

Every child. Every school.
Same opportunities.

Ambitious for every child

Addressing the leadership challenge

By the time a child from a disadvantaged home starts school they are on average 19 months behind the development of their peers.¹ This progress gap grows larger over time.

The research in this report finds that children who are persistently disadvantaged are most likely to fall behind at school. Outcomes for children who experienced sustained poverty are disproportionately worse in areas 5 and 6. Persistently disadvantaged students in these areas make 17.9 months less progress than non-disadvantaged children nationally.

This must change and the case studies in this report show how schools in the most challenging

contexts are being transformed by Ambition School Leadership participants. Great middle and senior leaders - the engine room of our schools - can drive excellence for all. Working alongside heads and executive leaders - the strategy and culture experts - they can close the gap between disadvantaged children and their wealthier peers.

Combining the middle leadership expertise of Teaching Leaders with the headship and executive leadership specialism of The Future Leaders Trust, we are creating a seamless leadership development journey for teachers in our education system. Our new organisation - Ambition School Leadership - now offers participants end-to-end development pathways covering all levels of leadership. Our professional networks have

become stronger and more diverse, delivering more peer-to-peer support. We are excited to start our new journey together, and are set to continue improving the education system for disadvantaged children, becoming the UK's school leadership development experts.

Fourteen years ago I became swept up in the mission to end educational disadvantage. I joined the first Teach First cohort and in 2008 was a founding staff member at Teaching Leaders, becoming Chief Executive in 2011.

Now, as CEO of Ambition School Leadership, my determination that all children have access to an outstanding education is as strong as ever. In the twenty-first century it is not acceptable that family background and geography have such an effect on a child's

educational outcomes. Together, we have a renewed drive to fulfil our mission to build a network of exceptional school leaders at all levels to transform the lives of the children who need it most.



James Toop
CEO, Ambition School Leadership

**Ambition
School
Leadership**

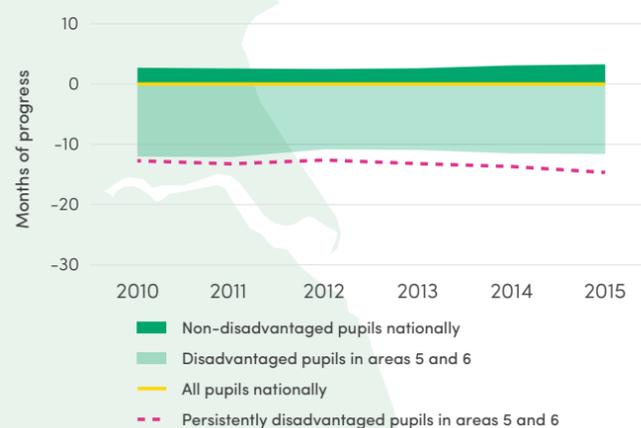
The progress gap in England

'I want to be a leader in an education system where every child draws a winning ticket in the postcode lottery.'

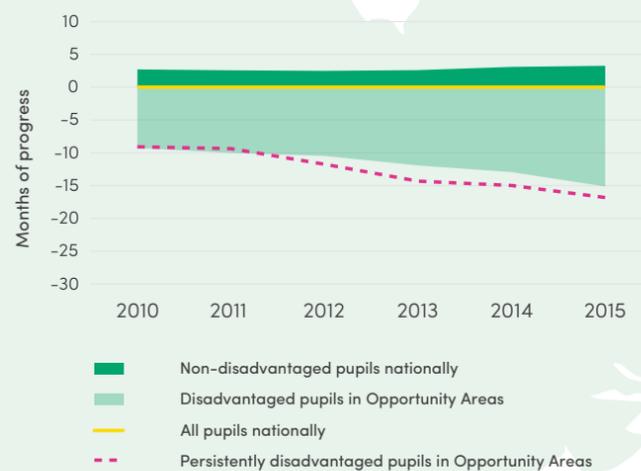
Clare, Deputy Headteacher



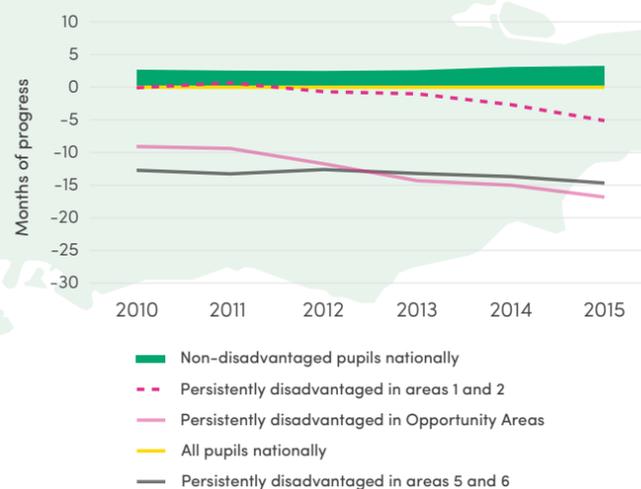
Student progress gaps in Areas 5 and 6 (2010-15)



Student progress gaps in Opportunity Areas (2010-15)



Persistently disadvantaged student progress gaps (2010-15)



Not all children have the same chance of success at school. Our ambition is to create a fair society built on an education system where every child can thrive, no matter what their background.

The national picture

By the time a child from a disadvantaged home starts school they are on average 19 months behind the development of their peers.² This progress gap grows larger over time.

By measuring progress we can see how much children have learned and the skills they have gained between two set points. Progress is education in action.

In March 2016 the Department for Education evaluated each Local Authority District and grouped them into six categories numbered 1 to 6.³ Areas rated 5 and 6 are those where children were making the least progress and had the poorest access to high-quality schools. These areas also have the poorest provision of leadership support, such as National Leaders of Education and Teaching School Alliances.

In October 2016, the Secretary of State for Education announced targeted support for six Opportunity Areas, identified as having the greatest need and the lowest rates of social mobility in England.

Research

The Education Policy Institute (EPI) has conducted new research for Ambition School Leadership to show how disadvantaged pupils performed in these areas between 2010 and 2015. EPI looked at the educational progress made by disadvantaged and persistently disadvantaged students between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 and compared it to non-disadvantaged children nationally, to give a progress gap measured in months of learning. They also looked at the Ofsted Leadership and Management ratings of schools and how they had changed since 2010.

Progress in challenging areas

Disadvantaged students lose nearly a year of learning in areas 5 and 6

In areas 5 and 6, disadvantaged students experience a 14.9 month progress gap compared to non-disadvantaged students nationally. This is 7.7 months larger than the progress gap for disadvantaged students in areas 1 and 2, which shows why areas 5 and 6 are being prioritised. The situation is even worse for persistently disadvantaged students – those receiving free school meals for 80% of the time measured – who make 17.9 months less progress in areas 5 and 6 than non-disadvantaged children nationally.

Disadvantaged students have seen a greater decline in Opportunity Areas than in areas 5 and 6

Over the past five years, Opportunity Areas have seen the steadiest decline in student progress. Whereas the progress gap for disadvantaged students in areas 5 and 6 has stayed between 13 and 15 months, in Opportunity Areas the gap has grown from 12 months in 2010 to 18.4 months in 2015.

Persistently disadvantaged students in Opportunity Areas have seen the greatest absolute decline in progress

Out of all the groups analysed, persistently disadvantaged students in Opportunity Areas have seen the greatest growth in their progress gap since 2010 – 8.3 months. Since 2013 the progress gap has been larger for persistently disadvantaged students in Opportunity Areas than the average across areas 5 and 6.

Leadership in challenging areas

Leadership quality is more likely to drop in challenging areas than elsewhere

The research also looked at schools' Ofsted Leadership and Management ratings in 2010 and 2016. In areas 5 and 6, schools that were rated Good or Outstanding for Leadership and Management by Ofsted in 2010 were more likely to drop to Requires Improvement or Inadequate by 2016 than in areas 1 and 2. The quality of leadership was also less likely to improve from the lower ratings up to Good or Outstanding.

Conclusions

1. The progress gap for disadvantaged pupils is growing. This is evident across all areas, but is most marked in Opportunity Areas where the gap has grown steadily every year since 2010.
2. Persistently disadvantaged pupils are furthest behind. Too many of the poorest children are not feeling the effects of interventions, and more needs to be done to break down barriers to progress.
3. Schools in areas 5 and 6 are less likely to improve their Ofsted Leadership and Management rating; yet we know schools need good leadership in order to improve.

Leaders in the lowest performing areas and in Opportunity Areas need more support if they are to improve or maintain the quality of their leadership so that it is consistently Good or Outstanding, giving their schools the capacity to improve.

The progress gap is greatest in Opportunity Areas, where disadvantaged children in 2015 were left 18.4 months behind wealthier children.

1. (From cover page) Washbrook, E. & Waldfogel, J. (2012) Achievement gaps in childhood: A cross-national perspective, Presentation to the Sutton Trust/ Carnegie Corporation Summit on Social Mobility, May 2012

2. Ibid

3. The areas have been categorised according to 11 indicators: Five educational standards indicators and six capacity to improve indicators. See 'Defining Achieving Excellence Areas: Methodology guidance note', DfE March 2016, gov.uk

A photograph of two young children, a boy and a girl, in school uniforms. They are both smiling and looking down at something they are cooking in a kitchen. The boy is holding a wooden spoon and stirring a pot. The girl is also smiling and looking towards the boy. They are wearing blue school sweaters with a red crest on the chest. The background is a light-colored brick wall.

From Special Measures to Good in one year

Oasis Academy Skinner Street is in Gillingham, Medway; an area tackling long-term disadvantage as a result of industrial decline. Principal Dan Morrow was himself a student at the school, and now he leads a team who are committed to improving the life chances of local children.



Francyne Carr
Year 5 Leader, Director of Behaviour and Head of House

Francyne joined Skinner Street one year ago and she is part of the Teaching Leaders programme.

“Outstanding” is our word of the year. I say it every morning!

‘When I started last September neither the children nor their parents believed that they could be outstanding. They were happy to accept the lot they were given. Now they have realised that we’re not compromising on standards, students have stepped up – and, more importantly, parents are supporting us too. They now have high expectations of us and rightly so. This September students have come back and attendance is above 98%.’

Chloe, Assistant Head of Upper School: ‘It’s not easy changing the perceptions of school for parents who were failed. It takes time, lots of meetings, home visits and consistency. We have reinforced this positively with rewards systems. For our children, offering enrichment opportunities such as ice-skating raises ambitions and aspirations.’

The vision

‘Dan’s vision is for our school to be Outstanding. Medway is historically disadvantaged but we believe this vision can transform our community and the lives of our children. Dan is clear that the team need to be aligned; it has to be a collective vision or we will not reach our destination.’

Debbie, Year 4 Leader: ‘We’ve bonded as a team. Working with Dan to create a shared vision statement has helped us to develop consistency and pass this down to our teams and the children.’

Impact of training

‘The skills we learn at Teaching Leaders don’t stop with us. We bring them back and share them with the rest of the team. We now lead Monday CPD training through which we support colleagues on priorities like assessment and marking strategies. It’s about developing and retaining our staff. With all the strengths we have in school, everyone can have the chance to be a leader. We can all learn.’



Dan Morrow
Principal

Dan joined Skinner Street in 2015. He is part of the Future Leaders and Talented Leaders programmes.

‘Leadership is not about the individual; you have to bring colleagues with you.’

‘When I arrived, my approach was to review organisational culture and translate that into better practice through re-aligning vision and values. I changed the organisation structure to distribute leadership and empower colleagues, creating a number of leadership secondments to role-model high expectations and form a core team of excellence.’

‘Another priority was to ensure we were using time in the school day effectively. We conducted a strategic re-timetabling each half term to focus on closing specific gaps for children and monitor and track individual progress in a timely and focused framework. I make it clear that everyone is part of this change, including support teachers and the admin team.’

‘Together, we co-created a vision statement that became the basis for a new staff handbook detailing all our policies and expectations. The culture of support and development we’ve nurtured here – both internally and through Future Leaders and Teaching Leaders – means that staff know they are making a difference and are more committed because of it.’

Tjay
Former student

Tjay was a pupil at Oasis Academy Skinner Street when Dan Morrow joined. Having struggled with his behaviour, he now plans to go to university.

‘I had always been in trouble at school, but when Mr Morrow arrived he would sit down and talk to me calmly. He taught me to play chess and Scrabble and helped me with ways to express my anger.’



Donna Weeks
Deputy Principal – Head of Lower School

Donna has worked at the school for a year and is part of the Future Leaders programme.

‘Everyone is prepared to develop each other, which shows the legacy of the training they’ve received.’

Sharing the learning

‘Being on Future Leaders made you think about how you can develop all members of your team, not just yourself.’

‘Each teacher is part of a coaching team, so everyone has an impact throughout the school. Teaching Leaders participants and even younger staff are now facilitating that, which has led to 80% Good or Outstanding teaching.’

‘The ripple effect goes beyond the traditional teaching structure. We have given teaching assistants the credit they deserve by renaming them support teachers – and they have responded by up-skilling themselves based on what we’re trying to achieve for students. Everyone is prepared to develop themselves and each other in order to reach our goal of becoming an Outstanding school.’

‘He took me to Kent University where I saw all the different courses you could do. In Year 6 I didn’t get excluded at all and did much better in my SATs than I thought I could. Mr Morrow came to my new secondary school to make sure I’d settled in. I have gone back to Skinner Street and he has helped with my homework.’

‘Now I want to go on to university and become an engineer. I made Mr Morrow a present with Scrabble pieces so he would always remember me!’

Why leadership is essential

School leadership has never been more important. As responsibility for school improvement transfers to the school-led system, we will need effective leaders at every level, from middle leaders up to multi-academy trust CEOs. We believe this will guarantee that every child has a high-quality education.

The role of leaders in school improvement

For decades, educational research has shown that school leaders are central to school improvement. Across multiple countries, researchers consistently find that in schools or regions which show sustainable improvement, one of the earliest steps in their journey is the development of good leadership practice.¹ England's school leaders are already responsible for more decisions than in almost any other OECD country.²

In England, schools where Ofsted rates the quality of Leadership and Management higher than the school's overall performance are ten times as likely to see improvement in their overall performance at their next inspection than those where leadership and management is rated worse than performance overall.³

However, too often leadership development has focused on the role of the leader in isolation, helping to contribute to the idea of the 'hero head' who can single-handedly transform school performance.

Leaders do not influence children's performance directly. Successful school leaders create conditions that support effective teaching and learning, and build capacity for professional learning and change.⁴ They enable their staff to perform well and, as a result, pupil outcomes improve.

The behaviours of effective leaders

Alongside expertise and technical skills, effective leaders exhibit a specific set of behaviours. Research shows that, across sectors, strong leaders engage staff in their vision, establish clear expectations, plan strategically, develop others and create a positive, constructive climate.⁵

This is evidenced by recent findings from the Centre for High Performance. They identified five approaches to headship, but only one which delivered long-term, sustainable improvements in pupil outcomes. These leaders focused on building the right culture and environment, engaging the community, then addressing behaviour and teaching.⁶ Improved pupil outcomes then followed. This is the style of leadership we need for a consistently high-performing system.

'My ambition is to provide every child with the best possible opportunity to achieve their potential.'

Titilayo, Director of Education



Developing leaders at all levels

Ambition School Leadership works with leaders at all levels to develop the specific skills and competencies they need. Working together, within and across schools, these leaders will have a transformative impact on the lives of the students who need it most.

The importance of strong leadership in the self-improving system is clear. But teachers and leaders need support to step up into the roles that are emerging and lead system-wide improvement.

Effective leadership development

Ambition School Leadership's Competency Framework focuses on those traits which support sustainable impact. We use this framework to guide the development of the leaders on all our programmes; they use it to understand their strengths and identify where they need to develop to become more effective leaders.

The skills and behaviours for effective leadership can be learned. But right now access to high-quality development is not guaranteed for every leader that needs it.⁷ In a recent survey, 53% of new headteachers said they would have valued access to coaching and mentoring when they took post.⁸ School leaders need consistent, structured support to perform to their potential.

High-performing school systems offer leaders access to peer-to-peer mentoring, knowledge networks, dedicated time carved out for professional development and access to leadership qualifications.⁹ As a national organisation, with a combined 18 years' expertise in developing leaders at every level, we can provide leaders with a structured career pathway and tailored support wherever they are in their leadership journey.

The right skills for every level

Our experience and research shows that leaders at different levels need different behaviours and skills.

Middle and senior leaders

Effective middle and senior leaders build high-performing teams with excellent teaching, and manage resources effectively.^{10, 11}

Headteachers

Effective headteachers establish a clear vision and purpose, while having the skills to ensure every teacher is developed, the needs of every pupil are met and improvements are sustainable.¹²

Executive headteachers

Executive headteachers must look outward to create partnerships, foster collaboration between schools and lead a turnaround in underperforming schools.¹³

Chief executives

Multi-academy trust CEOs will set an organisation's strategy and structure with greater distance from the classroom, ensuring delivery of consistent quality across a number of schools and creating the conditions, tools and resources to enable all schools to thrive.

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3. The School Leadership Challenge 2022. London: Teach First, Teaching Leaders and The Future Leaders Trust with analysis by McKinsey & Co. 2016.
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12. National standards of excellence for headteachers. London: Department for Education. 2015.
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No excuses in an Opportunity Area

Oldham has been identified by the government as an Opportunity Area, meaning it is one of the six most challenging areas in the country in terms of social mobility. The leaders at The Oldham Academy North are dedicated to raising aspirations and enabling their students to achieve.



Martin Knowles
Headteacher

Martin joined the Future Leaders programme in 2009, the first to do so at his school.

‘It is through building a critical mass of leadership that we have been able to make such a difference to pupil outcomes.’

No excuses

‘My school serves one of the most deprived areas in England but we don’t make any excuses. We are on target to be in the top five per cent of schools for Progress 8 this year. It is through building a critical mass of leadership that we have been able to make such a difference to pupil outcomes.’

‘The whole school and all the decisions made within it are driven by the ambition to improve outcomes for our students. I interview every member of staff before they join, and ask for feedback regularly through anonymous staff surveys, to ensure that everyone is committed to the same goal, and feels they are contributing to it.’

‘My two deputy heads are Future Leaders, and six staff are Teaching Leaders. The continuing professional development on both programmes is second to none. I promote CPD throughout the school, and there are eight staff undertaking MAs; others are taking NPQSL/NPQML/NPQH qualifications.’

Tailored curriculum

‘We have changed the curriculum to suit our students. Art is compulsory at Key Stage 4 and we teach dance, PE and performing arts. All students have the opportunity to gain in confidence and excel, which spills over into other areas of work. It’s quite a bold approach and we need the right staff. I believe we have them now, and with great leaders in place, we will retain them too.’



Chris Davis
Deputy Headteacher

Chris joined the Future Leaders programme in 2015.

‘My main belief – and Martin’s too – is about raising aspirations of students and, very importantly, of staff.’

Accountability at all levels

‘You have to set high expectations. We refuse to accept a low-aspiration mindset for our students, just because of their backgrounds or the complex issues they currently face. Doors were closed for me at school, and I want to make sure that children at this school have the chance to realise their potential.’

‘Having both Teaching Leaders and Future Leaders participants in school gives a consistent leadership message, raising aspiration in the culture of the school. With a close focus on pupil data, including half-termly reviews, cross-departmental moderations and book scrutiny, we are firmly establishing effective systems in the academy to ensure we will become Outstanding rapidly.’

‘To maintain a shared commitment to our school mission, we coordinate weekly staff CPD sessions. Sharing expertise at these gatherings ensures everyone feels valued and supported. Future Leaders and Teaching Leaders are spread throughout the school, creating strong alignment with the mission and making the most impact. Alongside this, our close focus on analysis of student achievement data means we are able to target support where it is needed most.’



Sarah Myers
Learning Leader of Performance

Sarah joined the Teaching Leaders programme in 2014 following a promotion.

‘Sometimes it’s not going to go right the first time, but it’s important that staff and students are able to grow.’

‘The Teaching Leaders and Future Leaders on the staff have brought more focus to the whole team. As a middle leader, I know I need to be on top of my data for reporting; this is essential if we are to close the gap for the most disadvantaged students.’

Leadership for teachers and students

‘Improving outcomes for our students is a challenge, so it’s important that we up-skill all staff: leadership development is for everyone. In the past I would have done everything myself, but now I see that I need to allow my team to try things by delegating strategic tasks. Staff have the opportunity to grow but are still held to account by good line managers.’

‘This approach extends to students. I have transferred leadership practice learned at Teaching Leaders to a child’s perspective, with particular focus on communication skills. In Year 8 our students take a six-week leadership pathway course. They develop confidence and want to achieve and join the student council, or become leaders in dance, drama or sport. It has had a massive impact on their confidence and self-esteem, which they can carry forward into their studies and future lives.’

A woman with curly hair, wearing a striped shirt and dark trousers, stands with her arms crossed. Next to her is a young boy in a dark suit, white shirt, and tie. They are both looking towards the camera against a solid yellow background.

Meeting the sector's needs
We have an opportunity to re-shape
leadership development in
England's schools.

Schools in England face a variety of challenges, including attracting, developing and retaining leaders. Ambition School Leadership is committed to re-shaping leadership development in England by creating new pathways for teachers and leaders based on world-class leadership development.

Meeting the sector's needs

Research from Teach First, Teaching Leaders and The Future Leaders Trust, 'The School Leadership Challenge', predicted that the sector is likely to need many more leaders by 2022. It is also likely that the schools serving our most disadvantaged pupils will be most in need of more good leaders.

Ambition School Leadership is working to ensure this problem never becomes a reality. We are working alongside partners - from individual schools to the Department for Education - to provide development programmes that enable leaders to have greater impact in their current roles and prepares them for their next role, leading to a fulfilling and impactful career.

We have an opportunity to lead a cultural change and inspire the education system to take collective responsibility for leaders at all levels, including: leadership development; technical training; mentoring and coaching; and peer-to-peer support networks.

We are committed to working with schools and multi-academy trusts, federations, dioceses and other groups to make sure we have the right number of great leaders in the right places, who are all focused on giving every child an excellent education.

'We will close the leadership gap in England by developing effective leaders at all levels for schools in challenging contexts.'

Baroness Sally Morgan, Chair of Trustees
Ambition School Leadership

Growing demands

There are three underlying factors that could increase the need for leaders. These are affecting schools all over the country but in particular those serving our most disadvantaged pupils.



Executive leadership

More leaders will be needed to meet the growth of new leadership positions at executive level in academy trusts.



An existing shortage

There is already a need for additional leaders in the system.



Retirement

Half of the existing leadership pool is expected to leave or retire in the next six years and not enough younger leaders are replacing them.

Solutions

There are clear actions we can take now to start improving the recruitment and retention of leaders working in schools in challenging contexts.



Pathways

Establish clear career pathways for leaders at all levels.



Support

Support more leaders to stay in schools in the most challenging contexts.



Progression

Help these leaders to progress and develop so that they can have greater impact.



Network

Create a national network of high-quality leaders to provide peer support and constructive feedback to enable improved standards.



Talent:

Provide talent-spotting and succession-planning support.



Working together across a network

Ormiston Academies Trust has chosen Ambition School Leadership as its preferred leadership training provider. Their existing Future Leaders and Teaching Leaders participants attract recruits, and also aid staff retention as leadership development is put into action.

'The work of Teaching Leaders and The Future Leaders Trust has been invaluable in supporting Ormiston Academies Trust to develop a strong leadership pipeline for our academies. We look forward to working with Ambition School Leadership to identify and nurture our principals of tomorrow.'

Sir Toby Salt, Chief Executive, Ormiston Academies Trust



Christian Goude
Curriculum Leader of Humanities
City of Norwich School

Christian joined Teaching Leaders in 2016. His school is in an Opportunity Area.

'We've got that clear mission and clear objectives; we've got the skills and a vast array of talent and we are driving up standards and results.'

'The Head of School at City of Norwich is a strong leader. She takes pride first and foremost in the classroom and wants that to be shared with everyone. We are trying to become an academy known for excellence in all that we do. Across the school this year we have added half a grade on average for our students, so our Progress 8 score is fantastic and we've closed the gap for disadvantaged students.'

'It absolutely matters that all the leaders share common values and a common vision. We have an achievement plan with just three common objectives, shared across the whole school. These are: the individuality and breadth of the student; catering for or preparing students for the next step in their lives; and maintaining or being renowned for excellence in teaching and learning.'

'I am the only Teaching Leaders participant at the City of Norwich School, so I really benefit from meeting other middle leaders at the programme training and across the Ormiston Academies Trust network. There's reassurance when you discover other middle leaders are doing similar things. Being part of a supportive trust enables us to share and collaborate on ideas that are working so we can all keep driving standards up.'



Umbar Sharif
Principal
Ormiston Six Villages Academy

Umbar moved to her coastal school in West Sussex from Highbury, North London as part of the Talented Leaders programme. She first joined the Future Leaders programme 10 years ago.

'The programmes have raised the bar for all of the leaders in our academy.'

'When I arrived at Six Villages Academy the Trust was working hard to rebuild the community's confidence in the school. The school had been categorised as having "serious weaknesses" and there was a lot of work to do to drive up attainment. I contacted Teaching Leaders within four weeks of starting at Ormiston Academies Trust as I knew the programme would benefit my middle leaders.'

'The Teaching Leaders and Future Leaders programmes give you unrivalled partnership and network opportunities. Future Leaders has given me such high-quality experiences: being trained by a McKinsey consultant; unpicking with a mentor what school improvement looks like. Having two middle leaders get on the Teaching Leaders programme has been invaluable too, and I know there is an aspiration to have more Ambition School Leadership participants across Ormiston Academies Trust, which would be brilliant.'

'The Teaching Leaders programme has built middle leaders' confidence and they pass on the high-quality mentoring and coaching support they receive to other staff in the academy. The projects they are working on are directly linked to whole-school improvements and priorities.'

'It has been a great year for us at Ormiston Six Villages; we achieved our best ever GCSE results, hitting 60% for A*-C English and maths and 57% for all A*-C in August. Now the school and the community believes we can do this.'



Sian Parsons
Assistant Principal
Ormiston Endeavour Academy

Sian's school is in Ipswich, an area where students' outcomes have traditionally been limited and social mobility is low.

'We don't have conversations such as: "Oh but the Principal told me we need to..." It's: "We're doing this for the Academy because..."'

'Our head, Christine Woods, a Talented Leaders programme participant, has created a clear vision in collaboration with the middle and senior leaders and the Trust: every child deserves an outstanding education.'

'Data analysis allows us to perform targeted and quick interventions, so no children get left behind. This year, Christine's first year as head, exam results improved dramatically, with 55% achieving 5+ A*-C and our gender gap has shrunk.'

'The key is to develop a shared language, and to create respect and space for staff to have ideas and to see the impact in the life of the Academy, so that things are not done to them but with them. One of our newest middle leaders came up with an idea for improving the climate for learning which was adopted academy-wide.'

'We receive great support from the Trust and good leadership and management empower staff. People want to stay because they feel respected, their ideas are valued and they can see they are having an impact. It is our middle leaders who have become the driving force for change in the academy.'

Reaching new heights: executive leadership

At the top of our leadership pathway, Ambition School Leadership has pioneered a set of tailored Executive Educators programmes to develop leaders as they take up these evolving roles.

The growth of executive leadership

Great leaders are crucial at all levels but for executive headteachers and multi-academy trust (MAT) CEOs their roles are often new and evolving.

They need support to understand their new remit and how they realise the potential of their MAT or group of schools to drive real impact.

There is a rapidly increasing number of executive leaders in our education system; the number of executive headteachers (EHTs) in post grew by 240% between 2010 and 2014. Our ambition is to support CEOs and EHTs as they step up into these roles.

Projections from our Leadership Challenge report show that we could need somewhere between 4,000 and 8,000 new executive leadership roles in our education system by 2022.

‘Great headteachers can and do become great CEOs. Tailored leadership development is fundamental, not only in terms of helping understand what the role is about; but also making sure people get a chance to network and learn from each other.’

Sir David Carter
National Schools Commissioner

Developing our executive leaders

As a leading training provider for those at the top of the school system, we are working with academy trusts and other school groupings to fulfil our commitment to develop mission-driven leaders at all levels, from middle to MAT leadership.

We are bringing together new research on MATs; it uses leading examples from top-performing MATs, shares alumni case studies and brings in expert technical training for leaders in areas such as finance, governance, strategy and HR.

In this way we will create a network of school leaders across the country who are committed to ensuring every child achieves.



Executive headteachers: what's in a name?

It is currently hard to define the role of the EHT; but what we can say is that it is not the same as that of chief executive, and that the skills and competencies required for each are very different.

Our research, in collaboration with NFER and NGA, 'Executive Headteachers: What's in a Name?', found that EHTs' roles can serve different strategic aims. These can include overseeing the transition and improvement of schools, as well as growing partnerships between schools.

Demand for EHTs is only going to grow. The sector needs to capitalise on the increased leadership capacity which EHTs can bring and also nurture future EHTs to meet the demand of England's evolving school system.

This is why Ambition School Leadership has developed a programme which specifically addresses the challenges of executive headship, as part of our suite of Executive Educator programmes.

Routes into executive headship

Our research has found three common routes into executive headship:

1. Temporary posts

Temporary posts are taken up by seconded heads or school improvement partners for rapid school turnaround.

2. Expansion

Traditional headship role is expanded so that a headteacher takes over leadership of a school in addition to their 'home' school.

3. Multiple schools

Federations and MATs create new EHT roles to oversee multiple schools.

What we know about CEOs

The role of the MAT CEO is critical for the organisation's strategy and structure.

But being an outstanding headteacher does not prepare you to be an outstanding CEO, meaning specialised development and technical training is important. In many ways, CEOs have to let go of what made them a successful head in order to monitor and manage quality across more schools with greater distance.

CEOs must set the strategy, management and operating models for the MAT structure, and be clear on how those will drive better outcomes for children. They need great leaders at all levels to do this so developing and managing talent is a key lever for success.

We work with CEOs to support their own leadership development and the development of the many leaders in the schools they are responsible for.



Cathie Paine

Deputy Chief Executive
REAch2 Academy Trust

'Executive Educators training was excellent and very systematic. I still look at my notes to remind me of the bigger picture. The programme gave me the tools to reflect on my own practice and to learn from the most successful MATs in the country.'

'As a headteacher you had people you could call up who knew what you were going through.'

'Setting up a multi-academy trust can feel isolating. Through Executive Educators I gained a peer group overnight.'

'Through several residentials I built up a group of CEOs, deputy CEOs and COOs who I would now not hesitate to call on and ask for help.'

'The mission to improve life chances for disadvantaged children runs through Executive Educators, so I implemented what I learned; and as a result it permeates the Trust. This is important as we are taking on big challenges with schools in difficult circumstances, where we need to work with new and existing staff to embed a high-aspirations culture for all children, no matter what their background.'

'Beyond the central elements of vision, value and culture, the module on MAT governance was invaluable. Leading a growing trust like REAch2, the insights I gleaned from this course continue to inform my strategic thinking and actions on a day-to-day basis.'

'When things get complex you have to go back to your principles. From the very start of my career, I have asked myself, "Would this be good enough for my children?" If it wouldn't, then we must change it.'



We are working for a fair society built on an education system where every child can thrive, no matter what their background.





**We are building a network
of exceptional school leaders
at all levels to transform
the lives of the children
who need it most.**



Baroness Sally Morgan
Chair of Trustees

'Ambition School Leadership inherits 18 years of combined experience in leadership development, a far-reaching national network of leaders who are committed to our mission, and partners spanning government, not-for-profit and corporate sectors.

'We will close the leadership gap in England by developing effective leaders at all levels for schools in challenging contexts. In this way, Ambition School Leadership can help close the gaps in our education system.

'It is an exciting time for the new organisation and for the many people who have worked for and with both predecessor organisations. Together we will continue our work: focusing on the schools that need us most; raising the quality and skills of leaders at all levels; and increasing the number of great leaders working in schools in challenging contexts to change children's lives.'

A clearly defined career pathway

Ambition School Leadership will provide clear career pathways - which work across different schools, trusts and regions - that enable schools to develop and retain their staff, and ensure they are prepared to take on the challenges of leadership.

We will reach out to the people who show leadership potential but are under-represented in leadership roles: women and black, Asian and minority ethnic teachers and leaders - drawing on an often-untapped group that will close the leadership gap.

World-class training

Ambition School Leadership will provide the highest-quality training for leaders at all levels. We recognise that there are significant differences between the roles of leaders within the education system: middle and senior leaders and headteachers, and the evolving roles of executive headteachers and MAT CEOs. We are specialists in delivering the training in technical skills and leadership competencies needed for each level of leadership.

A network gathering momentum

Bringing together two well-established nationwide networks, Ambition School Leadership will unite over 4,000 school leaders within and across schools, MATs and regions with a common aim of closing the progress gap.

Our peer-to-peer networks and coaching and mentoring opportunities will mean teachers and leaders committed to improving outcomes for pupils will have access to a wealth of expertise and support to draw on and drive their mission forward.

Strategic partnerships

We are committed to working closely with key organisations to support their work to improve schools. We will work strategically with schools and education organisations to meet their development needs and increase our impact by developing more and more leaders.

We will work to strengthen our network by partnering with organisations and businesses, in or outside the sector, which share our commitment to improving school leadership. We will work with our participants, schools and partners to shape and define the new strategic leadership roles in the education system, bringing our expertise and vision to lead the sector at all levels.

Ambition School Leadership is developing a new strategy to be released in Spring 2017. In the meantime it will be our priority to engage with the education sector to help shape our work.

Our four strategic commitments

Develop headteachers

We will exponentially grow the number of our leaders reaching headship and system leadership in the areas where they can make the biggest difference.

Reach priority areas

We will reach into Opportunity Areas, and areas 5 and 6 where need is greatest, building local networks of exceptional leaders committed to changing outcomes.

Build the leadership pipeline

We will grow and retain aspiring middle and senior leaders to ensure we have a sustainable supply of leadership talent at all levels.

Deepen strategic partnerships

We will strengthen and build new strategic partnerships to expand our offer to provide a holistic leadership solution for the increasing and diverse leadership needs of trusts and groups of schools.

We develop leaders at all levels.

Join us in our mission to build a network of exceptional school leaders at all levels to transform the lives of the children who need it most.

To find out whether your school is eligible, to apply for one of our programmes or recommend a colleague, visit ambitionschoolleadership.org.uk

Aspiring Leadership Programme

For groups of teachers preparing for their first leadership roles.

Teaching Leaders

Our selective programme for high-potential middle leaders looking to increase their impact, with tailored primary and secondary pathways.

Middle Leadership Programme (with NPQML)

Tailored leadership development for a school's whole middle leadership team.

Senior Leadership Programme (with NPQSL)

For senior leaders ready for whole-school responsibility.

Future Leaders

Our selective programme for high-potential senior leaders who have the talent and commitment to become headteachers.

Headship Programme (with NPQH)

For senior leaders preparing to reach headship in 12-18 months or headteachers looking for further development.

Executive Educators

Our flagship system leadership training, with tailored programmes for aspiring or serving executive headteachers and CEOs of multi-academy trusts.

Bespoke Partnerships

We work with our partners to understand their system-wide leadership needs and create strategic and sustainable solutions.