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The way in which career breaks for childbirth and childcare are regarded and managed is a significant issue and requires further consideration. Central to this is the fact that it is generally more difficult for women to resume work at the same level after a career break than it is for men.

To accommodate work–life balance issues more fully, it is important to nurture a culture in the school that is tolerant in relation to families, particularly children and elderly people. There is also a need to recognize and encourage paternity leave.

Mentoring, seen as vital in supporting aspirant female headteachers, has increased significantly in recent years, probably as a result of national training initiatives, and it is important that this continues.

Although women are less likely to be expected to take on stereotypical feminine roles, headteachers should remain sensitive to the need to expose aspiring school leaders to a range of management and leadership experience in order to increase their promotability.
Despite these recent trends, men continue...56 per cent to 62 per cent nursery and primary headship rose from...26 per cent to 31 per cent secondary headship rose from...percent of headteachers percent of teachers important for potential female headteachers. Mentoring and the existence of role models are particularly...served as headteachers. Women also appear to be less likely to plan their careers. Women are...are regarded and managed is a significant issue and can operate as a barrier to headship for women in teaching. While stereotyping was prevalent in the past, but is now much less common. However, some stereotyping still continues, particularly in the perception that women remain most underrepresented in secondary schools and men report some resistance to their working in early years. Coleam of the Institute of Education, and is available on the NCSL website at www.ncsl.org.uk/twlf. There appears to have been some reduction in the amount...proportion of female secondary headteachers. London and Birmingham have more than 40 per cent and the North and South West have 23 per cent. Considerable differences exist between regions in the...education and to building leadership capacity in schools, the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) has been...encouraging the leadership development of underrepresented groups in...issues are important for all, they tend to impact more on women, who usually bear more domestic responsibility than men. As such, women are more likely than men to take their domestic situation into account when considering whether or not to apply for headship. The job of headteacher is demanding and stressful and...some female heads who were leading schools in special measures felt particularly vulnerable to criticism as female leaders. Both male and female headteachers are more likely to feel inappropriate comments about their appearance.
Despite these recent trends, men continue to be overrepresented in senior leadership roles in schools in all phases. Special school and pupil referral unit (PRU) headship rose from 41 per cent to 47 per cent, and secondary headship rose from 26 per cent to 31 per cent. London and Birmingham have more than 40 per cent female secondary headteachers, while the North and South West have 23 per cent. The proportion of women reaching headship and deputy headship is important for potential female headteachers. Women are more likely than men to doubt their abilities to serve as headteachers. Women also appear to be less likely to plan their careers. Women are more likely than men to have to change partners who take responsibility for domestic arrangements. Domestic demands on female headteachers in general have eased. The majority of male headteachers enjoy the support of colleagues (60 per cent compared to 90 per cent). Female headteachers from all sectors are also still more likely to be single, divorced or separated than their male counterparts.

The job of headteacher is demanding and stressful and requires long hours of work. Although work–life balance issues are important for all, they tend to impact more on women, who usually bear more domestic responsibility than men. As a result, women are more likely than men to take their domestic situation into account when considering whether or not to apply for headship.

Female headteachers reported concerns about the way in which gender-related work–life balance issues are important for all, but they impact more on women, who usually bear more domestic responsibility than men. Women are much more likely than men to have to change partners who take responsibility for domestic arrangements. Domestic demands on female headteachers in general have eased. The majority of male headteachers enjoy the support of colleagues (60 per cent compared to 90 per cent). Female headteachers from all sectors are also still more likely to be single, divorced or separated than their male counterparts.

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Author: Dr Marianne Coleman

Proportions of female teachers and female headteachers by phase

Fig 1. Proportions of female teachers and female headteachers by phase

Be overrepresented in senior leadership roles in schools in all phases.

The proportion of women in:

- special school and pupil referral unit (PRU) headship rose from 41 per cent to 47 per cent
- secondary headship rose from 26 per cent to 31 per cent
- nursery and primary headship remained at 9 per cent

Gender and leadership in schools:

Important for potential female headteachers.

Mentoring and the existence of role models are particularly important for potential female headteachers. Women also appear to be less likely to plan their careers.

Women are more likely than men to doubt their abilities to serve as headteachers. Women are regarded and managed is a significant issue and can operate as a barrier to headship for women in teaching.

The way in which career breaks for childbirth and childcare are prevalent in the past, but is now much less common. However, some stereotyping still continues, particularly in the London and Birmingham authorities where the proportion of female secondary headteachers is more than 40 per cent.

Female headteachers reported concerns about the way in which career breaks for childbirth and childcare are perceived to be looking for a male headteacher. Such experiences appear to be less common than was the case in the past, but do continue to be a major area of concern. Appointment boards usually include a majority of men.

As part of its commitment to encouraging the leadership development of underrepresented groups in education and to building leadership capacity in schools, the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) has been working with the University of London to commission research on gender and headship in the 21st century.

Female headteachers reported concerns about the number of female secondary headteachers. London and Birmingham have more than 40 per cent and the North and South West have 23 per cent.

Female headteachers are more likely to be the main breadwinner than women secondary headteachers, and the greater number of primary schools to secondary school levels reflects the higher proportion of female primary headteachers in primary schools.

Female headteachers are more likely than men to have to change jobs to follow their partner. About a quarter of the partners of female secondary heads and about half the partners of male secondary heads have moved to follow them.

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The proportion of female secondary headteachers with children is higher than the proportion of men with children. Male headteachers enjoy the support of their families more than women.

It would appear that some women have had to make significant sacrifices in their careers to have children. Women secondary headteachers are more likely to have children than men but significantly less likely to have married.

The job of headteacher is demanding and stressful and requires long hours of work. Although work–life balance is an important issue for both men and women, some women have had to make significant sacrifices in their careers to have children.

There appears to have been some reduction in the amount of work available to women secondary headteachers, which was prevalent in the past, but is now much less common. However, some stereotyping still continues, particularly in London and Birmingham, where the proportion of female secondary headteachers is more than 40 per cent.

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The majority of male headteachers enjoy the support of their families more than women.

There was also little difference in the ways in which male and female respondents attached to their leadership style. These most commonly included:

- consultative
- supportive
- coaching
- inclusive
- collaborative

There were no significant differences in the descriptions that male and female respondents attached to their leadership style. These most commonly included:

- decisive
- visionary
- challenging

These descriptions are more commonly associated with the leadership style that may be more commonly demanded of today's leaders.
1. It is important that governing bodies are fully aware of equal opportunities issues in the appointment of both women and men in secondary and primary schools. Governors in particular may be biased in favour of men and discriminate against women because of family responsibilities.

2. A positive development has been the relative equity for men and women that now exists in respect of senior roles in secondary schools prior to headship. However, it should be noted this has not always been extended to the role of acting headteacher.

3. The membership of interview panels in all types of schools is still weighted towards men and steps could be taken to remedy this.

4. There appear to be regionally based cultural barriers to the full acceptance of women as leaders. Equity issues could be addressed on a regional basis. There is also a need to recognise and address the masculine culture of some regional headteachers' meetings.

5. The way in which career breaks for childbirth and childcare are regarded and managed is a significant issue and requires further consideration. Central to this is the fact that it is generally more difficult for women to resume work at the same level after a career break than it is for men.

6. To accommodate work–life balance issues more fully, it is important to nurture a culture in the school that is tolerant in relation to families, particularly children and elderly people, the family and domestic responsibilities, particularly in primary schools, and to recognise and encourage paternity leave.

7. Mentoring, seen as vital in supporting aspirant female headteachers, has increased significantly in recent years, probably as a result of national training initiatives, and it is important that this continues.

8. Although women are less likely to be expected to take on stereotypical feminine roles, headteachers should remain sensitive to the need to expose aspiring school leaders to a range of management and leadership experience in order to increase their promotability.
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Recommendations for school leaders and governors and for national training programmes