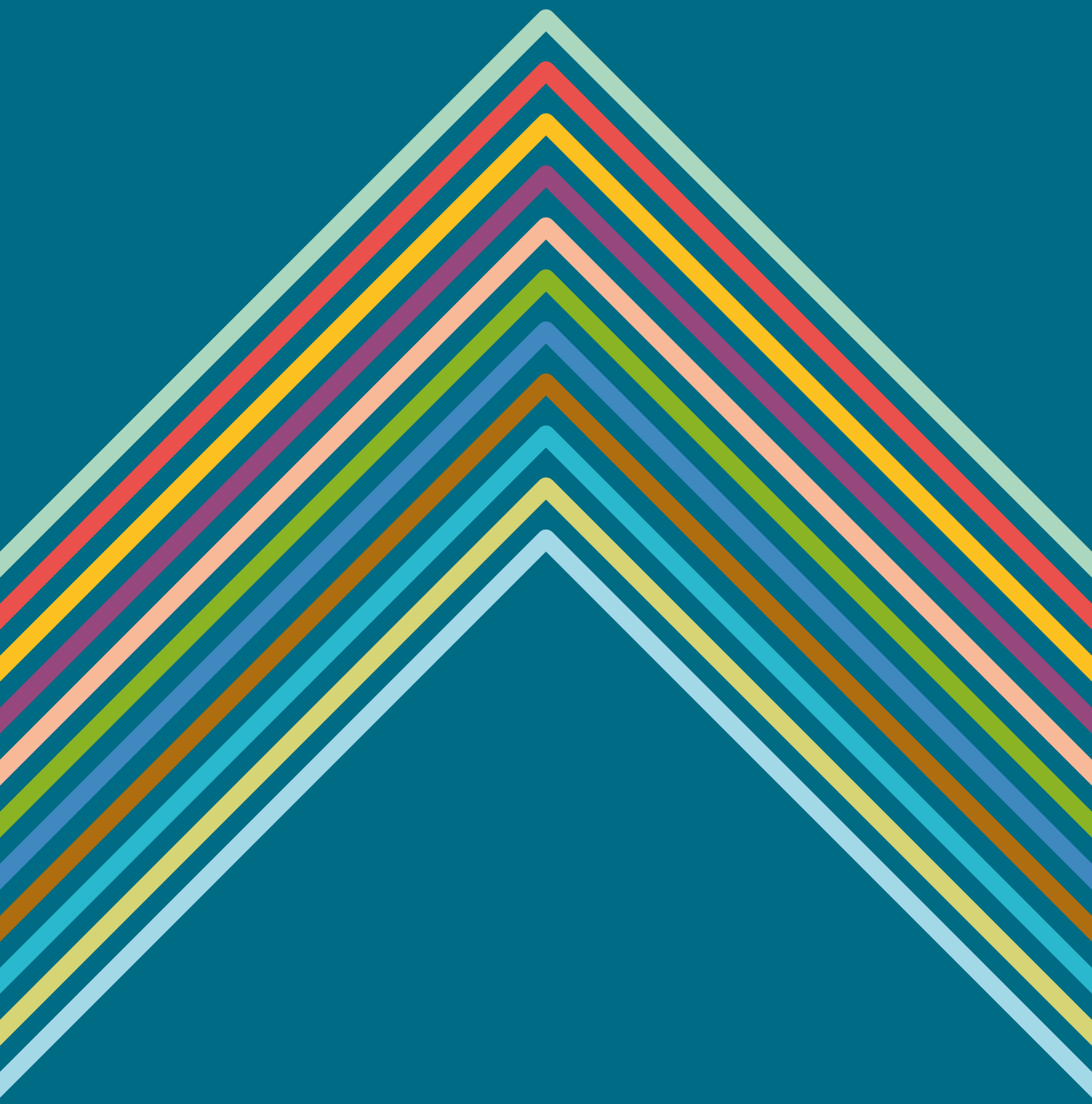


System leaders: Headteachers and the improvement of government schools in England



Lessons from England in the transformation
of school leadership

By Chris Taylor, Tony McAleavy
and Charlotte Jones, January 2017



Education Development Trust

At Education Development Trust, we transform lives by improving education around the world. Whether we are working with governments on national educational reform or directly with clusters of schools to effect positive change, our specialist knowledge means we design and deliver effective, sustainable education solutions tailored to the local context. We invest annually in our programme of educational research because it matters to us that policymakers make informed decisions and that teachers benefit from the latest best practice. Our research underpins our work and we are passionate about being part of the education debate.

System leaders: headteachers and the improvement of government schools in England

Global evidence concludes that improving the quality of school leadership is one of the most powerful tools available to education policymakers: build the capacity of school principals to lead change in schools, and higher student achievement surely follows. In this document, we look at the lessons that can be learnt from England, where the quality of school leadership across more than 20,000 schools has been transformed through an integrated set of policy choices since the early 2000s. They are:

Key reform 1

A national agency dedicated to driving school leadership development

Key reform 2

A national qualification for first-time school principals

Key reform 3

Using outstanding school leaders as a system-wide resource – as National and Local Leaders of Education

Key reform 4

Widening the influence of highly successful schools in raising teaching standards

Key reform 5

Growing the next generation of talented school leaders

In each case, the impact is assessed and some essential lessons of relevance to other education systems are identified.

School leadership matters

Global research findings over more than 30 years have consistently identified leadership, along with the quality of the teaching, as the key factors in explaining why similar students do better in some schools than in others. Teaching quality is not enough. A school's effectiveness is also determined in significant measure by how well it is led.

"Student achievement in a school almost never exceeds the quality of its leadership and management, and improvements in performance almost never occur in the absence of good leadership." **Fenton Whelan, Lessons Learned, 2009¹**

Good leaders influence their schools' results most decisively by concentrating on the things that matter. Above all, they make sure that teaching and learning are effective. They do that chiefly by continuously and visibly checking the quality of classroom work and by encouraging teachers to act as a team to improve their practice. They use performance data intelligently to identify strengths and remedy weaknesses in the school's performance so that the progress of every student in every subject is as good as it can be.

"The more leaders focus their relationships, their work and their learning on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their influence on student outcomes." **Viviane Robinson, Student-Centred Leadership, 2011²**

The countries with the most successful education systems typically take action to improve school leadership. They do this by establishing policies for the systematic selection of the best teachers as future leaders, by developing the capacities of serving school leaders and by defining the role of the school leader in a way that emphasises the principal's responsibility for leading teaching and learning. [See, for example, Mourshed M, et al. *How the World's Most Improved Systems Keep Getting Better.*^{3]}

School leaders in England are among the most effective in the world – and keep improving

Leadership quality – a sharply improving picture

Evidence from the OECD suggests that school leaders in England are among the most effective in the world.

"The UK has the highest index of principal leadership among OECD countries." **Beatriz Pont, one of the authors of *Preparing Teachers and Developing School Leaders for the 21st Century*, OECD, 2012⁴**

FIGURE 1: THE EFFECT ON STUDENT OUTCOMES OF DIFFERENT LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES (SOURCE: THE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP ON STUDENT OUTCOMES: AN ANALYSIS OF THE DIFFERENTIAL EFFECTS OF LEADERSHIP TYPES, 2008)⁵

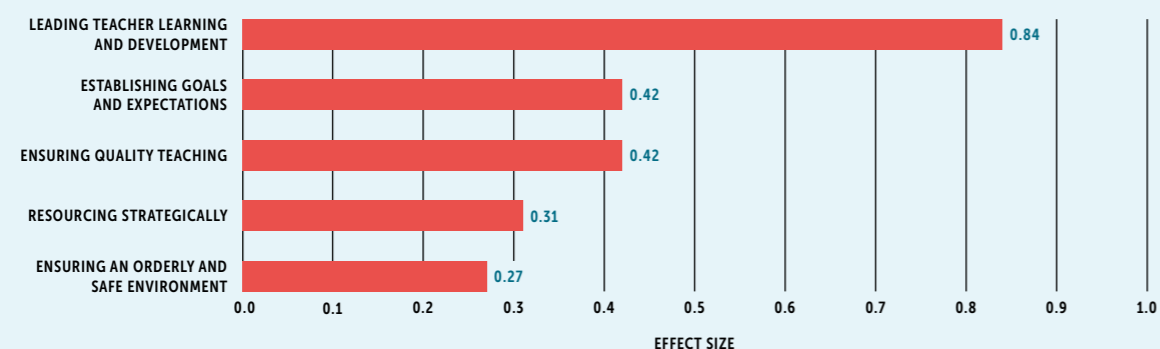


FIGURE 2: INDEX OF PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS WHOSE PRINCIPALS ENGAGE REGULARLY IN ACTIVITIES WITH HIGH IMPACT ON IMPROVING TEACHING (SOURCE: PISA DATABASE 2009)⁶

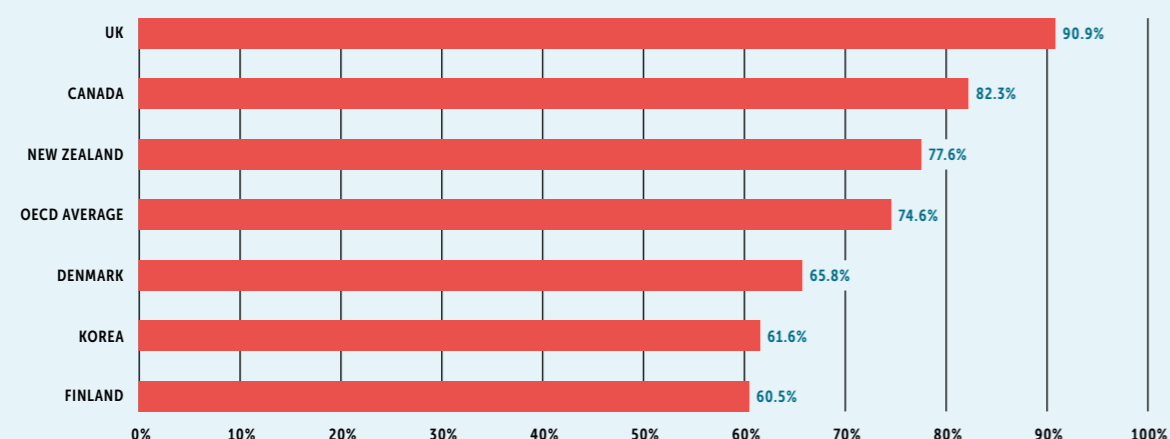
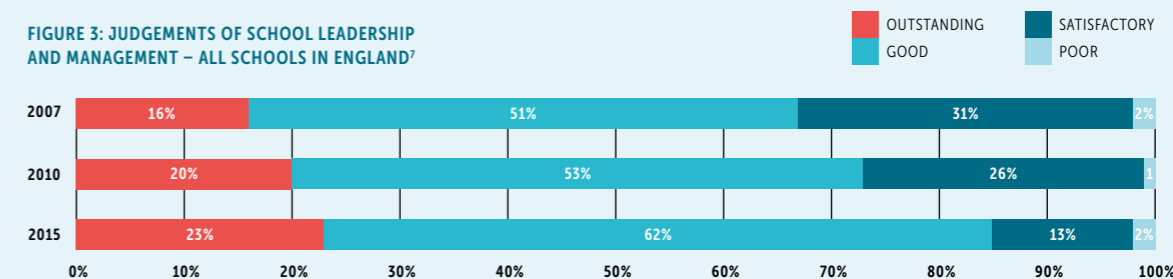


FIGURE 3: JUDGEMENTS OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT – ALL SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND⁷



This index of principal leadership measures the involvement of school leaders in the areas that have the most impact on improving teaching practices: the attention they pay to the things that really matter, such as working with teachers to strengthen their performance, observing in classrooms and monitoring students' work.

As well as being unusually accomplished in 'principal leadership' or 'instructional leadership', evidence from the national school inspectorate in England indicates that the quality of school leadership is also continuously improving. Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) school inspections in England record significant improvement in leadership quality in recent years.

Inspectors base these evaluations of school leadership on agreed criteria, including how effectively leaders:

- undertake rigorous and accurate self-evaluation and how well it leads to improvement measures
- secure and sustain improvements to teaching, learning and assessment
- motivate the teaching staff to deliver a high quality education for all students
- promote the professional development of teachers at every stage of their careers and strengthen their leadership capacity

- monitor students' progress to ensure that no-one falls behind and underachieves

It is in these specific areas that school leaders in England have made progress in recent years.

Strong school leadership has been critical in England in a decentralising policy context

A significant shift in education policy has taken place in England in recent years. Influenced strongly by the thinking of Michael Fullan in Canada, the emphasis in public policy has shifted from 'top-down' reform, typified by the National Strategies, towards promoting system-wide improvement led by schools themselves. In this decentralising context, schools have been given high levels of autonomy and accountability for improvement, and school leaders have taken on an increasingly critical role in school reform. The impetus is to secure further improvement in student outcomes while mitigating the risks associated with this high autonomy and strong accountability.

Stalled improvement in student performance and risks to sustained improvement

Between 1997 and 2010 the government funded so-called National Strategies for pedagogical improvement in government schools in England. Detailed guidance on effective pedagogy was provided to schools. After several years of successful operation, these centrally prescribed

National Strategies for improving teaching and learning in primary and secondary schools, appeared to have run their course. Having improved very significantly since 1997, National Curriculum test scores reached a plateau by 2005 and further progress was proving difficult to achieve.

During the period 2005 to 2010 there was recognition that further improvement was unlikely to result from prescriptive government guidance on pedagogy. It was also increasingly understood that the high levels of autonomy and accountability

that characterise the English system (see box below) carried with them several risks:

- **Isolation.** Schools becoming inward-looking, closed to outside influences, whether as a result of over-confidence, insecurity or just because they are too busy
- **Unproductive competition.** Preventing collaboration between schools and restricting opportunities for leaders and teachers to learn from outstanding practice elsewhere

High levels of autonomy and accountability characterise the English system

School autonomy

- In terms of day-to-day management and the extent of school-based decision-making, England's government schools are among the most independent of external control of any system in the world. Since the 1980s, schools have had increasingly significant financial discretion delegated to them, becoming self-managing in most respects. Each school's school board – known as the governing body – is responsible for hiring its staff, managing its budget and assuring the quality of the education it provides
- Since 2000, many schools have converted to 'academy' status, which gives them even more independence by removing them from the oversight of the officers of the local government districts in which they are located. These academies receive their funding directly from the central ministry in London. More than a fifth of all schools in England, including over half of secondary schools, are now academies

Strong accountability

- School leaders in England are also among those held most closely responsible for their schools' effectiveness. For more than 20 years National Curriculum test scores and the results of national examinations have been used to construct annual public 'league tables' of school performance
- Since the mid-1990s the national system of inspection conducted by Ofsted has generated reports on every school at roughly three-year intervals. These reports are published and freely available to the public
- The combination of high stakes testing and robust inspection creates a context of very high accountability and public scrutiny for the work of school leaders

- **A widening gap in performance.** Schools with capacity and advantage tending to get better while less successful schools get stuck or deteriorate
- **Leadership roles becoming unattractive to many.** This leads to insufficient recruitment, especially roles in fragile and challenging schools

Moving towards a self-improving school system

Current policy incorporates the notion that, while a considerable level of central direction might be necessary to affect basic improvements, greater professional ownership of reform processes is required to propel the education system towards a level of performance on a par with the highest performing in the world. Creating momentum for change through competition between largely autonomous schools needs to be balanced by promoting different forms of collaboration between them. In particular, high-performing and low-performing schools are now encouraged to link together in order to close the gap in learning outcomes between the most and the least successful.

The London Challenge initiative (2003-2011) presents an early, and highly successful, example of this approach, at the centre of which was the pairing of low and high performing schools. Leaders and teachers worked together in coaching relationships, sharing successful leadership and classroom practice. The initiative was transformational. Government schools in London now outperform those across the rest of England, and students from disadvantaged backgrounds make particularly good progress. These and other approaches to school-to-school partnership promoted by the London Challenge

programme are now being applied across the country.

Leadership development in England traditionally focused on increasing the organisational capacity of autonomous schools. The emphasis is now on developing school principals as system leaders, on whose performance a self-improving system critically depends.

As a result, more and more school principals in England take responsibility for areas that were formerly seen as the preserve of central and local government or universities through:

- Pre-service training and the induction of teachers new to the profession
- The continuing professional development of teachers
- School improvement, through collaborative working and accepting collective responsibility for students' outcomes across a locality or wider area
- The identification and training of the next generation of school leaders

The rest of this document explores the key components of the policy reforms in school leadership since 2000, their impact, and some essential lessons of relevance to other education systems.

Data has been elicited through interviews with expert witnesses and thought leaders in this area. Please see page 23 for a full list of interviewees who contributed to this report.

¹ Whelan, F. (2013; 77) ² Robinson, V. (2011; 15) ³ Mourshed M. et al (2010) ⁴ Schleicher, A. (2012) Ed. ⁵ Robinson, M. et al (2008) ⁶ <https://pisa2009.acer.edu.au/> ⁷ Ofsted (2016)

Key reform 1: a national agency dedicated to driving school leadership development

Rationale

The National College for School Leadership (NCSL), which has since been renamed the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL), was founded in 2000. Based at a purpose-built campus in the city of Nottingham, but working in localities around the country, it developed a range of training programmes for aspiring and serving school leaders at different levels of seniority. It published extensively on leadership issues and had a major responsibility for making research findings accessible to school leaders.

After a successful start, the National College had lost some of its focus by 2005. It had taken on too many diverse pieces of work and was thought to have become too theoretical in its approach: too much concerned with academic research rather than with the practicalities of school leadership. Most important, it had lost the confidence and support of many experienced school principals, who felt that it had little to offer them.

A comprehensive revision of the National College followed the appointment of Steve Munby as its Chief Executive in 2005. As a result, the National College engaged far more closely and purposefully with school leaders across the country. Their views of how it was performing and their recommendations for how it should fulfil its brief to promote effective leadership were deliberately canvassed and followed. Personal contact with the Chief Executive played an important part in creating the sense of the National College 'belonging' to the profession rather than acting as an agency of the ministry.

Regional networks, led by serving school principals, and an annual large-scale national conference kept the profession in close touch with the National College, which each year published a summary of principals' opinions of the value of its work.

Much of the work of the National College in these years was co-created in partnership with serving school principals. This included the style and content of its various training programmes and the learning materials to support them. All National College programmes incorporated a set of training methods recognised as having high impact on adult learning. They include:

- Work-based learning – on the job and in other schools
- Learning alongside credible peers in a cohort group
- Mentoring and coaching to provide challenge and support
- Exposure to outstanding practice
- Learning from high quality materials, informed by up-to-date research
- Time for reflection

Today, the National College licenses organisations that satisfy quality criteria to deliver the training. These are mainly groups of highly successful schools, together with universities and other training providers.

At the same time National College maintained constructive relationships with policymakers.

It gave ministers and officials valuable access to serving school principals through regular meetings, seminars and consultations, and it provided well-developed advice to ministers and officials on strategic school leadership issues. As an organisation operating semi-independently of the central ministry, the National College occupied a position between the government and the profession. It helped each to understand the other and was able to challenge both in an effective and even-handed way.

Evidence of impact

The National College quickly became the foremost national contributor to school leadership development in England. It enjoyed a massive reach across the education system: between 2001 and 2013 more than 100,000 individuals took part in its programmes.

The National College has contributed strongly to school improvement nationally by highlighting the importance of good school leadership and

by bringing expertise together to promote growing awareness of its characteristics.

It was instrumental in changing decisively the concept of school leaders' responsibilities from managing budgets and other administrative processes to the leadership of teaching and learning.

Its programmes have widened the understanding of school leadership to include middle leadership, the leadership of pre-school nurseries and consultant leadership, through which experienced principals support and develop the skills of others.

The National College has successfully promoted the concept of the school principal as a learner: continuing to develop professionally, learning from different school contexts, through coaching and being coached, and by using evidence to inform decisions.

Several evaluations show that schools whose leaders had participated in National College programmes generally achieved more rapidly improving test scores than those who had not.⁸

Lessons learnt

The success of the National College was based on the following key principles:

- Maintain close and open engagement with school leaders
- Seek their views systematically and respond to their feedback
- Constantly review and revise the content of the training and the materials used to support it: to keep up to date with the rapidly changing contexts in which schools operate; and to maintain the intellectual integrity of the training by keeping it informed by research findings
- Insist on the highest quality of training delivery: all trainers must be subject to rigorous quality assurance measures
- Ensure that schools at all levels of effectiveness are reached, engaged and influenced, not just those with highly successful leadership
- Keep the work aligned to other developments in the education sector by maintaining partnerships with other key organisations such as ministry policymakers, inspection agencies, curriculum authorities and student assessment bodies

⁸ Cower, M. & Crawford, M. (2009) & Simkins et. al (2007)

Key reform 2: a national qualification for first-time school principals

Rationale

The National College is responsible for the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), which was introduced in 1998. NPQH is designed for aspiring school principals who are close to taking up their first such post. It was introduced to impose some nationwide consistency in their professional preparation. It aims to develop among them a common understanding of the key responsibilities associated with the post and successful approaches to meeting its challenges.

Between 2004 and 2012, the NPQH was a mandatory programme and a qualification for candidates seeking their first appointment as a principal in a government school in England. Around 35,000 individuals graduated from the NPQH programme between 2001 and 2013.

From 2008, following criticism that it had become insufficiently rigorous as a practical preparation for the role of principal, the NPQH underwent comprehensive re-structuring:

- The criteria for entry to the NPQH programme were made more demanding to ensure that only those who were capable of leading a school in the immediate future were accepted
- The programme's emphasis shifted from presenting the knowledge required of school principals to developing the practical application of the skills, attributes and values demanded of successful leaders of teaching and learning
- Final assessment for the qualification became far more rigorous, based firmly on nationally

consistent professional standards and involving written assignments and interviews

The NPQH is part of a suite of qualifications offered by the National College to support school leaders at different levels of seniority. They form part of a modular leadership curriculum.

The NPQH programme comprises of a two-week placement at a school in a different context from the participant's own; three core study modules, each involving 50 hours of activity (leading and improving teaching, leading an effective school, succeeding in headship); two further elective modules; and a final assessment.

Endorsement for these approaches is provided in the responses given when aspiring heads were asked what they found most helpful to their development.

Evidence of impact

The proportion of schools achieving good or outstanding inspection ratings for leadership in primary schools rose from 71% in 2009/10 to 85% in 2014/15.⁹

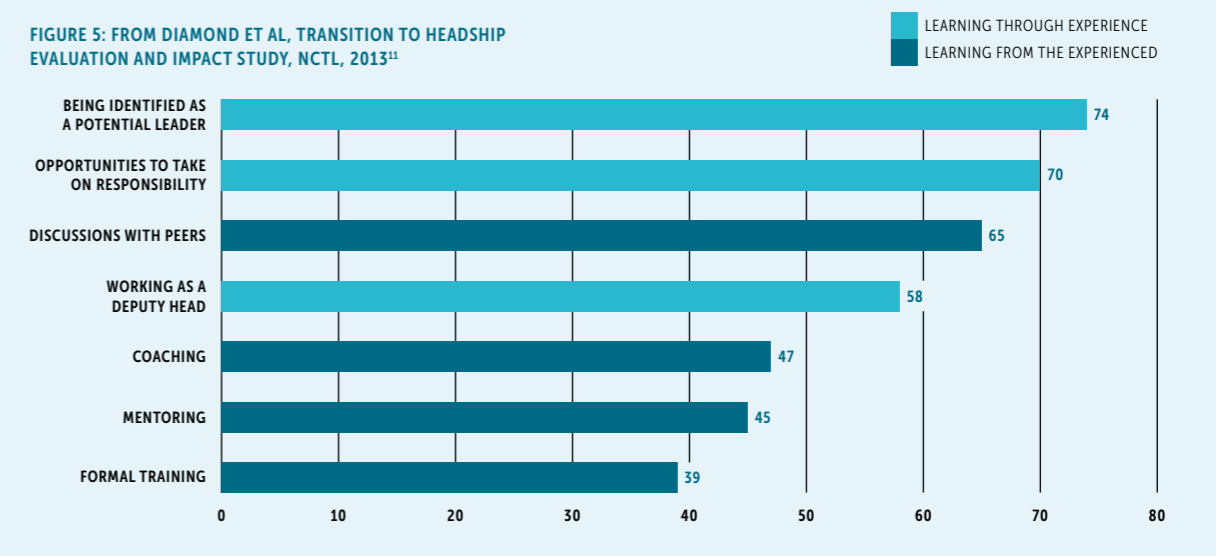
In common with some other successful systems, such as in Singapore, systematic preparation is now recognised as essential as an established benchmark for "principalship readiness".

Most NPQH graduates and their principals cite positive evidence of improvements in leadership. NPQH graduates continue to exert a positive impact in their school before moving to the position of principal in another.

FIGURE 4: NATIONAL COLLEGE LEADERSHIP CURRICULUM LEVELS 1 – 3⁹

LEVEL	QUALIFICATION	DESCRIPTION
1	National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership (NPQML) Leading a team within an organisation	Responsible for leading a team within a school and academy (for example, head of faculty, key stage, year group)
2	National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL) Leading beyond a team within an organisation	Responsible for leading more than one team and/or leading across a school or academy (for example, assistant head, deputy head, special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO))
3	NPQH Aspiring to lead an organisation	Aspiring to lead a school, academy or children's centre (aspiring head, principal or children's centre leader)

FIGURE 5: FROM DIAMOND ET AL, TRANSITION TO HEADSHIP EVALUATION AND IMPACT STUDY, NCTL, 2013¹¹



Lessons learnt

The success of the National Professional Qualification for Headship was based upon the following key principles:

- Make selection for the programme rigorous, to ensure that only those with the potential to become successful principals in the short term are accepted
- Make the award of the qualification contingent on candidates satisfying a set of rigorous, nationally imposed standards that define the expected levels of performance
- Keep the content of the programme up to date, so that it accurately reflects the real challenges that new school leaders currently face
- Develop effective quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that licensed providers deliver high-quality training

⁹ DfE (2015) ¹⁰ NCTL (2014, 6) ¹¹ Diamond, A. et al. (2013)

Key reform 3: using outstanding school leaders as a system-wide resource

Rationale

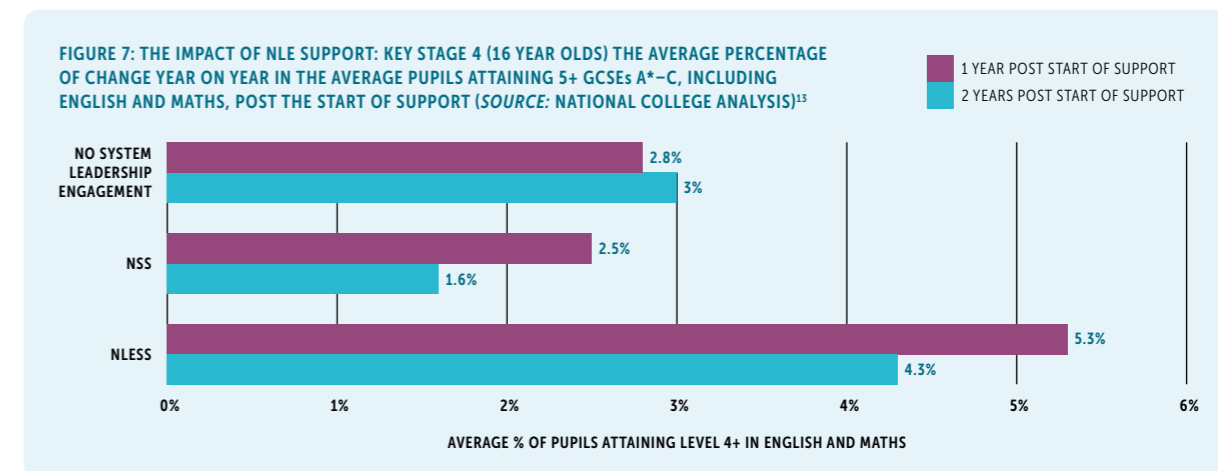
School principals in England now play the central role in developing a self-improving and sustainable school system. An increasing number of principals work as system leaders, continuing to lead their own schools while they and their staff support other schools requiring improvement. The aim is to harness the expertise of successful principals and deploy it to increase the leadership capacity of all schools in order to raise standards across the board. The term 'system leader', originally introduced by Michael Fullan (2005), carries an explicit moral purpose: that leaders should strive for the success of students in all schools, not just their own.

The system leader concept is different from support models that rely on advisers who no longer lead schools themselves. Such models often lack credibility because they cannot draw

so readily on the up-to-date insight and skills of serving principals and their staff.

About 1,000 National Leaders of Education (NLEs) currently work with other schools across England. NLEs are experienced headteachers of schools with an outstanding inspection rating. They work as consultants with schools identified as being in need of significant improvement, providing support tailored to their needs. Staff from the NLEs' schools (known as National Support Schools) support and challenge their counterparts; this is not just about school principals. Types of support vary from a single phone call or visit, to an extended placement of a member of staff in the partner school. An annual bursary can be used to offset some of the costs incurred.

In addition, about 1,800 Local Leaders of Education (LLEs) provide one-to-one coaching



and mentoring support to another headteacher. LLEs are headteachers of schools with at least a good inspection rating, who have practical experience of coaching and mentoring.

The National College maintained a school-to-school support directory for people looking to commission the services of NLEs and LLEs.

Evidence of impact

A national evaluation (Hill and Matthews, 2010)¹⁴ looked at the attainment of pupils over three years in English and Maths at GCSE level (exam performance at age 16) in 'NLE' schools vs the average for schools in England. The impact was clear:

- The annual rate of improvement in student attainment among NLE-supported schools was over double the national average and enabled these schools to close the gap in performance. They made an 8.5 percentage point increase from 2006/07 to 2008/09 compared with the national average improvement of 4 percentage points over the same period
- The decline among the NLE supported schools was arrested, preventing many of them from slipping into national challenge territory

The impact extended to disadvantaged students: attainment of students eligible for free school meals (FSM) in schools supported for more than 1 year improved at a faster rate than national averages. In addition, FSM-eligible students in the primary and secondary supported schools on average performed better than students eligible for FSM nationally.

The work of NLEs and other system leaders also brings benefits to their own schools:

- They maintain an increase in performance. Although starting from a much higher base, their rate of improvement is only very slightly less than the national average
- Principals and other senior staff gain valuable opportunities for their own professional development
- Middle leaders and other expert practitioners benefit from sharing their knowledge and skill with others, and learn from them in return. They gain the skills required to partner unknown colleagues in very different circumstances
- Supporting another school creates development opportunities at lower levels in the leadership structure. Many schools seek to give increasing opportunities for leadership to relatively junior members of staff

FIGURE 6: ADAPTED FROM SCHOOLS LEADING SCHOOLS II: THE GROWING IMPACT OF NATIONAL LEADERS OF EDUCATION, HILL AND MATTHEWS, NCSL, 2010¹²

NLEs	LLEs
Provide intensive support for schools with serious weaknesses or needing an interim principal	Usually support 'satisfactory' schools needing improvement to move to 'good'
Are available for deployment outside their own local area. Their support is brokered with help from National College	Usually work locally as part of a networked team
Supply additional leadership support from the staff of their school	Can deploy other members of staff to pair informally with the partner school's equivalent staff members
May provide long-term support, leading a team of seconded leaders and specialist staff and/or sustained coaching and mentoring for up to two years	Usually provide support for up to one day a week for between one and three years

Lessons learnt

The success of the National Leaders of Education reform was based on the following key principles:

- the relationship must be one of equals and collaboration, characterised by dialogue rather than instruction. Learning almost always occurs in both directions. Insist that principals and others who receive support evaluate and report on an aspect of the work of the school that provides it
- honesty and trust are essential to ensure that hard messages are delivered effectively and result in improvement
- get the ground rules and timescale clear at the start of each support project. Make clear the partners' respective roles. Agree an exit strategy: what things will be like when the project has been successfully completed
- performance data must be at the heart of each school-to-school support programme. Educational improvement is best supported by carefully benchmarking performance against that of other schools with similar characteristics: statistical neighbours. This makes it possible to identify and analyse underperformance, based upon a comparison of schools with similar intakes

Some form of central organisation of this kind of school collaboration is necessary to:

- ensure rigour in the selection of consultant principals
- supply training and subsequent monitoring of the support provided. Even highly effective principals may need preparation and training in order to work as consultants providing support to others
- provide basic protocols for the delivery of support and model sets of expectations and accountabilities for each of the partners
- manage the brokering of support, to ensure even geographical coverage and an optimum fit between the schools providing it and those receiving it
- manage the evaluation of completed projects and the recognition and dissemination of successful practice
- ensure that effective school-to-school support is sustained over the long term by continually refreshing the pool of consultant leaders

¹² Hill, R & Matthews, P. (2010) ¹³ (Ibid) ¹⁴ Hill, R & Matthews, P. (2010)

Key reform 4: widening the influence of highly successful schools in raising teaching standards

Rationale

Highly effective schools are now designated as Teaching Schools. They are selected from those with an outstanding inspection rating. They work with other schools to provide high-quality training and staff development to raise teaching standards. They are a key instrument of the policy to raise standards by developing a self-improving education system led by schools themselves.

The first Teaching Schools began to operate in 2011; there are now nearly 600 in England. They are represented nationally by the Teaching Schools Council, which is now responsible for the designation of new teaching schools.

Teaching Schools lead local alliances, comprising neighbouring schools and other partners such as universities, district authorities and private sector organisations.

Teaching School Alliances (TSA) were set up with 6 core responsibilities:

1. Training new entrants to the profession

- Recruiting and selecting trainee teachers
- Providing school-based initial teacher training

2. Supplying professional development opportunities for teachers and school support staff

- Identifying the best teachers and leaders from across the alliance to provide school-based programmes, including coaching and mentoring

- Tailoring the training to meet the specific needs of local schools

3. Developing leadership potential

- Identifying people to fill leadership positions in the future
- Developing potential leaders within and across the alliance schools

4. Supporting other schools

- Coordinating school-to-school support, usually working with schools in difficulty to bring about improvement
- Deploying senior and middle leaders in support of other schools

5. Selecting outstanding middle and senior leaders to work as Specialist Leaders of Education (SLEs)

- Providing training for SLEs
- Deploying SLEs to support individuals and teams in other schools
- Evaluating and quality assuring the work of SLEs

6. Engaging in research and development

- Ensuring that initiatives are informed by evidence and the outcomes measured
- Sharing learning from research and development work with the wider school system

FIGURE 9: EXTRACTS FROM AN EXAMPLE OF A TSA VISION STATEMENT

Our (TSA) shared vision

We will work together to ensure that all children across our schools benefit from the highest standards of teaching and learning and are inspired, supported and prepared to fulfil their potential.

We will first consider 'what can we give?' as our basis for being part of this alliance, with the knowledge that the more you give, the more you are likely to receive in return. Our alliance will be one based on social capital and the participation of professionals at all levels.

We will set the bar high, we will be ambitious and we will hold ourselves to account for the quality and impact of our partnership. We know this is a unique opportunity to achieve something quite transformational. We won't let that opportunity pass.

In short, we will harness our collective professionalism, expertise, and moral purpose, to ensure no one is left behind, and every school and individual in our partnership thrives – to the benefit of all children.

There is no single, national blueprint governing the work of teaching schools. Alliances have adopted different approaches and concentrate on different aspects of the brief.

In most cases, teaching school status has given further impetus to pre-existing local partnerships. Deeper collaboration has been a local response to the risk of isolation resulting from the greatly reduced role of district education authorities and universities in promoting and supporting school improvement.

Membership of Teaching School Alliances is entirely voluntary and renewed annually. Accountability for student performance remains with individual schools. Successful alliances establish a form of internal joint accountability, in which the members adopt responsibility for the quality of the education provided in every member school, not just their own.

Teaching School Alliances have found that the intelligent use of performance data is essential if collaboration is to lead to improvement. Many

alliances conduct regular peer reviews, in which data from all member schools are presented in a common format, openly shared and analysed. The analyses are used to identify strengths and weaknesses and to produce strategies for improving performance across alliances.

Evidence of impact

Pre-service training has proved highly successful. Alliance schools are able to fill vacancies with new entrants whose levels of performance and expertise meet their specific requirements. Training new teachers in-house typically helps to strengthen teaching in general by encouraging the routine observation and discussion of pedagogy.

School-based, in-service training programmes usually prove more effective than traditional off-the-shelf methods of delivery. Alliance schools are able to design bespoke programmes which respond to specific weaknesses and spread successful practice.

Teaching schools have been successful in promoting the rapid improvement of many schools in difficulty, confirmed by improved test and examination results and higher inspection ratings.

Collaboration between schools has multiplied the opportunities for individuals to take on leadership responsibilities for cross-school initiatives. The SLE role provides opportunities for teachers with leadership potential to gain experience in other schools.

Many teaching school alliances have set up collaborative groups in which teachers with similar responsibilities and interests systematically share information and reflect on practice.

Partnerships with universities have helped to structure and direct school-based research and development projects.

Lessons learnt

The success of the Teaching School initiative was based on the following key principles:

- Establishing a consistent and effective strategy for widening the influence of highly successful schools requires a strong and sustained drive from central policymakers
 - Maintaining the full engagement of all the partners depends on a clear sense of collective purpose and responsibility, which must be constantly revisited
 - Successful Teaching School Alliances rely on leadership that is genuinely collaborative. Leading staff for whom there is no line-management responsibility is challenging and requires careful strategies to achieve it
 - Alliances work best when they create powerful networks through which schools supply one another with intensive and sustained support, responding to changing needs and involving staff at all levels
 - Peer review of performance is a powerful mechanism for achieving real improvement
- across a group of schools. Its success depends on building a climate of trust and openness, allowing data to be shared and discussed honestly among all alliance partners
- Schools with multiple problems serving severely disadvantaged communities present serious challenges to school-to-school improvement activity. These schools require concerted and well-funded support over extended periods of several years, with targeted contributions from a range of agencies
 - Successful alliances adopt deliberate measures to assure the quality of their school-to-school support. These can involve monitoring and evaluation by non-school partners or annual assessments of impact by an independent evaluator
 - The most successful collaborative research projects involve teachers in investigating what works well, how, when and why. They are part of routine improvement work, rather than additional activities

Key reform 5: growing the next generation of talented school leaders

Description and rationale

Talent management and succession planning are characteristic of successful organisations in all sectors. Far fewer schools than private sector companies have formal mechanisms for actively managing the careers of their most talented staff. However, high performing schools tend to take talent management and succession planning very seriously.

Between 2006 and 2010, the National College took a strong lead both in highlighting the importance of identifying and developing teachers with leadership potential; and in advancing practical strategies for doing so.

School leadership in England faced a looming recruitment crisis in the early years of the 21st century because:

- A large proportion of serving school principals were due to retire in the near future
- There had been a fall in the number of applicants for principal positions in government schools
- Governing bodies, who select principals, were increasingly reluctant to appoint candidates of insufficient quality
- Heightened public accountability meant many teachers regarded senior leadership positions as unattractive

These factors underlined the need for sustained initiatives at national, local and school levels to improve succession planning, aiming to motivate individuals to become leaders and enable them to develop the skills and expertise required.

The National College undertook a process of strategic analysis to help it understand the underlying causes of the problem and to generate strategies for action. This involved widespread consultation with school leaders, school governors, teachers, academics and educational leaders. National College analysis of the problem produced 'Leadership succession: a framework for action' in 2009. The key points are summarised in the diagram on the following page.

The framework prescribes a local solutions approach: local self-evaluation, local objectives and local action plans. It comprises a set of principles and strategies.

The principles underpinning the framework are as follows:

- It is easier to retain capable, experienced leaders than to recruit new ones. Holding on to valued leaders should be a priority in any succession strategy
- Leadership capability only makes sense in relation to the jobs we expect leaders to do. We must understand our leadership requirements now and in the future

FIGURE 10: LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION: A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION, FROM DSBM PHASE 3 MODULE 2, NCSL¹⁵



- There are different types of leadership roles, operating at different levels. The era of the single career track is over. People have varied preferences and abilities
- The identification of people who can fill leadership positions now and in the future should be based on evidence and rigorous assessment. Gut feelings can diminish clarity, lessen objectivity and harm diversity

The following strategies were promoted by National College:

- Adopt a range of programmes and processes: understanding needs, identifying talent, planning training
- Expand opportunities. Individual schools are usually too small to be independent units for succession planning. Only collaboration between schools can provide sufficient openings for teachers to practise leadership skills
- People learn to be leaders through a combination of formal training and on-the-job experience. Structured and varied experience of actual leadership is crucial. Effective succession plans will provide opportunities designed to meet individual needs
- Focus on filling the roles with the greatest impact with the people with the greatest potential. Spot talent and place emergent leaders in key roles

Evidence of impact

At the national level there has been little change in vacancy levels in spite of demographic predictions. However, the challenge of succession planning remains as great as ever.

At the local level, schools, often working in collaboration with one another, have developed a wide range of practical strategies. These include:

Using transparent criteria to identify teachers with leadership potential, so that the required characteristics are clear, such as:

- High-quality classroom practice
- Professional relationships with students, colleagues and parents
- Effective contributions to the resolution of issues discussed in meetings
- Inclination to take the initiative
- Ability to see projects through to a conclusion and meet deadlines
- Willingness to learn

Providing opportunities to exercise leadership to enable people to gain experience and see what new roles really entail, such as:

- Job shadowing to observe and work closely with more senior leaders
- Job rotations and secondments, where people work in unfamiliar functions or contexts
- Taking lead responsibility for school-wide initiatives
- Participating in school-to-school support work

Lessons learnt

The success of new approaches to talent management and succession planning was based on the following key principles:

- Experience does not guarantee ability. Talented teachers are capable of leadership roles from an early point in their careers
- Emergent leaders need to be given the opportunity to take real responsibility, but with a safety net of supervision from more senior colleagues
- Succession planning often involves bypassing traditional hierarchies, allowing those with talent to exercise responsibilities outside the formal scope of their current posts
- Make the opportunities to develop as leaders explicit to all members of staff: stress that individuals will be supported and initiative will be encouraged
- Good school self-evaluation and performance management processes are necessary to identify those with leadership potential and to monitor their work
- Be constantly on the lookout for opportunities to develop others. Individuals can learn from observing and participating in many day-to-day leadership tasks alongside more experienced colleagues

¹⁵ National College for Teaching and Leadership (online resource)

REFERENCES

- Barnes, Iain (2009). *Identify and grow your own leaders: a practical guide and case studies*. NCSL
- Cower, M. & Crawford, M. (2009) 'Headteacher preparation programmes in England and Scotland: do they make a difference for the first-year head?' in *School Leadership and Management* Vol. 29, Issue 1
- DfE (2015) Policy paper: *evidence of improvement in the teaching profession* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-improvement-since-the-2009-to-2010-academic-year/evidence-of-improvement-in-the-teaching-profession> [online resource] (accessed 03/01/2017)
- Diamond, A., Adamson, J., Lamb, H., Neat, S. & Spong, S. (2013) *Transition to Headship Evaluation and Impact Study* National College for Teaching and Leadership
- Fullan, M (2005) *Leadership and Sustainability* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press
- Gu, Qing et al (2014). *Teaching schools evaluation: research report*. NCTL
- Hargreaves, David H (July 2010). *Creating a self-improving school system*. NCSL
- Hill, R & Matthews, P. (2010) *Schools leading schools II: the growing impact of National Leaders of Education* National College Publishing
- McAlevy, Tony & Elwick, Alex (2015). *School improvement in London: a global perspective*. CfBT
- Mourshed, M., Chijioke, C. & Barber, M. (2010) *How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better* London: McKinsey and Company
- National College for Teaching and Leadership (2014) *Content development Handbook: Leadership curriculum* National College for Teaching and Leadership
- National College for Teaching & Leadership DSBM Phase 3 Module 2: *Analysing the strategic direction in school* <https://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/transfer/open/dsbm-phase-3-module-2-analysing-the-strategic-direction-in-school/strategic-analysis-of-resources/dsbm-p3m2-s5-t1.html> [online resource] (accessed 14/12/2016)
- Ofsted (2016) *Data view* <http://dataview.ofsted.gov.uk> [online resource] (accessed 14/12/2016)
- PISA (2009) <https://pisa2009.acer.edu.au/> [online resource] (accessed 12/12/2016)
- Robinson, M.J (2008). *The Impact of Leadership on Student Outcomes: An Analysis of the Differential Effects of Leadership Types*. University of Auckland
- Robinson, V. (2011) *Student-Centered Leadership* San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
- Robinson, V., Lloyd, C.A., Rowe, K.J. (2008) 'The Impact of Leadership on Student Outcomes: An Analysis of the Differential Effects of Leadership Types' in *Educational Administration Quarterly* Vol. 44, No. 5 pp. 635-674
- Schleicher, A. (2012), Ed., *Preparing Teachers and Developing School Leaders for the 21st Century: Lessons from around the World*, OECD Publishing <https://www.oecd.org/site/eduistp2012/49850576.pdf> [online resource] (accessed 12/12/2016)
- Simkins, T., Coldwell, M. Close, P and Morgan, A. (2009) 'Outcomes of in-school leadership development work: a study of three NCSL programmes' in *Educational management administration and leadership* Vol. 37, No. 1 pp. 29-50
- Whelan, F. (2013) '*Lessons Learned: how good policies produce better schools*' <http://www.acasus.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/R2-Lessons-Learned.pdf> [online resource] (date accessed 12/12/2016)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the following interviewees who kindly provided their reflections and insights on system leadership developments in England for this report:

Steve Munby

CEO Education Development Trust and former CEO National College for School Leadership

Jane Doughty CBE

Consultant and former Director at the National College for Teaching and Leadership

Yasmin Bevan OBE

Former Executive Principal and headteacher of Denbigh High School and Challney High School for Boys (Chiltern Teaching School Alliance)

Joan McVittie DBE

Former Headteacher of Woodside High School (National Support School) and National Leader of Education

Marie-Claire Bretherton

Executive Headteacher of Mount Street Academy and Lincoln Carlton Academy (Kyra Teaching School Alliance)

Reena Keeble DBE

Consultant and former Headteacher, Cannon Lane First School

Simon Spry

Executive Headteacher Prince Rock School (Plymouth Teaching School Alliance), and National Leader of Education

Llyn Codling

Executive Headteacher Portswood Primary School (Portswood Teaching School Alliance)

Ken Gibson KBE

Executive Headteacher, Harton School (Harton Teaching School Alliance)

Richard Sheriff

Headteacher, Harrogate Grammar (Red Kite Teaching School Alliance)

Barbara Slider

Headteacher Shiremoor Primary Tyne & Wear (ShiNE Teaching School Alliance), and Local Leader of Education

CONTACT US

Education Development Trust has a track record of contextualising world class school reform approaches for local school improvement. We are currently researching and pioneering school system leadership models in diverse education settings including Australia, India and Kenya. We also host Global Dialogue, a series of webinar events connecting schools and leading educationalists working on collaborative school-led improvement programmes.

If you would like to join the next Global Dialogue event or discuss school system leadership please contact us at: **consultancy@educationdevelopmenttrust.com**

Chris Taylor

Principal Associate Consultant

Tony McAleavy

Research and Consultancy Director

Charlotte Jones

Head of Services Development (Consultancy)