

Hopes, fears and desires

Better work-life balance, flexible staffing structures to encourage more new leaders to emerge and the hope that 49 is not too advanced an age to become a school leader were some of the hopes, fears and desires shared in a talk2learn start-of-year hotseat with NCSL Chief Executive Steve Munby.

Michael Jolley, a local authority contact for the NCSL leadership succession partnership, pointed out that salary structures now enabled someone with a love of the classroom to earn well and not to have to embrace the myriad of out-of-school responsibilities of headteachers and deputies.

"School cultures and staffing structure models need serious reconsideration so that we can create *roles and expectations that are reasonable not just for 'headliner' headteachers, but for more ordinary mortals with lives and families*," he suggested.

Many school leaders expressed their willingness and commitment to take on leadership roles in the future, with the right support. Marie-Claire Bretherton, deputy head of an infant and nursery school in Lincoln, said the 'post-modern' generation recognised that leadership is no longer a one-person job.

"Those who are flourishing in their roles have surrounded themselves with a diverse and committed group of people," she said. "It is the team that thinks, reacts and holds all the information required."

Steve Munby agreed that current expectations of the traditional model of headship were too high.

"I really do believe that it is time to take a fresh approach; the College is not, however, saying there is one way forward. It's about what is right for school leaders in their context and we are doing a lot of work [on that] with colleagues around the country."



While welcoming all the support now available for potential school leaders, one 49 year old head of design and technology in a middle school in Worcestershire said she had felt trapped and had not been encouraged to develop her career fully during a quarter-century of teaching.

"This left me believing that I, perhaps, did not have the ability needed to be a 'leader' and I am still struggling with that confidence barrier. However, the Leadership Pathways programme is doing a great job in changing that opinion I have of myself. *I hope I can squeeze in a few years even if it is to help some youngsters in the profession find their professional path more easily.*"

Claire Turner, the new headteacher of a medium-sized primary school in Cambridgeshire, said her own career path demonstrated a very practical way of growing new leaders.

"As a deputy, I worked in a non-teaching role alongside a very experienced head who was committed to developing her staff. I had the opportunity to do most of the jobs a head has to do and cope with the day-to-day emergencies and problems. Taking on headship has not been the huge step up that it would have been had I been a teaching deputy."

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