

Summary of Prof. John Howson's 17th Annual Report 'The State of the Labour Market for Senior Staff in Schools in England and Wales'

The Facts

This study contains details of 1,230 posts on the Leadership Scale advertised by publicly-funded schools and academies in England and Wales between September 2010 and the end of June 2011.

There was a slight decline in the number of Headship vacancies this year, but a more pronounced fall in the number of advertised vacancies for deputy headships and an even steeper fall in the number of assistant headship vacancies.

Primary head teacher vacancies averaged 5.1 (4.6 last year) applications. Applications averaged 17.4 (14.2) for secondary headships and 5.7 (4.8) for special schools. These averages were slightly higher than those seen during the previous year.

Avg. Applications	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
Primary	6	5.4	4.8	4.9	4.6	4.8	4.6	5.1
Secondary	15.3	12.8	15	15.2	15.7	15.9	13.6	17.4
Special	5.7	4.2	4.5	5.1	5	5.5	4.3	5.7

Source: previous years reports

For deputy head posts, primary schools averaged 10.3 (8.2) applications, secondary schools 28.3 (22.5) and special schools 9.0 (7.1). These averages were slightly higher than that seen during the previous year.

Interview numbers ranged from, on average, 2.7 for primary headships (2.6 last year), 4.9 for secondary headships (4.9) and 2.8 for special schools (2.7). For deputy heads the averages were 3.5 in primary schools (3.3), 5.9 in secondary (5.5) and 3.2 in special schools (3.0).

Some 36% of primary, 19% of secondary and 39% of special school head teacher posts were reported unfilled after an advertisement this year, Last year the percentages were 34% of primary, 19% of secondary and 43% of special schools. This suggests that all sectors are still experiencing considerable difficulty in filling their posts, and secondary more than most.

	Phase	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
Headteacher	Primary	23	28	28	35	32	26	34	36
	Secondary	16	20	22	19	21	19	19	19
	Special	25	22	30	33	37	27	43	39
Deputy Head	Primary	19	21	19	25	19	19	17	12
	Secondary	18	12	15	17	21	15	14	20
	Special	24	28	26	35	22	25	29	21
Assistant Head	Primary	24	17	28	28	25	23	20	9
	Secondary	11	15	16	14	16	15	14	7
	Special	28	14	17	17	35	26	11	29

Source: previous years reports

**Inspiring leaders to
improve children's lives**

For deputy head posts, the percentages of posts unfilled after advertisement were 12% in primary, 20% in secondary and 21% in special schools. Last year, the percentages were 17% for primary schools, 14% for secondary schools and 29% in special schools. This year, although the situation for primary schools had improved, the secondary and particularly the special sector both experienced greater difficulty recruiting.

For assistant head posts, 9% of primary (20%), 7% of secondary (14%) and 29% of special school vacancies (11%) remained unfilled after an advertisement. This is the third year that the percentage of schools making an appointment in the primary and secondary sectors has improved, but the situation in special schools has clearly deteriorated.

As in recent years, a significant proportion of head teacher vacancies are the result of a retirement (65% of primary, 61% of secondary and 82% of secondary school vacancies). More head teachers are still retiring before the age of 60. However, there were fewer reported retirements than last year at the deputy and assistant head levels.

Primary schools continue to appoint more women than other schools. Women accounted for 70% of headships, 69% of deputy headships and 76% of assistant headships in this sector, compared with only 38% of secondary headships, 46% of secondary deputy headships and 48% of assistant head posts in secondary schools. In the special sector, women took 71% of headships, compared to 44% last year, 77% of deputy positions (63%) and 40% of assistant headship positions (66%).

As in recent years, few post-holders at all leadership grades were identified as being from any ethnic category other than White.

Once again this year, faith schools experienced particular difficulty at all stages of the recruitment process; this is especially true for many Roman Catholic schools, where the appointment rates were lower than any other school type.

As might be expected from the pay scales, starting salaries for head teachers and deputies generally increase with the size of the school and the experience of the newly appointed post holder. This is less true for assistant head posts where in the primary and secondary sectors there is more of a rate for the job than a rate for the size of school.

Most schools receive the majority of their applications and mostly make appointments from what might be described as the school's, travel to work area. Relatively few of those appointed to leadership posts are likely to be required to relocate on appointment.

The Issues

Despite regulation on the supply side requiring **NPOH** before appointment, a significant number of vacancies for headship remain unfilled when advertised. Solving this problem remains the key issue for policymakers. Assuming there is no shortage of qualified candidates, why are appointment panels not accepting the suitability of applicants for headships?

The problem of recruitment, with 19% of secondary, 36% of primary and 39% of special school vacancies going unfilled was despite an upturn in the average number of applications schools reported receiving for a headship vacancy. We know little about the number of applications candidates make, but it seems most are restricted in their search area to their current local authority and those in the immediate vicinity.

Although a typical school will be unlikely to face recruitment issues if the process is handled competently, any school that has distinct characteristics can face additional pressures. This year, Roman Catholic schools faced greater difficulty than other schools recruiting at all levels of leadership. The lessons learnt from this sector may need to be applied to emerging types of school governance lest they face the same set of problems in the

future. Small schools are another group who appear to face above average challenges when seeking a new head teacher.

There is little evidence of rapid promotion to leadership posts. The need for a minimum of ten years service for a headship, coupled with a maximum age beyond which appointment panels do not seem to recruit first-time head teachers poses career dilemmas for late entrants to the profession, especially in the secondary sector where in large subject areas there may be five or even six steps on the ladder from classroom teacher to a headship. For the 28% of newly qualified teachers who entered service in 2011 after their 30th birthday¹, becoming a head teacher will be somewhat of a challenge if current trends persist.

The fact that the percentage of teachers entering in their 20s is on the increase is good news for the longer-term availability of future school leaders. Of more concern is the decline in the number of vacancies for both assistant and deputy head teachers. Without a steady flow of new appointments, candidates for the **NPOH** will have to be drawn from elsewhere. Whether appointment panels will accept **NPOH** candidates without experience at assistant head level for deputy vacancies and deputy head level for headships is a moot point. Certainly, based upon past trends it seems unlikely such candidates will find favour without more awareness raising amongst governing bodies on the part of the National College.

This survey does not track the emerging role of executive head teachers and the effects of federations. The requirements of these and other new forms of governance for a steady flow of school leaders needs to be monitored lest the removal of traditional structures such as local authorities creates new problems of leadership above the level of the individual institution.

Although retirement remains a key reason for vacancies, and that will always be the case for headships, the peak of the bulge may now be past. Nevertheless, other changes such as reform of pensions may produce short-term effects, depending upon the outcome of the present negotiations.

Although there are some encouraging signs in relation to appointments from ethnic minority groups, especially at the lower leadership levels, overall numbers remain very low, and well below the percentage of either pupils or new entrants to the profession. Although women take the majority of posts in the primary sector, they are still under-represented in appointments to senior posts compared with their overall percentage of the profession, mostly markedly in the secondary sector where an oft observed „glass ceiling“ at around 40% of appointments still seems to be firmly in place.

Schools face a period of adjustment over the next few years as rolls continue to fall in the secondary sector, but rise in the primary sector. New forms of funding and inevitable curriculum changes will also put pressure on school leaders during a period of financial restraint characterised by the current pay freeze. Whether leadership salaries will be subject to the same freeze or succumb to the effects of market pressures if insufficient numbers of acceptable candidates emerge will be a key issue for the next twelve months.

Conclusion - Headteachers

This year, responses were received from 550 primary schools, 86 secondary schools and 47 special schools, representing rate of return of 25% in the primary sector, 21% in the secondary sector and 27% in the special sector. Responses were received from across England and Wales, and from various types of faith and non-faith schools, although we will await more responses from academies next year. Overall, the percentage of vacancies that arose this year as a result of retirement remained roughly the same as last year, except in special schools, where there was a notable increase in the number of early retirements unrelated to health reasons. Moreover, although the majority of those appointed were formerly deputy head teachers, substantive heads changing schools still accounted for a significant proportion of new head teacher appointments in the primary sector. Succession planning will remain a problem in this sector if head teachers remain older and schools face a shortage of suitable candidates from deputy and assistant headships. Indeed, of all schools placing first-time advertisements for headship posts, 33% of primary schools, 23% of secondary and 41% of special schools were unable to make an appointment, and considerable numbers reported having advertised their post before. Most

schools that failed to appoint blame a lack of quality among applicants, despite receiving the same or higher numbers of applications, and chose to re-advertise the position either immediately or at a later date. This represents a considerable waste of public resources in schools at a time when their budgets are being severely curtailed. It also suggests that the NPOH, far from solving the problems of head teacher recruitment, may actually be hindering the process, as some schools have commented. Women still account for 70% of appointments in primary schools, but only 38% of those in secondary schools, and are less likely to be appointed in larger schools in these sectors. Very few candidates of an ethnic minority were appointed this year. While generally attracting greater interest, headship vacancies still remain unfilled at the same rates as last year. The considerable proportion of existing head teachers over the age of 50 and the reduction of opportunities to progress up the Leadership Scale following the decline of advertised deputy and assistant headships may result in greater difficulty in the future if effective measures are not taken now to ensure the supply of suitably qualified applicants. This is a particularly pressing issue in the primary and special sectors, and raises doubts about the success of the NPOH requirement for head teachers.