



TOMORROW'S
LEADERS
TODAY

What are we learning about... the school leadership labour market?

Evidence Into Practice Guide



National College for
School Leadership

Inspiring leaders;
improving children's lives

Who gets headships?

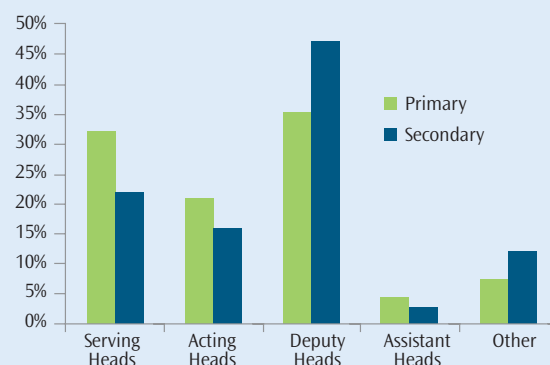
In 2006/07, around 2,000 headships were advertised. Where appointments were made, who got the jobs?

Data suggest that the recruitment market for headship has been generally conservative – especially in the primary phase. In 2007, while nearly 40 per cent of secondary headship appointments went to existing or acting headteachers¹, the corresponding figure in the primary phase was around 50 per cent. Nearly half of secondary headships went to current deputy headteachers, whilst only around 35 per cent in the primary appointments were deputies. Assistant heads accounted for less than five per cent of appointments in either phase.

Candidates who have had a period as an acting headteacher appear to do well. This is not necessarily the benefit of ‘incumbency’ – among the acting primary heads appointed to substantive roles in 2007, less than a third were appointed to the school where they were acting head. This may be due,

in part, to the additional confidence that a candidate can gain from a period of acting headship, encouraging them to step up to a headteacher role on a permanent basis.

Appointments to headship in 2007: background of successful candidate by job role¹



Profile of candidates successful in headship recruitment exercises, 2007¹

	Primary		Secondary	
Age of successful candidate	Under 35	13%	Under 35	0%
	35 - 39	24%	35 - 39	12%
	40 - 44	24%	40 - 44	23%
	45 - 49	20%	45 - 49	37%
	50+	19%	50+	28%
Gender of successful candidate	27% male	73% female	59% male	41% female
% of successful candidates from minority ethnic background	1.5%		2.2%	

Women make up 84 per cent of the total teaching workforce in primary and 57 per cent in secondary. Just over five per cent of the total teaching workforce is from a minority ethnic background. The table above highlights, therefore, that both women and ethnic minority leaders are under represented in headship.

Most schools are able to recruit a headteacher straight away – in 2006/07 about 63 per cent of primary and 75 per cent

of secondary school headteacher posts were filled after one advertisement¹. The secondary position is the best it has been for seven years, but the primary position continues to worsen. If a further 5 per cent become successful first time in the next recruitment round then, at a national level, an extra 120 schools would succeed in recruiting a headteacher where currently they have to re-advertise.

WHAT IF ... I could tap into different recruitment markets?

Does local data suggest that candidates are being drawn from the full range of recruitment markets available to schools in terms of:

- Career background: are experienced assistant headteachers being given appropriate consideration, for example, rather than being rejected by governing bodies as not having a deputy's experience?
- Personal profile: is there any evidence that short-listing processes may be overlooking candidates with particular profiles or backgrounds?
- Geographical coverage: are applications being drawn from all available labour markets locally?

This need not involve a time-consuming data collection exercise. Of course, more sophisticated information enables greater certainty, but even a sample review can provide an initial basis for action.

The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) has developed a specific tool for collating data to review the diversity of the current school leadership teams at local level. It can be downloaded from:

www.ncsl.org.uk/tomorrowsleaderstoday/resource

If local data suggest that appointments do not reflect the full breadth of the available recruitment market, is this because candidates are not being attracted initially or because appointment panels are overlooking potentially strong candidates who have applied?

Strategies for attracting more leadership candidates into your area are described in 'Turning Heads', available at www.ncsl.org.uk/tomorrowsleaderstoday/resource

Strategies for supporting appointment panels to enable them to make robust evidence-based decisions are available at www.ncsl.org.uk/tomorrowsleaderstoday/governors

How long do headteachers stay in post?

While it is true that most headteachers leaving their post are retiring, there is also a significant level of movement among mid-career headteachers. Of departing headteachers whose posts were advertised in 2007, around a quarter moved to another post in education – either in another school or elsewhere.

Data suggest that the average age of appointment to a first headship is around 38 for primary heads and 41 for secondary heads. Their average length of tenure in one headship is around six to seven years^{2,3}. This corresponds with separate research that has identified a 'plateau effect' in headteachers' engagement once they have been in post for 7-10 years⁴.

Years in post	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	New in post – developing the role succession				Reaching average tenure – succession risk			Plateau high risk		

Those headteachers leaving post to take up a second headship are most likely to do so in their mid to late forties. The average age of appointment of individuals entering second headship is 44 for primary school heads and 47 for secondary school heads³.

In the context of succession planning, these data enable planners to assess their 'succession risk', looking at the whole population of school leaders, not simply those approaching retirement.

WHAT IF... I could extend headteachers' length of tenure?

Retaining a leader is much easier and less costly than recruitment, and carries considerably less risk. As a short-term measure, succession pressures might be eased by improving retention of existing (younger) headteachers who might otherwise move into jobs outside headship within or beyond education. Even an additional 12–24 months of service from a headteacher might provide a vital breathing space for longer-term strategies to develop, bringing through new leaders.

The most effective retention strategies:

- are driven by good local intelligence
- respond to the aspirations of individual headteachers
- recognise that an individual's career planning is informed by personal as well as professional considerations.

A systematic approach to succession planning brings together intelligence from across a whole system, for example, combining hard data about length of tenure generated by local authority human resources (HR) departments together with 'soft' information about individual headteacher's aspirations gathered by school improvement services.

This enables authorities, diocese or other school systems to map their succession planning risk, and to target their retention strategies accordingly. Highly mobile heads with flexible personal circumstances, who have been in post for five or more years, for example, might be assessed as a high succession risk. Newly appointed heads, by contrast, might present a low succession risk.

Such a combination of intelligence and data can inform decisions about how best to target time and resources to retain key leaders.

High risk profiles:

at or above average tenure; approaching retirement; have expressed interest in a career move; flexible personal circumstances etc

Headteachers in this category represent the highest succession risk, with the greatest likelihood of seeking new career opportunities and the flexibility to do so. Immediate impact strategies may retain them for a short period, but are unlikely to hold them for long. Interventions are likely to be closely tailored to an individual's requirements – eg short-term financial incentives, opportunities to develop complementary professional development projects alongside their headship etc.

Medium risk profiles:

reaching average tenure; have secured key improvements in current role; unlikely to stay in current role until retirement etc

Headteachers in this category represent a medium risk, but may also be the cohort where retention strategies can have the greatest stabilising effect. Interventions might include opportunities to earn entitlement (over time) to development opportunities such as sabbaticals or secondments.

Low risk profiles:

new in post; personal circumstances likely to inhibit a move out of the locality

Headteachers in this category are stable in their current roles and represent the lowest succession risk. While they represent the lowest priority for immediate retention interventions, however, effort should be directed to building employer loyalty through 'good employer' practices, delaying inclinations to move later.



See case study section

What is happening to demand for headteachers?

Succession planning need not involve replacing 'like with like', particularly at a time when the needs of communities are changing. The requirement for effective and sustainable schools that are responsive to local need is leading to the development of new school models and different leadership roles.

In headline terms, the number of primary headteacher roles has fallen by about 1,000 posts since 2001. At the same time, of course, the gap in the supply of suitable candidates has also grown. In the secondary and special phases, the number of headteacher posts has been stable.

The number of posts has been affected by several factors: falling school rolls, school closures, amalgamations and the emergence of new school models. Many local authorities are managing the challenge of falling rolls. Across England, the full-time equivalent (FTE) number of pupils in maintained schools was 7.3 million in January 2007, down from 7.4 million the previous January. The number of schools also fell: in January 2007 there were 17,361 primary schools in England, 143 fewer than 2006.

Full-time headteachers in England, January 2001–07 (000s)⁵

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Nursery and primary	18.6	18.5	18.3	18.2	18.0	17.8	17.6
Secondary	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.5
Special, PRUs and other non-school education	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4
Total	23.5	23.4	23.2	23.2	22.9	22.7	22.5

In relation to new school structures, there are no reliable national data for, say, the growth in the number of school federations working with a single headteacher. However, almost 10 per cent of headteachers have now reported some sort of formal federation arrangement involving their school⁷. This has opened new areas of debate about the nature of headship. The federated model, for example, is testing the idea that every school has to have its own headteacher⁸. In addition, the changing policy agenda is giving rise to demand for new leadership capabilities in schools. The development of extended schools and the integration of services, is creating leadership roles which cross professional boundaries, while the emerging 14–19 agenda is creating demand for collaborative leadership which reaches beyond the confines of a single organisation. Just as today's headteachers have roles which are radically different to those of the past, tomorrow's leaders will require new capabilities again to meet the demands of new circumstances.

WHAT IF... I could influence demand for headteachers?

The Independent Study into School Leadership⁷ identified several drivers for new and emerging models of school leadership. Drivers include: extended and multi-agency schools striving to meet the multi-agency agenda; workforce remodelling; falling rolls in rural areas alongside headship recruitment difficulties which lead to federations; and the 14–19 agenda.

These drivers present complex policy, organisational and planning challenges. They underline the need for succession planning to be integrated into overall strategic planning. Succession planning that is isolated within an HR or leadership development function will (inevitably) be less effective.

Options and suggested alternative school (and leadership) models are set out in more detail at www.ncsl.org.uk/modelsofheadship. These options sometimes represent a pragmatic way to maximise the impact of available leadership capacity in an area, and can also underpin longer-term strategies for sustainable leadership structures.



CASE STUDY Devon: new school structures

Paul Jones, headteacher of Blackpool CE Primary School is part of the Devon Succession Planning Group and has set up the first hard primary school federation in Devon.

Blackpool CE School has 320 pupils. It amalgamated with Chudleigh Knighton CE School on 1st September 2006. Chudleigh Knighton had experienced ten different headteachers or acting headteachers over the previous six years, had been given a notice to improve in 2005, and its school roll had dropped from 100 to 70.

Discussions with both the Blackpool and Chudleigh Knighton governors started in March 2006, at the approach of the local School Improvement Adviser. Formal consultations included discussions with parents of both schools about the proposed organisational structure, involving an executive headteacher of the two schools working within a hard federation, with the smaller school retaining a head of teaching and learning.

At the time of federation two Blackpool teachers moved to Chudleigh Knighton with one becoming the new Head of Teaching and Learning. Paul Jones became Executive Headteacher of both schools. The business manager and SENCO are shared across both schools – as is subject leadership.

Since then, there have been local authority monitoring and evaluation visits, plus an HMI visit. Standards are seen as good, with outstanding teaching in place; rapid progress has been reported and leadership is seen as secure.

Observations from the experience:

- School Improvement Advisers can play a key role in alerting governing bodies of the possible advantages of considering new structures.
- Governing bodies need to discuss options on succession planning regularly.
- Clerks of governors need additional knowledge support to facilitate the consultation process.
- Time must be invested in enabling stakeholders to talk through the strategic, practical and emotional issues.
- Local authority HR teams need to be involved in discussions.
- Clear systems and structures must be established at the outset.
- It helps if headteachers/prospective executive heads have a good knowledge base of federation case studies and research.
- The federation journey has the potential to offer a better deal for all children, and also foster professional development.

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When do headteachers retire?

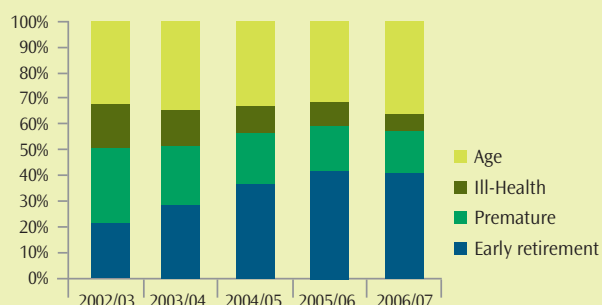
The overall demographic profile of headteachers has been well documented.

- In 2006, 60 per cent of primary headteachers were over 50, with 28 per cent over 55. Among secondary headteachers, 64 per cent were over 50, with 30 per cent over 55.
- Data for the age profile of deputy and assistant headteachers demonstrate the need for succession planning to take account of the supply of future headteachers; some 43 per cent of deputy and assistant headteachers were also over 50 in March 2006.
- Of those school leaders retiring in 2006/07, just 36 per cent were doing so at actual retirement age. The remaining two thirds left their role early – most (42 per cent) through choice to take up a pension on reduced benefits.
- Looking forward, the number of retiring headteachers will peak in 2009, suggesting that 2008/09 and 2009/10 will see the toughest recruitment challenges.

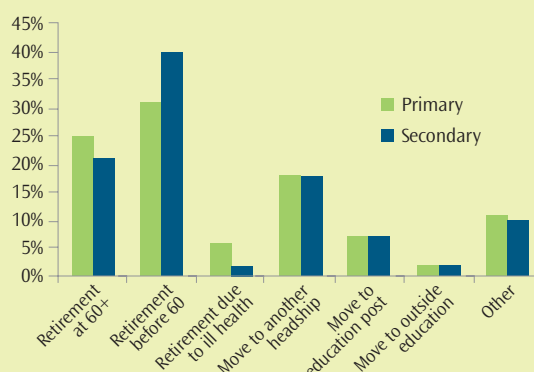
Age distribution of school leaders 2006⁹

Phase	Role	% under 25	% 25-29	% 30-34	% 35-39	% 40-44	% 45-49	% 50-54	% 55-59	% 60+	Total number
Nursery & Primary	Headteachers	0	0	3	8	12	18	32	25	3	17,800
	Deputies and assistants	0	3	15	15	14	15	23	15	1	16,400
Secondary	Headteachers	0	0	1	3	10	22	34	27	3	3,500
	Deputies and assistants	1	1	6	11	14	20	26	18	2	15,600

Reasons for retirement: all school leaders: 2002/03 –2006/07¹⁰



Reasons for advertising a headship in 2007: destination of departing headteacher¹



Recruitment market data offer a glimpse of more recent trends within the overall demographic profile. Among primary headteachers, the proportion of heads retiring before 60 appears to be reducing, and the proportion of post-60 retirements increasing. However, of all the headteacher posts advertised in 2007 following retirement of an incumbent, it is still true that in most cases the outgoing head was leaving before the age of 60.

WHAT IF... I could retain retiring headteachers longer?

Research suggests that headteachers nearing retirement may be motivated by a number of factors which may encourage them to consider delaying, or, more likely, phasing retirement.

These are:

- wanting to leave a legacy
- improved work-life balance
- recognition of status
- intellectual challenge
- dignified transition to retirement

Different individuals have different motivations. However, the most significant factor causing a headteacher to leave a post is 'workload'. Salary level is a considerably less significant factor in influencing behaviour.

One way of addressing workload is to identify other ways to support school leaders. For example, school business

managers have been shown to save up to 30 per cent of headteachers' time (and through effective resource management have freed 5 per cent of the budget to reinvest in teaching and learning). See NCSL's Looking for a Bursar publication at www.ncsl.org.uk/media/AF3/27/looking-for-bursar-tda.pdf

Propositions for delaying/phasing retirement that tap into these motivations are also more likely to be successful. Phased retirement options are now possible due to changes in pension arrangements that took effect in January 2007. Individuals are able to access up to 75 per cent of their pension while undertaking a reduced amount of work, for which they could still draw up to 75 per cent of their salary.

Information on pension flexibilities

www.teacherspensions.co.uk

Employer helpline: 0845 3003756

Teachers' pensions helpline: 0845 6066166



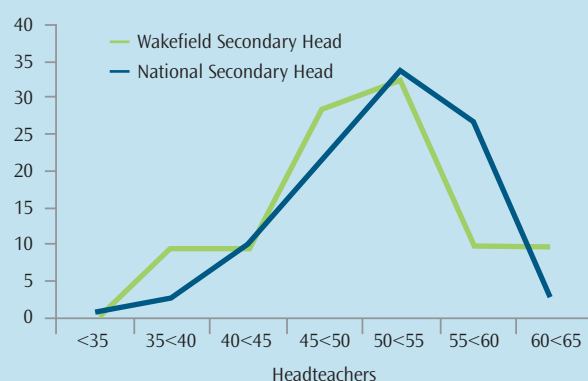
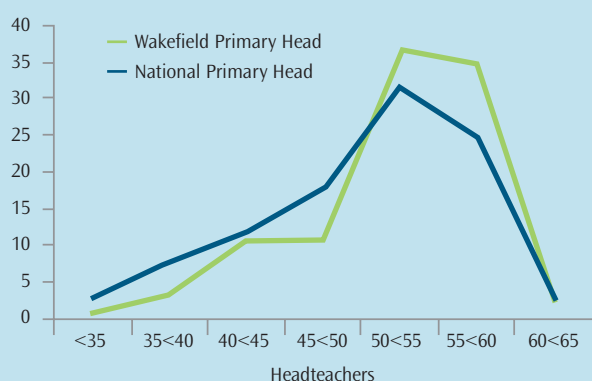
See case study section

Key case study: Wakefield Metropolitan District Council

Working with NCSL, one authority, Wakefield, has set about building a tool to help them identify trends in leadership recruitment and to forecast headteacher vacancies. As the authority has a well-established school improvement service, substantial anecdotal evidence was available but little by way of hard information. As a consequence, discussion about succession planning tended to remain speculative, with limited ability to compare Wakefield's position with the country as a whole. The decision was taken to make a concerted effort to establish the authority's key data to inform succession planning and to do so in a way that would enable the information to be kept up to date in subsequent years.

Recognising that data-gathering exercises often fail because of the burdens they create, the team kept things as straightforward as possible. This was also important to ensure sustainability in the future. The process required only the name, school (and phase), date of birth, gender and date of appointment of each headteacher. The team also found that the date of departure of leaving headteachers was also available, and included data on ethnicity where it was already known. With such a simple matrix, the data was available almost instantly, covering nearly all headteachers in the authority since 1999, a total of 172 serving headteachers and 105 who had left their post.

The skill of the authority's lead statistician was deployed to create a robust spreadsheet that would interpret the data automatically to identify key trends. He created a tool that drew information from the simple listing of headteacher data to generate (automatically) comparative tables and graphs without the need for further data manipulation. By embedding national data in the spreadsheet, the tool also provided automatic comparison with the wider picture.



As the team suspected, the age profile of primary heads in Wakefield was significantly older than the national picture. By contrast, the profile of secondary heads was younger than the national profile. More surprising was the realisation that six years ago, the number of headteacher vacancies had been even higher than the challenge the authority is likely to face in the next two years.

Information of this kind triggered some enthusiastic discussion among headteachers. The group was able to question, for example, whether there was still a glass ceiling for women aspiring to headship and to explore the suggestion within the data that governing bodies appeared less likely to appoint women of child-bearing age to primary headships.

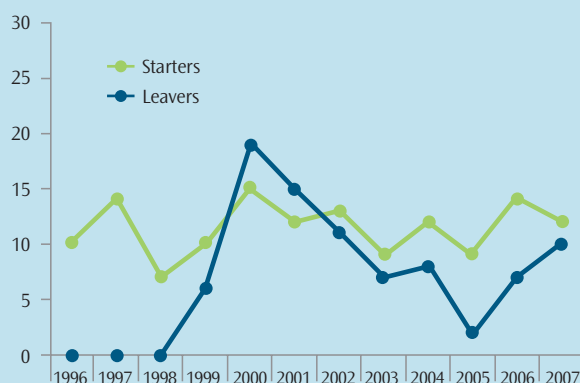
Data about heads leaving before retirement age focused attention on the implications for retention. This sparked discussion about co-headship models, for example, to create opportunities for periods of 'apprenticeship'.

The group also recognised the importance of focusing on key data to ensure sustainability. This meant agreement on what to leave out as well as what to include. It was agreed, for example, to focus on the single thing that the authority was most interested in: the number of vacancies.

The statisticians' greatest challenge was the attempt to forecast future demand. The spreadsheet generates a projection of future vacancies, although statisticians stress that the number should be treated as a hypothesis and not a prediction. The projection is modelled on what has happened in the past, using the age profile of current heads combined with information about length of tenure. This led the team to confirm that an age-related analysis by itself underestimated the likely number of vacancies, and that, in Wakefield at least, the fact that over a quarter of primary headteachers had completed five to six years in post was just as a significant as their chronological age.

The tool is available at www.ncsl.org.uk/tomorrowsleaderstoday/resource to be used or adapted as required. Once the basic data on headteachers is attached as a simple spreadsheet, comparative charts and tables are generated automatically.

Primary Starters and Leavers by year 1996-2007



Case Studies



CASE STUDY Mid-career flexibility

Yasmin had been in post as headteacher at a school for children with specific learning difficulties for three years. The leadership team at the time consisted of a head and deputy, supported by three heads of department. The chair of governors was in an acting capacity.

Yasmin joined the school when it was deemed to have serious weaknesses. It was her first headship; she was in her mid-thirties and had previously been a deputy head for over six years, with periods of acting headship. Within the first year, HMI (Her Majesty's Inspectorate) and Ofsted visited and removed the school from serious weaknesses. The school received a good inspection report. Under Yasmin's leadership the school moved into a period of stability.

After three years in post, Yasmin realised that her life was entirely about the school, the students and the job. She was left asking herself, "What about my life, my family, my child?". She had a five-year-old child and worried that she

was no longer doing a good job of being a mother. She decided to resign, despite the fact that she loved her job; her desire to give time to her family and young child was more important.

The governing body met and decided to take action to keep Yasmin in post. Following focused negotiations led by the chair, the governing body offered Yasmin the option of working at home one day a week. This would allow her to take her child to school and pick him up on that day. They were concerned that if the head went to a four-day contract, she would inevitably be paid for four days yet do five days' work. Yasmin withdrew her resignation and continued to lead the school for a further two years, before moving on to another headship in a larger special school. She commented that the flexibility offered by the governing body was exactly right for that moment in time when she had a small child. However, the need for flexibility changes as personal circumstances change, and governing bodies should be prepared to review arrangements regularly.



CASE STUDY – Redcar and Cleveland: retaining effective school leaders

St Joseph's RC Primary School in East Cleveland has flourished under the leadership of its headteacher for 25 years.

When he announced he planned to retire, governors tried unsuccessfully to dissuade him. A governor with a business background outlined strategies he was using to retain experienced staff since the introduction of flexible pension arrangements. This was attractive to the headteacher, who has retained his enthusiasm for the job. Detailed discussions were held with the senior leadership team, governors and representatives from the local authority and the diocese. All decisions were underpinned by the conviction that the

school must benefit from any arrangements. It was agreed that for one year the headteacher would work three days a week and share the leadership of the school with the deputy. Detailed remits for each of them and other key members of staff were drawn up. The plan was communicated to parents and key partners, received a positive response and was implemented. This has given governors, staff and senior officers time to plan a recruitment strategy and to manage change.

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What are we learning about... the school leadership labour market?

About this guide

This guide examines what we know about the school leadership labour market. Although the information may be of interest to individual school leaders and governing bodies, it is designed for people who work across groups of schools in local authorities, dioceses and other local partnerships to secure enough high calibre school leaders.

The guide asks four key questions:

- What if we could increase the pool of available candidates for headship by opening up new recruitment markets?
- What if we could influence future demand for headteachers by adopting new models of leadership?
- How can we sustain headteachers' motivation for longer?
- Why do headteachers retire early, and what encourages them to stay in post?

The guide explores some of the facts and figures behind the school leadership labour market to help succession planners develop their own answers to these questions, and brings together key intelligence about labour market trends to inform local strategy.

A range of additional online resources, which include more case studies and practical tools, are available at www.ncsl.org.uk/tomorrowsleaderstoday/resource

Evidence into Practice Guides

This is one in a series of guides that share intelligence and insights into the leadership succession challenge facing schools. Guides will be published during 2008 and 2009 as local strategy develops. Guides currently available can be downloaded from www.ncsl.org.uk/tomorrowsleaderstoday/resource

Finding, developing and keeping great headteachers

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