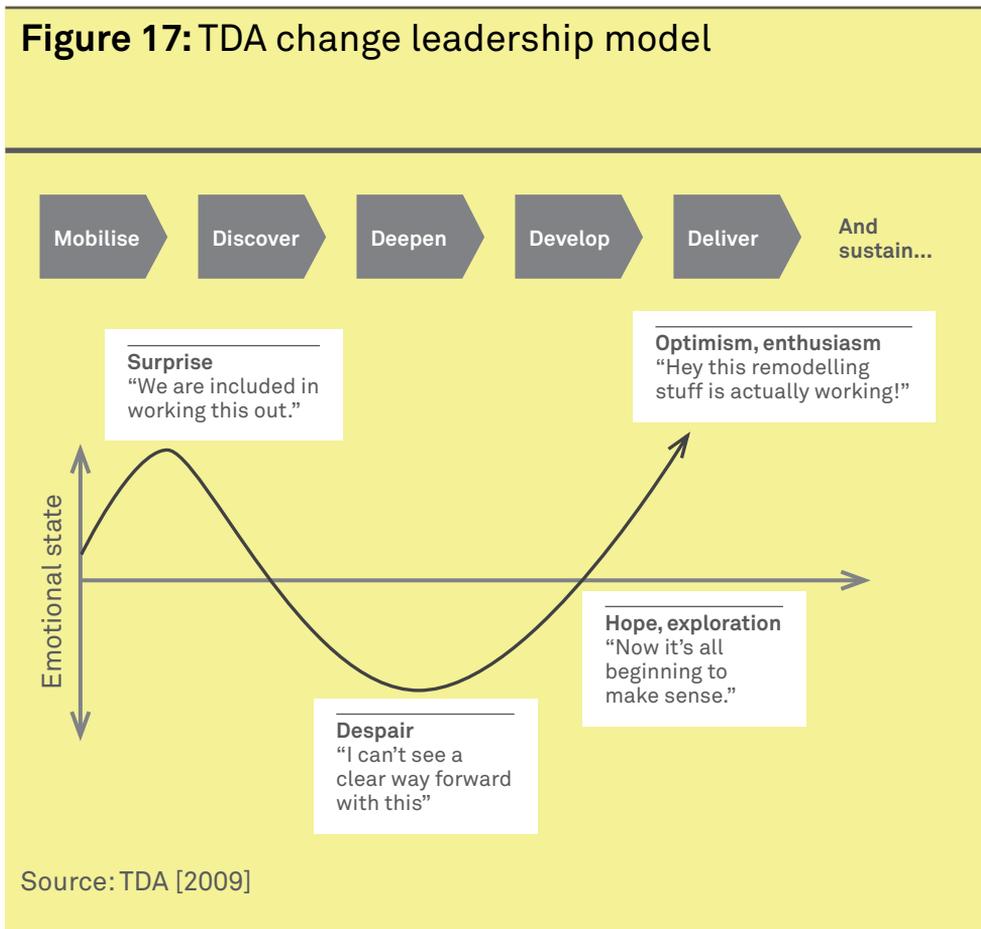
Discover – establish change priorities.

Deepen – understand the scale and scope of the challenge involved.

Develop – develop effective and sustainable strategies for change.

Deliver – implement these strategies.

Figure 17: TDA change leadership model

Mobilise → Discover → Deepen → Develop → Deliver → And sustain…

Surprise
"We are included in working this out."

Optimism, enthusiasm
"Hey this remodelling stuff is actually working!"

Emotional state

Hope, exploration
"Now it's all beginning to make sense."

Despair
"I can't see a clear way forward with this"

Source: TDA [2009]

The TDA model emphasises that education leaders should understand the political and emotional aspects and implications of change. It uses the concept of an emotional curve to convey the ups and downs that occur during a change journey, and calls on school leaders to be aware of how the political and emotional aspects of a change programme can hinder or encourage success (TDA, 2009).

More recently, the College has developed a change leadership model with the Innovation Unit and the Bridge Consultancy. This four-stage model was used to support the development of new organisational and leadership models, including federations and new partnerships with other services. It can be used as a diagnostic tool to help school leaders understand what needs to be changed or why change is not happening. The model's four stages, or levers, are:

Ambition levers – help leaders to create a living vision for change.

Directional levers – enable leaders to develop a strategy for change.

Transformational levers – encourage leaders to create a working culture and relationships that will ensure change can take hold.

Transactional levers – assist leaders in implementing the change process.

Using the model helped to create a common language for change and highlighted the importance of a planned and structured change process. The model focused on developing a cadre of leaders across a school or partnership who really understand the vision and can drive it forwards, and creating a positive culture for change before making more operational decisions about changing structures or processes.

These two models, and others that have been used widely in other sectors, indicate that whilst there is no single model that works in all circumstances, leaders can benefit from understanding the change process in an explicit way.

Change in practice

Practical examples of what effective leadership of change in schools looks like are emerging from the development of system leadership activities. The development of the London Leadership Strategy and the roles of national leaders of education and local leaders of education have helped to pinpoint the attributes of a successful leader of change.

> A head who has the resilience and moral purpose to be able to maintain a core vision and identify the specific strategies that need to be put into place to make an impact is better placed to lead change effectively.

Many headteachers who are appointed to a new post have lots of plans and ideas but find themselves knocked sideways by, for example, a poor inspection outcome or resistance from staff. A head who has the resilience and moral purpose to be able to maintain a core vision and identify the specific strategies that need to be put into place to make an impact is better placed to lead change effectively.

Case study 11: Supporting schools out of special measures

"The effective leadership of change requires a clear vision, very few targets and an absolute focus on the change you are trying to achieve," maintains John Atkins, Executive Principal of the Kemnal Trust and principal of Kemnal Technology College in Bromley.

He and his team at Kemnal Technology College have helped several schools out of special measures. The first thing he does when he goes into a new school is to ensure that staff are equally focused on raising standards.

"We tell the staff that we will take on all of their workload apart from teaching and learning, for which they will remain accountable. They don't have to cover for other staff and they don't have to attend any evening meetings. We ensure that there is no excuse for not achieving in the classroom."

Not everyone will be able to cope with the new regime and effective leaders of change have to be prepared to take tough decisions. "You have to be strong enough to look people in the eye and take them on head to head without blinking. And you do it because you know that what you are doing is right and proper if pupils are to get a fair deal from school," says John.

Atkins insists that the best people will stay. "There are always achievers who are frustrated by the incompetence surrounding them. And it is ultimately a team effort."

The experiences of John Atkins and colleagues at Kemnal Technology College highlight the importance of vision, focus and the determination to achieve change despite the obstacles that may be placed in the way.

To develop a more robust view of change leaders, the College commissioned Nottingham University to study successful change leadership in more depth. The study looked in particular at how heads and other school leaders respond to adaptive challenges and set out to answer three core questions:

1. What constitutes effective change leadership?

2. What does effective change leadership look like in practice?

3. What do school leaders need to learn to become effective change leaders?

The result is a strong, practically grounded portrait of what successful leaders of change do and the strategies they employ. The College is using the study to develop a set of case studies that look at how leaders have responded to different change scenarios.

Research for the College into developing strategically focused schools suggests that:

> "In an era of rapid change and multiple initiatives from government, schools have to take on new ideas and learn from doing them. The importance of developing a reflective and learning culture so that strategy can emerge from the analysis of experience is a powerful way of dealing with complexity."
>
> (Davies et al., 2007:74)

School leaders have a key role in this, ensuring that individuals have the chance to share, reflect and learn, and that they are able to articulate the main strategic intents and direction of the school. Successful change needs leaders who can deal with short-term challenges while also building for the future, build and reinforce the values and vision of the school through regular and consistent dialogue, and develop and enhance strategic leadership throughout the school.

Conclusions

Change management models are a valuable tool but while they can help an organisation get to grips with major change, they are not enough on their own to ensure change is effective. This demands a greater understanding of what the effective leadership of change looks like in practice: we may know what great leaders of change do, but we are not always sure how they do it.

National College's research into the characteristics of effective change leadership is already informing the shape of leadership development programmes. In addition, the College is using the research to develop other learning tools and resources that individuals and groups of leaders can use to navigate their own local system change.

Change leadership is not a skill or talent that only senior leaders need to develop. It must go right through the organisation. This is why the College is looking at what change leadership means for middle leaders who might, for example, be working across a network of schools and agencies to deliver projects and initiatives.

National College has begun to develop a profile of successful change leadership through its research and work with schools. As described at the beginning of this publication, school leadership continues to rise to the changing demands and challenges that it faces. Successful school leaders are achieving this by focusing on continuous improvement – and this requires effective change management.

As Bill Gates observed: 'The complacent company is a dead company. Success today requires the agility and drive to constantly rethink, reinvigorate, react and reinvent' (cited in Covey, 2006:104). This is as true for education as it is for business.

School Leadership Today

The view from College partners

Part 3: The view from College partners

In this section we present a view from two of the other organisations that share National College's interest in supporting the development of school leaders; the Association of School and College Leaders [ASCL] and the National Association of Headteachers [NAHT].

The view from ASCL

Education will remain near the top of the political agenda after the 2010 general election and school leadership will be at the top of the education agenda. So this publication comes at a critical time, when the quality and reach of school leadership has never been more important.

The landmark HMI publication *Ten Good Schools* (HMSO, 1977) identified the main common characteristic of these schools as the quality of the head and this was echoed in the recent Ofsted publication *Twelve outstanding secondary schools: excelling against the odds* (Ofsted, 2009). Thus we have the evidence over time that the role of the head teacher has always been a vital component in the success of a school. So why is it specially important now?

First and foremost, it is exciting now because it is no longer just about the head. Genuinely distributed leadership – not just the sharing out of jobs – means that there is a real chance that schools can respond to the three great challenges identified in this publication – reducing in-school variation, raising the achievement of disadvantaged youngsters, and growing tomorrow's school leaders. No single person, or superhead as the media love to call such people, could or should attempt to do it alone.

Part of this is having the freedom to build a senior leadership team that is right for each school's particular circumstances. We take for granted in England and Wales that we can do this, but it is by no means commonplace across the world, where school leaders have much less autonomy. Increasingly, the senior leadership team contains one, two or even three people who are not qualified teachers. These schools are in the best possible place to respond to the increasing range of demands now placed on us, not least because business managers often see the problems from a different perspective and challenge long-held assumptions.

The second reason that school leadership is at the top of the agenda is that politicians have at last recognised that the expertise in school improvement lies in schools and so they must create ways in which successful school leaders can lead the system, working in more than one school. The National College has been at the forefront of this process with its highly successful National Leaders of Education scheme, which rightly recognises in the National Support Schools

concept that it is the leadership, not the sole leader, of successful schools that can be harnessed to help other schools in need of support. This system leadership – or wider leadership, as I prefer to call it – is now a core part of the school improvement agenda in England.

Increasingly this wider leadership is extending into the area of children's services, in which school leaders can best fulfil their strong commitment to *Every Child Matters* by playing a part in the leadership of local services. If we are maximise the potential of disadvantaged children, this is especially important.

So, when a school leader – and a head in particular – is appointed to his or her post, they are also being appointed as a co-leader of education in the area. Although this is often not explicit, it becomes apparent from the first week in the new job and governing bodies would be wise to recognise this more strongly in the appointment process.

School leaders are, as this publication states, "driven by making a difference" and that increasingly means the opportunity to make a difference not only in one's own school, but more widely.

92 per cent of heads say that it's a great job, a message that needs to come across more strongly to counteract the prevailing line that heads are overworked and over-accountable. Only in that way will we be able to respond to the third challenge of growing tomorrow's leaders. The National College is building the right sort of leadership development continuum, backed by a succession planning strategy that cannot afford to fail, but every school leader, and especially head teacher, has to accentuate the positive side of the job to the enthusiastic young teachers who are the heads of the future.

Among the overwhelming external demands, successful school leaders hold to their own priorities and, above all, to their own values. As well as working to achieve externally set performance indicators, they set their own, including targets for the leadership successes of their staff. In that way, they keep control of the increasingly wide agenda now facing schools, lead the changes that really matter, retain their focus on teaching and learning, and continue to raise the aspirations of the next generation of school leaders and the young people they teach.

Dr John Dunford, General Secretary, Association of School and College Leaders

The view from NAHT

There has been a chronic shortage in the recruitment of primary and special school heads over the past few years: the situation is not improving.

So far this year, advertisement rates have held steady, for a variety of reasons. When these counter balancing factors do not continue, then 'crisis' is not too strong a word to describe what could happen over the next 3-5 years when application rates rise as more that 5000 school leaders leave the profession.

On page 36, we noted that on average three times as many applications were received per secondary headship vacancy than per primary one. More worrying is that more than half the applicants in the primary sector were either not deemed to be adequately qualified to be called for interview, or declined the invitation. The danger of appointing candidates not yet ready for headship and the consequent effect on leadership and management is of real concern. The now active and commendable work of the National College in providing Peer Support for newly appointed Heads is not before time.

Recruitment to primary and special school leadership must be an immediate priority. Whilst the situation is improved in the Secondary sector, there is no room for complacency, particularly in the recruitment of women into headship and under-representation from the black and ethnic minority community.

There is also concern over the high level of temporary filled places, highlighted on pages 37 and 38. Whilst we would agree that acting headship can provide valuable opportunities, we are not as confident as some that the majority of these vacancies are planned opportunities to give experience to aspiring Heads.

NAHT is concerned for schools caught in this predicament. Temporary arrangements can be unsettling for the whole school community, especially where those arrangements are not supported by strong external governance and support.

This imbalance must affect standards.

We believe that there is a high correlation between the numbers of schools judged by Ofsted to be in the lower categories of performance and schools with temporary leadership arrangements. This intends no slight on the skills and courage of those who have 'stepped up to the plate' to help out schools that have become 'headless'. Colleagues are owed more than a debt of thanks for taking on that task. This is why we are delighted that through the evidence put forward by the Social Partnership, leaders who assume this role on a temporary basis will be able to receive more than thanks for taking on those roles.

NAHT believes there must be greater determination to tackle the issues that are *currently* discouraging middle managers from applying for headship, most notably:

bureaucratic overload

vulnerability

lack of pay differentiation in small school headship

As National College has noted:

"Small primary schools face real issues around capacity and workload...headteachers are increasingly stretched by bureaucratic and managerial activity and report negative impact on work-life balance." (Bennett, 2008)

NAHT's analysis of the **bureaucratic burden** of small school headship focussed on the increased bureaucratic demands of the past two decades in the following (not exhaustive) list. We believe that the bureaucratic burdens on school leaders may well increase with new legislation being brought in on the back of new legislation.

Vulnerability of the Head of the small school during inspection is also an issue. Current arrangements place the whole burden of proof on the shoulders of school leadership. In small schools where the capacity to distribute that leadership is limited, the Head is the front line and the middle rank and the back line.

The issue of **pay differentials** is most clearly articulated by deputy heads who feel that moving to the headship of a small school has no financial benefit.

We call for an alliance of agencies to pay urgent attention to the explosion in the administrative duties demanded of Headteachers. *There should be as much emphasis on removing administrative burdens on school leaders as there is for teachers.*

We welcome the development of school business managers in schools or clusters of schools. We intend to push ahead with the development of Services for Schools with our business partners the Schools Advisory Service, and we applaud the work they have been undertaking in Wakefield.

We therefore recommend:

Further research in the status of Temporary Filled Placements.

Immediate easing of the administrative workload of all school leaders.

Work with Ofsted, National Strategies(SIPs)/ and Local Authority school improvement teams to positively and intelligently transform accountability frameworks.

Assessment of the capacity of Local Authorities to undertake effective succession planning.

Review of the workload caused by non-educational authorities (e.g. H&S, Financial Management, H.R etc.).

Collaboration and interdependence.

The NAHT has a strong working relationship with National College and we would wish to strengthen this collaboration and partnership to bring greater clarity of purpose and emphasis to the urgency of the situation.

Mick Brookes, General Secretary, NAHT

School Leadership Today

Conclusion: A vision for school leadership in the 21st century

Part 4: Conclusion: a vision for school leadership in the 21st century

School leadership remains one of the most significant policy priorities for governments everywhere. It remains important because it makes a difference to the significant challenges we face now and in the future.

In many ways, school leaders have an advantage in coping with our rapidly changing world, because of their understanding of learning. As Thomas L Friedman describes it:

> "The first, and most important, ability you can develop … is the ability to 'learn how to learn' – to constantly absorb, and teach yourself, new ways of doing old things or new ways of doing new things … In such a world, it is not only what you know but how you learn that will set you apart. Because what you know today will be out of date sooner than you think."

(Friedman, 2006:309)

This is the style of learner that we need in our future world, and we believe that it is the kind of school leadership that we need in our current one. School leaders must be able to collaborate, adapt, explain, synthesise, model, personalise and localise. As Einstein remarked, 'the significant problems we have cannot be solved at the same level of thinking with which we created them'.

National College knows that the real expertise in school leadership resides with school leaders themselves. They are doing the job and understand its complexities, its challenges and its rewards. Only by maximising the impact of good and experienced school leaders and by working together with a common moral purpose can we build a sustainable approach that will make serious inroads into the challenges that education and society face.

As we have seen in this publication, the leaders of our schools have responded to many changes and will continue to face significant change in the future. School leadership is increasingly accountable and increasingly complex, and needs to become increasingly diverse. The number and type of school leadership roles are expanding. Schools are supporting each other, and increasingly working with other professions and organisations. School leaders are hungry to improve and most know what they need in order to keep improving and are ambitious. Younger, newer teachers and middle leaders are especially ambitious, expect good-quality leadership development and opportunity, and expect

School leadership remains one of the most significant policy priorities for governments everywhere. It remains important because it makes a difference to the significant challenges we face now and in the future.

to progress. School leaders make a difference, and are valued by parents and children. They have a key role to play in tackling the challenges that schools face, and that society faces.

In the face of these challenges, we believe that the core curriculum for school leadership development in the 21st century must focus on the leadership of teaching and learning, outward-facing and system leadership, the development of future leaders, and the leadership of change.

We believe that school leaders themselves should lead the way in developing school leaders and school leadership. They should develop local approaches that address the specific challenges of their local context. The College's research and experience with teachers and school leaders tells us that real-life learning on the job is often the most powerful and lasting form of professional development. It also has the extra benefit of not requiring schools to send their staff on too many external courses. To ensure that this is challenging and avoids the recycling of low-level thinking and inadequate practice, development must be supported by other approaches such as visits to other schools and contexts, high-quality coaching and mentoring, access to new ideas and reflection. National College is uniquely placed to play a key role in this.

To develop world-class school leadership, we need to encourage the best school leaders to support the rest – both within and across schools – and develop collaboration between schools and with other agencies. We need to encourage approaches to leadership that engage parents, the community, other children's services agencies, business and higher education, backed up by a more coherent and consistent approach to leadership development across all children's services. We must use the demographic challenges that face school leadership as an opportunity for transformation and to prepare a new generation of leaders to meet current and future challenges and opportunities. Finally, we should embed leadership development and talent management into schools themselves, ensuring that schools are developing and making the very most of leadership talent today and building leadership capacity that supports all schools in the future.

Where could this lead us? As we have described in the case study of the Harris Federation featured on page 30, examples are emerging of chains of schools or local federations of schools working together to secure improvement, supported by overarching chief executive-style leadership and governance structures. Could these executive system leaders be part of the answer to reducing variability between schools, so that every school becomes a good school? What would need to happen to accelerate and support their development? As we have also seen, a focus on earlier intervention and the drive to integrate services for children and families at the local level through children's trusts are attempting to narrow the gap in outcomes for children and families. The statutory role of director of children's services (DCS) in leading this integrated approach embodies the need for new ways of thinking about leadership and service provision in the 21st century. The College is delighted to be taking on its new remit to address

To develop world-class school leadership, we need to encourage the best school leaders to support the rest – both within and across schools – and develop collaboration between schools and with other agencies.

the leadership development and succession planning needs of this group. Will the current approach of school leaders working in partnership with leaders from a range of other services remain the norm, or will local children's services leadership roles as we are increasingly seeing in children's centres evolve over time to mirror the authority-wide DCS role? The College will continue to research and explore these issues, working with policymakers, practitioners and partners as we move forward.

We believe that the stakes are high. We have never faced such a rapid pace of change, nor such an array of tough challenges. At the same time, we have never been so well-equipped to deal with such challenges. The ingredients are there to sustain school leadership into the 21st century, to rise to the challenges we face, learn from the best and build our capacity and capability. There has never been a better time to be a school leader.

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School Leadership Today

The importance of school leadership in ensuring positive outcomes for children and young people has been demonstrated repeatedly in national and international research, and is a key policy priority for governments worldwide.

Schools and school leadership in England have changed rapidly in recent years. The number and variety of roles have grown. Collaboration has developed between schools and with other services. The quality and impact of leadership have improved. And the pace of change remains high.

In this publication, we have used our knowledge and what we have learnt from our work with school leaders to highlight some of the key changes that have taken place in school leadership in England over the last decade, what that leadership looks like in 2009, and our view of the challenges that it faces and how it is likely to develop in the future.

National College
for Leadership of Schools
and Children's Services