

# School leadership crisis

A new report has highlighted a crisis in leadership recruitment, with a quarter of schools predicted to be struggling to fill leadership vacancies by 2022.

According to the report, 3,800 schools already do not have enough leaders to enable them to operate in the best way possible. But with between 16,000 and 20,000 heads and deputies reaching retirement age by 2022, there will not be enough teachers coming through schools to replace them.

About 65% of school leaders are currently aged over 45, which means there will be large numbers of retirements over the next 10 to 15 years.

Adding to this woeful statistic, as more schools convert to academy status, there will be a need for between 4,000 and 8,000 more leaders, as the academy programme tends to create another level of management. In total, using a complex model that considers population projections, retirement rates and predicted rates of conversion, some 19,000 head teachers will be required. That's roughly five years away.

However, despite this bad news, the system is not short of talented potential leaders; the question becomes one of how the system can develop talented leadership from the substantial potential pool of classroom teachers today, as well as looking at other innovative ways of getting talented leaders into schools.

What's needed is a dramatic shift in the culture of schools to ensure aspiring and existing leaders have access to personalised development combining academic and practical learning, mentoring and coaching and peer-to-peer support networks.

There are several challenges that the system faces in achieving this. Firstly, potential applicants are being deterred by the role and not effectively incentivised to apply. Secondly, recruitment and placement is inconsistent, with problems particularly acute in some locations. Thirdly, leadership development opportunities are limited and variable, and finally leaders do not get the support or feel the motivation that would keep them in leadership roles.

Ultimately, solving the leadership crisis is about increasing the number of people excited to enter school leadership, and improving the training and support available for school leaders. These two outcomes can meet the challenges of the current system by creating a sustainable career journey for a new wave of school leaders across the country.

The report from The Future Leaders Trust, Teach First and Teaching Leaders suggests four solutions that could be deployed in the UK.

- Offer comprehensive leadership training and support programme to potential leaders in the 30-35 age range including formal training, mentoring, ongoing support networks, etc.
- Attract people from other professions into teaching leadership roles and provide them with training and ongoing development and matching them to opportunities.



- Shift the system nationally, regionally and locally to one that enables schools to embrace and support individuals that strive for leadership positions
- Expand interest in school leadership positions amongst teachers by creating a broad awareness building and publicity campaign that targets teachers across the board and country.

Already, one of the solutions - attracting people from other professions - has caused some controversy within education circles, with critics insisting experience of actual teaching is a pre-requisite. The argument is that the person in charge of a school on a day-to-day basis couldn't properly understand how to manage a school without having come up through the education ranks. Equally, when these executive headteachers are faced with an educational problem and are asked for their input by parents, what happens when they say it's out of their area of expertise?

But, as James Toop, chief executive designate of the merging Teaching Leaders and The Future Leaders Trust, said: private sector candidates would have the right skills and experience to fulfil roles such as finance managers and multi-academy trust chief executives.

- Toby Young from the New Schools Network, has also renewed his call for businesspeople with no teaching experience to be appointed as school leaders.

In fact, this already happens in the NHS, where hiring outside the profession is not about having untrained personnel working as medics, but about having non-medical people as the CEO or Finance Director of an NHS Trust.

Interestingly, a Department for Education spokesperson said the government did not "recognise" the report's figures, and went on to say: "The latest school workforce data shows that there are 68,800 full-time equivalent leaders in state schools in England. Furthermore, since 2010 the proportion of schools reporting a headteacher vacancy has decreased and the number of school leaders over the age of 50 has decreased significantly."

Ultimately, whilst it would be ideal if school leaders all had education connections, it is far more important that the person in the role is financially competent, and understands that their role is to help and support the school they lead.

Faced with such a huge upcoming shortfall in school leadership, now is not the time to hinder solutions that have been proven to work in other sectors.

# 'Singapore' approach to teaching maths can work in UK classrooms

New findings from Oxford University Press show that an approach to teaching maths commonly used in East Asian countries can significantly benefit children in UK schools.

The independent research is the first academic study to demonstrate that a mastery in maths textbook and professional development programme can work in the UK school system.

The research used a Randomised Control Trial (RCT) involving OUP's Inspire Maths – the mastery textbook and professional development programme based on My Pals are Here!, which is used in the majority of Singaporean primary schools.

It revealed that Year 1 pupils taught with the programme for two terms made significantly more progress than students using it for a shorter period.

Teachers reported that the programme could boost children's motivation and engagement, and the evaluation found that it can be used creatively and flexibly.

The research combined child assessments with classrooms observations and interviews with teachers - allowing the research team to investigate teachers' views while also measuring pupils' progress.



James Hall, lead-author, and now Lecturer at the University of Exeter, said: "Overall we found positive evidence that Inspire Maths benefitted children's maths achievement and supported teachers' professional development.

"This boost to progress was surprising because pupils had only been in a classroom setting for a short period and because it often takes time to embed new teaching approaches."

The mastery approach to learning maths involves children developing a deep understanding of a concept before moving on. It builds on a number of theories, including research conducted at Oxford University in the 1970's by developmental psychologist Jerome Bruner around how the brain assimilates new ideas.

# Poor governance blamed for 'inadequate' Perry Beeches' rating

The lack of governors holding its leadership to account is the main reason why Ofsted has ruled that Perry Beeches is 'in serious trouble' and to be rated inadequate.

This is despite the teaching and learning being 'good' and the teachers having excellent subject knowledge.

It is rare in Ofsted reports for poor governance to be the determining factor in an inadequate rating when the teaching is considered very acceptable, as in the case.

But this follows closely on a finding of serious financial breaches at the Trust where the charismatic founder Liam Nolan and chief executive was found to be taking two salaries. He had also allowed a deficit of 1.8 million to develop within the Trust. Mr. Nolan resigned, with the whole Trust board last May.

This is the second school within the Trust that has



been rated inadequate, with Perry Beeches 111 now in special measures. Pupils at the schools are, however, fiercely protective of the schools and praise the education and the teaching they receive there and the results are excellent.

# New degree apprenticeship fund announced

A multi-million pound fund has been announced by the government for new degree apprenticeships in industries such as nursing, construction and food manufacturing.

Universities and colleges across England have been awarded a total of £4.5 million to develop new degree apprenticeships for students starting in September 2017.

Working in partnership with leading employers, the universities and colleges will offer 5,200 new opportunities for apprentices and their employers in preparation for the introduction of the apprenticeship levy in April 2017.

The degree apprenticeships have been designed by employers, universities and professional bodies to offer an alternative to a traditional degree course by bringing together university study with paid work.

The 18 successful projects, including the University of Cumbria, Sheffield Hallam University, London South Bank University and Nottingham Trent University, have been awarded funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in the first round of a 2-year programme.



# Primary schools' academy conversions have not boosted pupil performance

The conversion of primary schools into academies has not boosted pupils' performance, according to research conducted by the London School of Economics.

All primary and secondary schools in England were given permission to be run independently of local government in 2010 in an attempt to drive up standards.

But the LSE study has found no evidence to support a benefit to primary students' results during the first two years of "academisation."

The report's authors concluded the Government has "radically restructured its school system under an assumption that academisation delivers benefits to schools and students."

They added: "We consider the first primary schools to become academies in England (between 2010 and 2012) and find no evidence of pupil performance improvements resulting from conversion."

The researchers said one of the reasons an increase was

not seen was because schools that converted were already seeing good results.

They used the National Pupil Database to compare the Key Stage 2 results of the 270 primaries that converted into academies between 2010 and 2012 with those that converted much later.

Academies were championed by the then education secretary Michael Gove in 2010 when he wrote to every state primary, secondary and special school inviting them to apply for the status.

In May this year, Nicky Morgan, education secretary at the time, backed down on plans to force all schools in England to become academies.

A Department for Education spokeswoman said: "The academy programme has given good schools the freedom to do what they know works best and helped to turn round underperforming schools that have previously languished under local authority control.

"Results in primary sponsored academies have been improving and we expect that trend to continue."