

# Women secondary head teachers in England: Where are they now?

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## Abstract

The underrepresentation of women in secondary school headship in England and elsewhere is an early and longstanding theme in the women and gender in educational leadership literature. The purpose of this article is to report findings from a statistical survey of secondary school head teachers across England. Data available in the public domain on school websites have been collated during a single academic year to present a new picture of where women lead secondary schools in England. Mapping the distribution of women by local authority continues to show considerable unevenness across the country. This article argues that a geographical perspective still has value. It might influence the mobilization of resources to targeted areas and ultimately result in women's proportionate representation in school leadership. Alongside this is a need for schools and academy trusts to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

## Keywords

educational leadership, gender, women head teachers

## Introduction

The distribution of women secondary head teachers (many now known as principals) by local authority in England has been documented on at least three previous occasions (Edwards and Lyons, 1994; Fuller, 2009, 2013). This article updates knowledge about the distribution of women secondary school head teachers across England for the academic year 2015–16. Its identification of regional variation aims to enhance the understanding of teaching professionals, researchers and policy-makers who are interested in improving women's access to headship. In 2015, women constituted 64 per cent of classroom teachers but only 40 per cent of head teachers (Department for Education [DfE], 2016c). This article uses two new sets of data from 2001 and 2015–16 to answer the following questions: (i) where are women leading state secondary schools in England? and (ii) how has their distribution by local authority changed over the course of 15 years?

At the time of writing, the Conservative government (elected in 2015) has rescinded its plans to make all schools academies by 2020 (DfE, 2016a). Nevertheless, the intention remains that schools seen to be failing or not improving sufficiently will be forced to convert to academies (Richardson, 2016). Such schools are no longer under local authority control. These major structural changes necessarily impact on the roles and responsibilities of local authorities in the education of children and young people and the employment of staff. Each academy and free school is responsible for fulfilling the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as education providers and employers.

The change in the role of the local authority might suggest that an analysis of women head teacher/principals'

distribution by local authority will become increasingly obsolete. However, this article argues that an analysis of data by local authority at this time: (i) enables a comparison of data over time; and (ii) usefully delineates geographical units that remain familiar to teaching professionals, researchers and policy-makers. For the first time, data have also been collated using regions determined by the regional schools commissioners (RSCs) (DfE, 2016b). It is concluded that whilst schools have long worked in partnerships and networks, these and other arrangements are increasingly formalized as chains of sponsored academies, multi-academy trusts or teaching school alliances. In the future, analysis by arrangements such as these might become increasingly useful. Indeed, the workforce census presented data by local authority maintained schools and academies to show there were slightly fewer women head teachers in secondary academies (36.4%) than in local authority maintained secondary schools (38.5%) (DfE, 2015).

Having provided a brief overview of the policy context here, the article goes on to outline existing research in women and gender in educational leadership in relation to the United Kingdom (UK) Equality Act (2010). There follows a description of how the survey was conducted. The findings are presented as a series of tables as Appendix 1 (Tables 1–7) using a variety of geographical lenses. Here, the findings are discussed in the light of the literature and

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the requirements of the Equality Act (2010). Conclusions are drawn to advocate a regional approach for investment in equality and diversity education by policy-makers and activist professionals. Implications for further research are also identified.

### Women in secondary school headship and the Equality Act (2010)

Shakeshaft (1987) identified six stages leading to a paradigmatic shift in the research on women and gender in educational leadership, management and administration. These include the '1) absence of women documented; 2) search for women who have been or are administrators; 3) women as disadvantaged or subordinate; 4) women studied on their own terms; 5) women as challenge to theory; and 6) transformation of theory' (Shakeshaft, 1987: 13).

The research reported here is located in the first stage as documentation of the presence of women. It contextualizes research in England that has also focused on documenting women's experiences of becoming and being head teachers (Coleman, 2002), studying women on their own terms (Fuller, 2013), women head teachers' challenge to gendered leadership theory (Fuller, 2014a, 2015), and the transformation of leadership theory by feminist scholars such as Ozga (1993) and Adler et al. (1993), who have been credited, along with Blackmore (1989), for their contribution to critical leadership studies (Grace, 2000). More recently, Helen Gunter, along with Pat Thomson and Tanya Fitzgerald, has ensured that gender shapes leadership knowledge production by focusing on identity construction (gender alongside age, disability, race and sexuality, for example); issues of social injustice (power struggles, division of labour and career paths); women's adoption of male/masculine/masculinist and/or 'normative' leadership; and gender and leadership as a continuing research agenda (see Fuller, 2014b).

In England, there is a resurgence of interest in the fact that despite girls' routine academic outperformance of boys at ages 5 years, 16 years and at degree level throughout Britain, the gender pay gap persists for women (Equality and Human Rights Commission [EHRC], 2009). Women still experience the difficulties and stress of sex discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace. They are less likely to hold leadership and management positions than men.

This applies to secondary schools, where there is a gap between the proportion of women in the teaching workforce and the proportion of women head teachers/principals leading schools in England (Fuller, 2013). Indeed, there remains a concern for the unequal opportunities for women in secondary school educational leadership in English schools (McNamara et al., 2010). This concern with women's underrepresentation in headship resonates with second wave feminist theory of equality, which sought women's equality with men in the workplace, and feminist theory of difference, which identified that women's socio-cultural roles necessitated different approaches to career advancement (see Scott, 1988). In the twenty-first century,

women's underrepresentation in headship is a matter of social injustice, with women's lack of parity of participation resulting in lack of recognition for their capacity for leadership and from lack of resources with which to achieve it (Blackmore, 2013; Fraser, 2007). Indeed, the barriers to women achieving headship have been seen as a complex range of interacting factors of: (i) socialization and stereotyping; (ii) internal barriers; and (iii) macro (societal), meso (organizational) and micro (personal) level culture and tradition factors (Cubillo and Brown, 2003).

In the UK, the Equality Act (2010) brought together the Race Relations Acts (1965, 1976), the Equal Pay Act (1970), the Sex Discrimination Act (1975), the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) and the Employment Equalities Regulations (Sexual Orientation – 2003; Religion or Belief – 2003; Age – 2006). It identifies nine characteristics for protection against discrimination as: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is responsible for monitoring the PSED that from 2012 requires all schools to have 'due regard' to the impact of policy- and decision-making on those with any of the nine protected characteristics. They have a duty to:

1. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimization and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
2. advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
3. foster good relations across all protected characteristics – between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it (EHRC, 2012a: 4).

As education providers, schools are expected to 'remove or minimise disadvantages', 'take steps to meet different needs' and to 'encourage participation when it is disproportionately low' (EHRC, 2012a: 4). They must publish information to show compliance with the equality duty and prepare and publish equality objectives. As employers, almost 70 per cent of the 383 randomly selected secondary schools were found to have no published objectives relating to the specific equality duties (EHRC, 2012b: 7). 41.6 per cent of secondary schools had published objectives that related to the three-fold general duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations (EHRC, 2012b: 10). With respect to the specific protected characteristics, the percentage of secondary schools that published objectives (not including objectives that cover 'all protected characteristics') were: age (5.6%), disability (58.4%), sex (53.9%), gender reassignment (6.7%), marriage and civil partnership (0.0%), pregnancy and maternity (3.4%), race (46.1%), religion or belief (19.1%) and sexual orientation (22.5%) (EHRC, 2012b: 14).

Here it can be seen that these schools have not demonstrably referred to characteristics that disproportionately affect women, such as pregnancy and maternity. The

emphasis by secondary schools was on education but not on employment (EHRC, 2012b). The percentage of secondary schools that published objectives relating to employment was: applications and appointments (26.0%), pay gap (2.0%), promotions or representation in senior roles (4.0%), discrimination, harassment, bullying or grievances (4.0%), sickness absence or staff leaving (0.0%), job satisfaction (2.0%), training (54.0%), and other (44.0%) (EHRC, 2012b: 17). Clearly, these issues apply to all the protected characteristics, but research shows that some of them have been cited by women head teachers as barriers to their advancement to secondary school headship which had to be overcome (Coleman, 2002). In recent research in six English local authorities, senior leadership team members (women and men) reported discriminatory attitudes from a range of people such as governors, senior leadership team colleagues, teaching colleagues, pupils and parents (Fuller et al., 2015). So, too, there was evidence of discrimination reported at the intersection of sex and a variety of other protected characteristics.

Showunmi et al. (2016: 927) have shown that only a few white women recognized ‘the privilege of white ethnicity in leadership positions’. Black and Global Majority women are underrepresented in the population of women head teachers in secondary schools (1.8%) compared with: the proportion of BGM women in secondary school teaching (9.9% of women classroom teachers) (DfE, 2016); the 14 per cent of BGM/BME of the population as a whole (Office of National Statistics, 2012); and the 23.2 per cent of minority ethnic secondary school children (DfE, 2012). The women who achieve secondary headship are white women.

## The research

The research described below raises epistemological challenges with respect to an essentialist gendered construction of leaders. Indeed, a critical and poststructural feminist approach would be more concerned with the deconstruction of gendered power relations and the reconstruction of leadership as multidimensional and multidirectional (Blackmore, 1989, 2013). Nuanced perspectives are possible using qualitative research methods (see Fuller, 2014a, 2015). Nevertheless, this research provides a context for such research and has enabled recognition, for example, that the majority of chief executive officers of the large chains of academies are men, whilst women appeared relatively well-represented in site-based leadership (Fuller, 2016). It enables further questions to be asked about the location of power and decision-making in these new structures. There follows a description of the survey as it was carried out.

This was a survey of state-funded mainstream secondary schools serving children who take public examinations at the age of 16 years. Its purpose was to map the distribution of women in secondary school headship. It follows existing research into women’s underrepresentation by focusing on English local authorities as the unit of analysis (see Edwards and Lyons, 1994; Fuller, 2009, 2013), thus enabling a comparison over time.

Earlier research (Fuller, 2009) collated data from *The Education Authorities Directory* (2005) as a list of schools published annually. By 2010, data were available online at the [schoolswebdirectory.co.uk](http://schoolswebdirectory.co.uk).<sup>1</sup> A combination of this and local authority website data was used to map women’s distribution in secondary school headship in the UK in 2010 (Fuller, 2013).

During the academic year, 2015–16, data for this study were collated by combining a list of schools by local authority from [schoolswebdirectory.co.uk](http://schoolswebdirectory.co.uk),<sup>1</sup> lists published online by local authorities and data collated from individual school websites. School websites were likely to be more accurate than either of the published lists. A number of stages ensured findings could be compared with research carried out for 2001 (using *The Education Authorities Directory* 2001, 2005 and 2010):

1. independent schools, sixth form colleges and middle schools were removed from the list taken from [schoolswebdirectory.co.uk](http://schoolswebdirectory.co.uk);<sup>1</sup>
2. the remaining list was compared with the local authority list to ensure that alternative provision, pupil referral units and special schools were removed;
3. academies (sponsored and converter), free schools, studio schools, university technical colleges and through schools were included (some had replaced schools included in earlier research; some were new schools);
4. school websites were analysed to ascertain the head teacher’s sex as it was presented by the incumbent and constructed by the researcher.

In England, titles are commonly used to indicate a person’s sex. In this survey, the titles ‘Mr’ and ‘Sir’ were used to identify men; ‘Mrs’, ‘Ms’, ‘Miss’, ‘Dame’ and ‘Lady’ were used to identify women. Neutral titles, such as Dr and Reverend, and the use of initials prompted the search for additional material as photographs or media reports in order to construct head teachers’ sex as it was presented in traditional ways in English culture. Thus, the sex of head teachers/principals was constructed from website welcome messages, photographs, lists of senior or strategic leadership teams, minutes of governing body meetings and letters home to families. Descriptive statistics have been used to present the findings in a univariate analysis with biological sex as the single variable.

A benefit of researching websites was to find examples of co-leadership and temporary arrangements not shown in data held by the DfE or local authority. In 24 schools there was evidence of co-headship/principalship. In 12 schools a woman and a man shared the role; in six schools there were two women, and in five schools two men. In one school there were three co-principals: one woman and two men. All were counted with the proportion of women calculated in relation to the number of schools rather than the number of head teachers. There were 81 schools with acting or interim head teachers/principals: 40 women and 41 men. All were counted. One website showed the head teacher

was on maternity leave, her headship being covered by a man as acting head teacher; in this case both were counted.

The range of roles and nomenclature of school leaders reflects changing structures in the English school system. It is common to find joint welcome messages by an executive head teacher/principal and head teacher/principal. In some cases, it is impossible to ascertain how far the role is a site-based leadership role. The person whose name was most prominent was counted as the head teacher/principal. In the case of chains of academies, a photograph of the chief executive might appear on every school website. Where possible, the site-based leader was sought and counted. This difficulty in deciding who the head teacher/principal of a school is might account for some differences between these findings and findings that appear to show a dramatically fluctuating proportion of women in some authorities that used a different method (telephone survey) to identify the sex of the head teacher (Fuller et al., 2015). It raises methodological questions for future research.

### **The distribution of women secondary school head teachers by local authority**

The proportion of women leading state secondary schools included in the survey in each local authority is given in Tables 1–7 in Appendix 1. The data are presented as Table 1 – the London boroughs (LB), greater metropolitan districts (GMD) and non-metropolitan districts (N-MD); Table 2 – local authorities with 50 or more secondary schools; Tables 3a–b – local authorities where the proportion of women is particularly high or low; Tables 4a–4d – significant changes over time (2001, 2005, 2010 and 2015–16); Table 5 – the English regions determined by the responsibilities of the RSCs (*Times Educational Supplement*, 2016); Table 6 – chains of academies with ten or more secondary schools; and Table 7 – a complete list of local authorities.

In earlier research, data about the distribution of women head teachers in state secondary schools have been presented as a series of tables to show every local authority (Fuller, 2009, 2013). For ease of reading here, the tables of data are provided for reference as Appendix 1. The findings are reported below as outlined above.

#### ***The London boroughs, metropolitan districts and non-metropolitan districts (Table 1)***

Analysis of the proportion of women leading state secondary schools in the London boroughs (LB), greater metropolitan districts (GMD) and non-metropolitan districts (N-MD) shows that the highest proportion are in South Yorkshire (47.1%), followed by the London boroughs (42.9%). The lowest proportions are in Merseyside (33.7%) and the N-MDs (36.1%). The degree of variance in each of the groups shows that some local authorities where women are well represented are geographically close to those where they are not – for example, Sandwell (16.7%) and Coventry (56.5%) in the West Midlands. This replicates findings elsewhere (Fuller, 2009, 2013; Fuller et al., 2015).

Within seven miles (the distance between Kensington & Chelsea (LB) and Richmond-upon-Thames (LB)), one authority has no women secondary head teachers at all (0/6 schools) and one has 70 per cent of schools led by women (7/10 schools). Each of these authorities is too small to make generalizations, so it is more useful to compare larger authorities consisting of fifty or more schools. The size of these authorities is comparable to the smaller greater metropolitan districts, Merseyside, South Yorkshire, and Tyne and Wear.

#### ***Large local authorities (Table 2)***

Whilst none of the larger local authorities (with 50 or more secondary schools) is comparable in size with the combined local authorities that comprise the London boroughs, or the West Midlands, Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire greater metropolitan districts, it is interesting to note the relatively high proportion of women leading schools in Kent (51.0%), Surrey (45.5%) and Birmingham (46.9%). In the past, the 'ILEA [Inner London Education Authority] factor' (Edwards and Lyons, 1994: 8) has accounted for higher proportions of women in and around London (Fuller, 2009). The ILEA was known for its radical anti-sexist education policy that aimed to 'free both sexes of the restrictive stereotypes which undervalue and undermine girls and women, and which convince boys and men that their superiority is "natural"' (ILEA, 1985: 3 cited in Arends and Volman, 1995: 119–120). Whilst London and Birmingham have been picked out as having relatively more women head teachers, it 'does not appear to be a distinctly urban phenomenon but does seem to be regionally biased' (Coleman, 2005: 9). The proximity of Kent and Surrey to London would suggest that this remains the case, though it appears not to be the case for Essex. Analysis of the former ILEA London boroughs reveals that the proportion of women head teachers was 46.3 per cent – marginally higher than in the London boroughs overall (but this was a decrease over time – see below).

#### ***Exceptional local authorities (Tables 3a and 3b)***

Exceptional local authorities are identified as those where the proportion of women is particularly high or low.

Women are not a minority. A social justice argument suggests women should be represented in headship in the same proportion as their representation in society and/or in the secondary school teaching workforce (64%). Just seven authorities had a proportion of women secondary head teachers that matches the proportion of women secondary teachers nationally: Thurrock in the East of England (70.0%); London boroughs Richmond-Upon-Thames (70.0%) and Merton (62.5%); Bristol in South-West England (68.2%); Bracknell Forest (66.7%) and Wokingham in South Central England (66.7%); and Darlington in the North of England (62.5%). The list of authorities with 50 per cent or higher proportions of women includes eight London boroughs and eight authorities from the greater metropolitan districts. However, there are high proportions

of women head teachers in local authorities that cross the country from the north-east and north-west, through the Midlands to London and the south-east and south-west.

Nine local authorities with exceptionally low proportions of women secondary head teachers were defined as those with 20 per cent or fewer – considerably lower than the 38 per cent of head teachers found in England overall. They include: London boroughs Kensington & Chelsea (0.0%) and Barking & Dagenham (18.2%); Herefordshire (12.5%) and Sandwell (16.7%) in the West Midlands; Bath & North East Somerset (15.4%) and North Somerset (18.2%) in South-West England; Bury (15.4%) in Greater Manchester; Knowsley (16.7%) in Merseyside; and Bedfordshire (18.8%) in South Central England. These authorities cross the country from the north-west, through the Midlands to London and the south-west. None is in the north-east or the south-east regions of England. Again, authorities with particularly low proportions of women are situated adjacent to authorities with particularly high proportions, as in Bath & North East Somerset (15.4%) and Bristol (68.2%).

### *Changes over time (Tables 4a to 4d)*

Between 2001 and 2015 the overall proportion of women secondary head teachers in England increased by 13 per cent from 25 to 38 per cent. Whilst the proportion of women in the London boroughs has not appeared to shift, an analysis of the 12 former ILEA London boroughs shows a decrease between 2001 and 2015 of 6 per cent. There are considerable changes in the greater metropolitan districts between 2001 and 2015. Of particular note are the following increases: in West Yorkshire between 2001 and 2005 of 17.1 per cent; South Yorkshire with two increases, 8.5 per cent between 2001 and 2005 and a further 10.6 per cent between 2010 and 2015 to make 21.8 per cent overall; and Greater Manchester, where the proportion of women has doubled in 15 years.

A simple comparison between 2001 and 2015 masks subtle changes. A more fine-grained analysis shows increases and decreases of 20 per cent or more occurring between 2001 and 2015 in some local authorities and large fluctuations during that period. For example, there was a marked decrease of 61.1 per cent in Knowsley between 2010 and 2015, and a 50 per cent increase in Bracknell Forest that masks decreases in the previous two five-year periods. Each of these local authorities is too small to make claims of statistical significance.

### *The English regions (Table 5)*

For the purpose of this analysis the English regions have been determined by the current responsibilities of the RSCs. Ten RSCs have a specific remit for the further academization of schools (Durbin et al., 2015). Their geographical areas of responsibility make up the following regions: South-East England and South London; South Central England and NW London; East of England and NE London; Lancashire and West Yorkshire; East

Midlands and the Humber; South-West England (includes Isles of Scilly); West Midlands; and North of England. The composition of each region by local authority was provided by the Department for Education (2016b). The regions incorporate the greater metropolitan districts, non-metropolitan districts and London boroughs.

Women are represented in higher proportions in secondary headship in South-East England and South London (44.5%) than elsewhere, and particularly compared to the North of England (33.6%). However, as already demonstrated, there is considerable variation within each region. In Newcastle-upon-Tyne, in the North of England, 50 per cent of schools were led by women. The degree of variance between local authorities within the regions is high in every case, the highest being South Central England and NW London, with a degree of variance of 66.7 per cent between Kensington & Chelsea (0.0%) and Bracknell Forest (66.7%). This provides an indication of the variation in the representation of women in some authorities within regions.

There follows a discussion of the implications of this update of knowledge for teaching professionals, researchers and policy-makers.

## **Implications**

It is hoped that these data will be useful to teaching professionals, researchers and policy-makers alike. Using the local authority as the unit of analysis has enabled comparison over time that shows the rate of increase is painfully slow at less than 1 per cent per annum. At this rate women's representation in headship will not match their representation in the teaching workforce before 2040. Mapping the distribution of women secondary school head teachers/principals across England using a number of different groupings and making a range of comparisons shows just how patchy it remains. The juxtaposition of local authorities with high proportions of women and those with low proportions remains in place.

Recommendation has been made to women aspiring to headship that they should 'Consider location: London and the metropolitan areas are statistically favourable' (Coleman, 2002: 48). This is certainly not the case for many London boroughs, and the greater metropolitan district authorities are not uniformly favourable. It might be more useful for women (and men) aspiring to headship to look carefully at the degree of diversity in school governing bodies, academy trust boards and in senior leadership teams before deciding where to apply for headship.

Women's disproportionate responsibility for childcare and domestic arrangements, and direct and indirect discrimination during the selection process and among workplace peers has been well-documented (Coleman, 2002; Fuller, 2009; Fuller et al., 2015; Ozga, 1993). It is vital that governing bodies, academy trust boards and head teachers ensure that objectives are set with respect to their responsibility as employers – not just as educators – in compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Activist teaching professionals are already engaged in work led by trade unions, professional associations and charitable trusts that focuses specifically on women in the teaching profession (ASCL, 2016; ATL, 2016; NAHT, 2016; NASUWT, 2016; NUT, 2016; The Future Leaders Trust, 2016). A social media based group #WomenEd, launched in 2015, already has regional networks developing across the UK that serve women leading in education across all sectors and phases (#WomenEd, 2015). In London, the Leading Women Alliance, led by ASCL, was launched in January 2016; in Nottingham, an Economic and Social Research Council funded initiative 'Women Secondary Headteachers: Pass it on' was launched in July 2016 (University of Nottingham, 2016). These initiatives focus on making connections between teaching professionals, researchers and policy-makers for the development of women's leadership in education.

This research has focused on women who are, in the main, white. The impact of additive and intersecting combinations of protected characteristics that result in dual/multiple discriminations are yet to be charted, though Showunmi et al.'s (2016: 917) use of an intersectional framework demonstrates 'that socio-demographic identities should be considered simultaneously in order to challenge universalist, gender and ethnic neutral assumptions of leadership'. It is vital that future research should focus on the experiences of Black and Global Majority women to follow up the existing small body of empirical research carried out in England (Campbell-Stephens, 2009; Coleman and Campbell Stephens, 2010; Johnson and Campbell-Stephens, 2010, 2013; Moorosi et al., 2016; Ogunbawo, 2012; Showunmi et al., 2016).

Local authorities are used by the Department for Education to identify the regions led by the RSCs. However, future research might be carried out to identify the distribution of women head teachers in other arrangements of schools such as multi-academy trusts, teaching school alliances or chains of sponsored academies. As an alternative to the geographical analyses above, 12 large chains of academies, with ten or more secondary schools, were selected to find out women's distribution in secondary headship in these chains (Kemnal Academy Trust (73.3% of secondary schools led by women), Northern Education Trust (70.0%), Ark Schools (55.6%), Harris Federation (50.0%), Oasis Community Learning (50.0%), Academies Enterprise Trust (48.3%), School Partnership Trust Academies (46.7%), Ormiston Academies Trust (46.4%), E-Act (41.7%), United Learning (41.7%), Academy Transformation Trust (40.0%) and Outwood Grange Academies Trust (35.7%) – see Table 6). All but one has higher proportions of women than in the country overall. However, women are under-represented at chief executive level, with only two of these chains led by women. There is a need for further research into the representation of women at executive head teacher/principal level as schools increasingly combine to form multi-academy trusts and chains of academies; and for research into site-based leadership within such organizations that asks: What is the reality of leading schools as part of a large chain of academies or in a multi-academy trust?

There is a need for further more precisely focused qualitative research into questions such as:

1. What has happened to promote equality and diversity issues in London boroughs since the abolition of the ILEA in 1990?
2. What happened in Knowsley schools in the past five years?
3. What made Bristol schools more attractive to women? Or what made women more attractive as head teachers in Bristol schools? Is there any relationship with the apparent decline in Bath & North East Somerset?
4. What is the reality of taking maternity leave whilst you are a head teacher?
5. What is the reality of co-headship?
6. What does the distribution of women secondary school head teachers look like in Teaching School Alliances? (Fuller, 2016).

With respect to policy-making, investment is needed in women's leadership development in some geographical areas more than in others. Such investment might take the form of further funding for equality and diversity education for all, i.e. pupils, staff, school leaders, governing body and academy trust board members. The DfE (2016a: 49) has devoted a section of the education white paper to 'Increasing diversity in leadership'. Recognized as a matter of identifying school leadership talent and succession planning, policy-makers state,

So we need to do more to release the full potential of our diverse leadership talent pool, including groups under-represented in leadership (like women, people from black and minority ethnic [BME] backgrounds, and lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender [LGBT] teachers). (DfE, 2016a: 49)

A commitment to 'support schools to develop a strong and diverse pipeline of great school and system leaders, funding activity aimed at groups who are under-represented in leadership positions, like women and LGBT candidates and those from a BME background' (DfE, 2016a: 49) has been followed up with funding for 'Women Leading in Education: regional networks', a 'pledge to coach women teachers in schools' and further 'Leadership Equality and Diversity Fund: for school-led programmes' (NCTL, 2016). Whilst these initiatives look and sound positive, in themselves they are not enough. More opportunities are needed for activist teaching professionals, researchers and policy-makers to work together, and for such work to become embedded in state education policy and school culture.

A starting point for school leaders would be to implement the PSED (2012), for activist professionals to challenge, and researchers to monitor the enactment of existing national policy and published organizational equality objectives.

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## Note

1 Available at: <http://www.schoolswebdirectory.co.uk/> (accessed September 2015 to March 2016).

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### Author biography

**Kay Fuller** is associate professor of Educational Leadership and Management in the School of Education, at the University of Nottingham, UK. She is a member of the Centre for Research in Educational Leadership and Management. Kay is a former teacher, head of English, deputy head teacher, school governor and initial teacher educator. She has worked in five mixed comprehensive schools in three local authorities. Kay currently leads the MA in Educational Leadership and Management. Her main research interests are in women and gender in educational leadership, which also includes women's and men's constructions of identity among school populations, and in the use of feminist theories including intersectionality theory. One of Kay's most recent publications is: *Gender and Leadership in Education: Women Achieving against the Odds*, an edited collection of writing that celebrates the research career of Marianne Coleman (Fuller and Harford, 2016, Peter Lang). Kay is an elected member of BELMAS Council.





## Appendix I

**Table 1.** Women secondary school head teachers by groups of local authorities (LA) as London boroughs (LB), greater metropolitan districts (GMD) and non-metropolitan districts (N-MD)

Groups of local authorities	Number of secondary schools surveyed (2015–6)	% of women secondary school head teachers (2015–6)	Degree of variance – LA with the lowest proportion	LA with the highest proportion
London boroughs	485	42.9	Kensington & Chelsea – 0%	Richmond-Upon-Thames – 70%
Greater Manchester (GMD)	167	37.1	Bury – 15.4%	Salford – 60%
Merseyside (GMD)	86	33.7	Knowsley – 16.7%	Liverpool – 45.2%
South Yorkshire (GMD)	70	47.1	Rotherham – 31.3%	Barnsley – 60%
Tyne and Wear (GMD)	61	37.7	Gateshead – 30%	Newcastle-upon-Tyne – 50%
West Midlands (GMD)	195	41.5	Sandwell – 16.7%	Coventry – 56.5%
West Yorkshire (GMD)	131	42.7	Calderdale – 30.8%	Kirklees – 53.8%
Total greater metropolitan districts	710	40.0		
Non-metropolitan districts	2071	36.1	Herefordshire – 12.5%	Thurrock – 70%
England	3266	38.0		

**Table 2.** Women secondary school head teachers in local authorities with 50 schools or more ordered by proportion (descending)

Local authority	Number of secondary schools surveyed (2015–6)	% of women head teachers
Kent	104	51.0
Birmingham	81	46.9
Surrey	55	45.5
Essex	78	37.2
Leicestershire	50	34.0
Hertfordshire	81	32.1
Norfolk	54	31.5
Lancashire	86	31.4
Lincolnshire	54	29.6

**Table 3a.** Women secondary school head teachers in local authorities with 50 per cent or more women head teachers ordered by proportion (descending)

Local authority	Greater metropolitan district or region	Number of secondary schools surveyed (2015–6)	% of women head teachers
Thurrock	East of England (R)	10	70.0
Richmond-Upon-Thames	London borough	10	70.0
Bristol	South-West England (R)	22	68.2
Bracknell Forest	South Central England (R)	6	66.7
Wokingham	South Central England (R)	9	66.7
Darlington	North of England (R)	8	62.5
Merton	London borough	8	62.5
Barnsley	South Yorkshire (GMD)	10	60.0
Camden	London borough	10	60.0
Hackney	London borough	15	60.0
Islington	London borough	10	60.0
Portsmouth	South-East England (R)	10	60.0
Reading	South Central England (R)	10	60.0
Salford	Greater Manchester (GMD)	15	60.0
Waltham Forest	London borough	17	58.8
Coventry	West Midlands (GMD)	23	56.5
Doncaster	South Yorkshire (GMD)	18	55.6
Kirklees	West Yorkshire (GMD)	26	53.8
Plymouth	South-West England (R)	19	52.6
Southwark	London borough	19	52.6
Kent	South-East England	104	51.0

(continued)

**Table 3a.** (continued)

Local authority	Greater metropolitan district or region	Number of secondary schools surveyed (2015–6)	% of women head teachers
Greenwich	London borough	14	50.0
Lewisham	London borough	16	50.0
Medway Towns	South-East England (R)	18	50.0
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne	Tyne and Wear (GMD)	12	50.0
North East Lincolnshire	East Midlands and the Humber (R)	10	50.0
North Lincolnshire	East Midlands and the Humber (R)	14	50.0
Poole	South-West England (R)	8	50.0
Rutland	East Midlands and the Humber (R)	4	50.0
Solihull	West Midlands (GMD)	14	50.0
Swindon	South-West England (R)	12	50.0
Trafford	Greater Manchester (GMD)	18	50.0
Wakefield	West Yorkshire (GMD)	18	50.0

**Table 3b.** Women secondary school head teachers in local authorities with 20 per cent or fewer women head teachers ordered by proportion (ascending)

Local authority	Greater metropolitan district or region	Number of secondary schools surveyed (2015–6)	% of women head teachers
Kensington & Chelsea	London borough	6	0.0
Herefordshire	West Midlands (R)	16	12.5
Bath & North East Somerset	South-West England (R)	13	15.4
Bury	Greater Manchester (GMD)	13	15.4
Knowsley	Merseyside (GMD)	6	16.7
Sandwell	West Midlands (GMD)	18	16.7
Barking & Dagenham	London borough	11	18.2
North Somerset	South-West England (R)	11	18.2
Bedfordshire	South Central England (R)	16	18.8

**Table 4a.** Changes to the distribution of women secondary school head teachers in groupings of local authorities over time

Groups of local authorities	% of women secondary head teachers – 2001				
	(The Education Authorities Directory (2001))	% of women secondary head teachers – 2005 (Fuller, 2009)	% of women secondary head teachers – 2010 (Fuller, 2013)	% of women secondary head teachers – 2015–16	% difference 2001 to 2015–16
London boroughs	41.1	41.1	43.1	42.9	1.8
Greater Manchester	18.8	24.2	34.1	37.1	18.3
Merseyside	26.5	30.6	38.7	33.7	7.3
South Yorkshire	25.3	33.8	36.5	47.1	21.8
Tyne and Wear	22.6	21	29.9	37.7	15.1
West Midlands	27.9	33.9	36.2	41.5	13.6
West Yorkshire	15.2	32.3	36.2	42.7	27.5
Total GMDs	22.7	29.8	35.5	40.0	17.3
Non-metropolitan districts	22.7	28.9	34.0	36.1	13.4
England	25.0	30.1	35.5	38.0	13.0

**Table 4b.** Increases in the distribution of women secondary school head teachers in local authorities over time ordered by proportion (descending)

Local authority	Greater metropolitan district or region	% of women secondary teachers – 2001 (The Education Authorities Directory (2001))	% of women secondary head teachers – 2005 (Fuller, 2009)	% of women secondary head teachers – 2010 (Fuller, 2013)	% of women secondary head teachers – 2015–16	% difference 2001 to 2015–16
Wokingham	South Central England (R)	11.1	33.3	33.3	66.7	55.6
Coventry	West Midlands (GMD)	5.3	31.6	42.1	56.5	51.3
Rutland	East Midlands and the Humber (R)	0.0	0	33.3	50.0	50.0
Thurrock	East of England (R)	20.0	30	30	70.0	50.0
Bristol	South-West England (R)	19.0	33.3	55.6	68.2	49.1
Doncaster	South Yorkshire (GMD)	11.76	5.9	17.6	55.6	43.8
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne	Tyne and Wear (GMD)	8.33	9.1	28.6	50.0	41.7
Hartlepool	North of England (region)	0.0	16.7	16.7	40.0	40.0
Swindon	South-West England (R)	10.0	20	45.5	50.0	40.0
Halton	Lancashire and West Yorkshire (R)	11.1	37.5	37.5	50.0	38.9
Wakefield	West Yorkshire (GMD)	11.1	16.7	22.2	50.0	38.9
Barnsley	South Yorkshire (GMD)	21.43	35.7	35.7	60.0	38.6
Kirklees	West Yorkshire (GMD)	16.0	36	45.2	53.8	37.8
Poole	South-West England (R)	12.5	37.5	55.6	50.0	37.5
Northumberland	North of England (R)	6.7	20	14.3	43.8	37.1
Salford	Greater Manchester (GMD)	23.5	21.4	40	60.0	36.5
Middlesbrough Borough	North of England (R)	8.3	11.1	11.1	44.4	36.1
Richmond-upon-Thames	London borough	37.5	50	62.5	70.0	32.5
Bradford	West Yorkshire (GMD)	12.5	34.5	42.9	44.1	31.6
Darlington	North of England (R)	33.3	14.3	42.9	62.5	29.2
North Lincolnshire	East Midlands and Humber (R)	21.4	35.7	50	50.0	28.6
Liverpool	Merseyside	17.6	21.9	36.7	45.2	27.5
Solihull	West Midlands (GMD)	23.1	46.2	50	50.0	26.9
Reading	South Central England (region)	33.3	42.9	57.1	60.0	26.7
Redcar & Cleveland	North of England (R)	15.4	33.3	36.4	41.7	26.3
South Tyneside	Tyne and Wear (GMD)	18.18	27.3	44.4	44.4	26.3
North East Lincolnshire	East Midlands and the Humber (R)	25.0	41.7	36.4	50.0	25.0
Trafford	Greater Manchester (GMD)	25.0	33.3	36.8	50.0	25.0
Rochdale	Greater Manchester (GMD)	21.4	28.6	30.8	46.2	24.7
East Sussex	South-East England (R)	19.2	37	51.9	43.3	24.1
Derby	East Midlands and the Humber (R)	14.3	28.6	21.4	37.5	23.2
Stockton-On-Tees	North of England (R)	7.7	14.3	21.4	30.8	23.1
Northamptonshire	South Central England (R)	20.5	33.3	40.5	42.9	22.3
Kent	South-East England (R)	29.5	34.3	43.4	51.0	21.4
Somerset	South-West England (R)	13.3	20	21.6	34.5	21.1
Wigan	Greater Manchester (GMD)	19.0	25	30	40.0	21.0
Brent	London borough	23.1	38.5	40	43.8	20.7
Oxfordshire	South Central England (R)	20.0	17.6	42.9	40.5	20.5
Suffolk	East of England (R)	18.4	21.1	33.3	38.6	20.2
Brighton & Hove	South-East England (R)	10.0	20	37.5	30.0	20.0

**Table 4c.** Decreases in the distribution of women secondary school head teachers in local authorities over time ordered by proportion (descending)

Local authority	Greater metropolitan district or region	% of women secondary head teachers – 2001 (The Education Authorities Directory (2001))	% of women secondary head teachers – 2005 (Fuller, 2009)	% of women secondary head teachers – 2010 (Fuller, 2013)	% of women secondary head teachers – 2015–16	% difference 2001 to 2015–16
Ealing	London borough	61.5	53.8	46.2	37.5	–24.0
Chelsea & Kensington	London borough	50.0	25	25	0.0	–50.0
Lambeth	London borough	63.6	60	46.2	41.2	–22.5

**Table 4d.** Fluctuations in the distribution of women secondary school head teachers in local authorities over time

Local authority	Greater metropolitan district or region	% Difference 2001 to 2005	% Difference 2005 to 2010	% Difference 2010 to 2015–16	% Difference 2001 to 2015–16
Hackney	London borough	31.9	–37.5	10.0	4.4
Hammersmith and Fulham	London borough	–12.5	25.0	–25.0	–12.5
Haringey	London borough	–21.8	9.1	11.2	–1.5
Hillingdon	London borough	–7.0	32.6	–6.3	19.3
Islington	London borough	–33.4	16.7	10.0	–6.7
Kingston-Upon-Thames	London borough	–10.0	30.0	–14.5	5.5
Merton	London borough	–6.9	0.0	25.0	18.1
Redbridge	London borough	–1.9	–11.8	26.8	13.2
Oldham	Greater Manchester (GMD)	6.6	40.0	–31.9	14.8
Stockport	Greater Manchester (GMD)	7.1	42.9	–41.2	8.8
Knowsley	Merseyside (GMD)	18.2	32.3	–61.1	–10.6
St Helens	Merseyside (GMD)	–15.1	21.8	–17.8	–11.1
Rotherham	South Yorkshire (GMD)	32.8	–12.5	–12.6	7.7
Calderdale	West Yorkshire (GMD)	20.0	2.9	–12.1	10.8
Bath & North East Somerset	South-West England (R)	15.4	7.6	–38.4	–15.4
Blackpool	Lancashire And West Yorkshire (R)	25.0	12.5	–21.4	16.1
Bournemouth	South-West England (R)	20.0	–17.8	5.1	7.3
Bracknell Forest	South Central England (R)	–33.4	–16.6	50.0	0.0
Buckinghamshire	South Central England (R)	18.8	–26.5	3.0	–4.7
Durham	North of England (R)	22.3	11.1	–15.2	18.1
North Somerset	South-West England (R)	20.0	0.0	–1.8	18.2
Peterborough	East of England (R)	–23.1	–7.7	25.0	–5.8
Portsmouth	South-East England (R)	5.6	–10.0	20.0	15.6
Southampton	South-East England (R)	14.3	16.7	–33.4	–2.4
Stoke-On-Trent	West Midlands (R)	23.6	0.0	–14.5	9.0
Windsor and Maidenhead	South Central England (R)	22.3	–28.2	–2.1	–8.1
Worcestershire	West Midlands (R)	–9.5	23.2	–11.4	2.4

**Table 5.** The distribution of women secondary school head teachers by RSC region ordered by proportion

Region	Number of secondary schools surveyed (2015–6)	% of women head teachers	Degree of variance – LA with the lowest proportion	LA with the highest proportion
South-East England and South London	535	44.5	Brighton and Hove – 30% West Sussex – 30%	Richmond upon Thames – 70%
South Central England and NW London	483	39.1	Kensington & Chelsea – 0.0%	Bracknell Forest – 66.7%
East of England and NE London	376	38.6	Barking & Dagenham – 18.2%	Thurrock – 70%
Lancashire and West Yorkshire	509	36.9	Bury – 15.4%	Salford – 60%
East Midlands and the Humber	382	36.4	York – 22.2%	Barnsley – 60%
South-West England (includes Isles of Scilly)	318	35.8	Bristol – 68.2%	Bath & North East Somerset – 15.4%
West Midlands	426	34.7	Herefordshire – 12.5%	Coventry – 56.5%
North of England	238	33.6	Cumbria – 21.6%	Newcastle-upon-Tyne – 50%
Total (one school not included in Table 1)	3267	38.0		

**Table 6.** The distribution of women secondary school head teachers by academy chain ordered by proportion

Name	Number of secondary schools surveyed	Women	% women	Sex of chief executive officer
Kemnal Academy Trust	15	11	73.3	female
Northern Education Trust	10	7	70.0	male
Ark Schools	18	10	55.6	female
Harris Federation	20	10	50.0	male
Oasis Community Learning	20	10	50.0	male
Academies Enterprise Trust	29	14	48.3	male
School Partnership Trust Academies	15	7	46.7	male
Ormiston Academies Trust	28	13	46.4	male
E-Act	12	5	41.7	male
United Learning	24	10	41.7	male
Academy Transformation Trust	10	4	40.0	male
Outwood Grange Academies Trust	14	5	35.7	male

**Table 7.** The distribution of women secondary school head teachers by local authority in 2015 – a complete list

Local authority	Number of schools surveyed (2015–16)	Number of women in 2015	% of women head teachers
<i>London boroughs</i>			
Barking & Dagenham	11	2	18.2
Barnet	25	10	40.0
Bexley	16	6	37.5
Brent	16	7	43.8
Bromley	18	8	44.4
Camden (ILEA)	10	6	60.0
Corporation of London			
Croydon	24	8	33.3
Ealing	16	6	37.5
Enfield	21	10	47.6
Greenwich (ILEA)	14	7	50.0
Hackney (ILEA)	15	9	60.0
Hammersmith and Fulham (ILEA)	12	3	25.0
Haringey	13	5	38.5
Harrow	12	4	33.3
Havering	19	5	26.3
Hillingdon	21	8	38.1
Hounslow	16	6	37.5
Islington (ILEA)	10	6	60.0
Kensington & Chelsea (ILEA)	6	0	0.0
Kingston-Upon-Thames	11	5	45.5
Lambeth (ILEA)	17	7	41.2
Lewisham (ILEA)	16	8	50.0
Merton	8	5	62.5
Newham	19	9	47.4
Redbridge	18	8	44.4
Richmond-Upon-Thames	10	7	70.0
Southwark (ILEA)	19	10	52.6
Sutton	14	5	35.7
Tower Hamlets (ILEA)	19	8	42.1
Waltham Forest	17	10	58.8
Wandsworth (ILEA)	11	5	45.5
Westminster (ILEA)	11	5	45.5
<i>Total London boroughs</i>	485	208	42.9
Former ILEA boroughs	160	74	46.3
<i>Local authority – GMDs</i>			
	No. of schools (2015–16)	No. of women (2015–16)	% of women head teachers
Bolton	18	6	33.3
Bury	13	2	15.4
Manchester	28	12	42.9
Oldham	14	3	21.4

(continued)

**Table 7.** (continued)

Local authority – GMDs	No. of schools (2015–16)	No. of women (2015–16)	% of women head teachers
Rochdale	13	6	46.2
Salford	15	9	60.0
Stockport	13	3	23.1
Tameside	15	4	26.7
Trafford	18	9	50.0
Wigan	20	8	40.0
<i>Total Greater Manchester</i>	<i>167</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>37.1</i>
Knowsley	6	1	16.7
Liverpool	31	14	45.2
Sefton	19	4	21.1
St Helens	9	2	22.2
Wirral	21	8	38.1
<i>Total Merseyside</i>	<i>86</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>33.7</i>
Barnsley	10	6	60.0
Doncaster	18	10	55.6
Rotherham	16	5	31.3
Sheffield	26	12	46.2
<i>Total South Yorkshire</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>47.1</i>
Gateshead	10	3	30.0
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne	12	6	50.0
North Tyneside	12	4	33.3
South Tyneside	9	4	44.4
Sunderland	18	6	33.3
<i>Total Tyne and Wear</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>37.7</i>
Birmingham	81	38	46.9
Coventry	23	13	56.5
Dudley	20	5	25.0
Sandwell	18	3	16.7
Solihull	14	7	50.0
Walsall	19	6	31.6
Wolverhampton	20	9	45.0
<i>Total West Midlands</i>	<i>195</i>	<i>81</i>	<i>41.5</i>
Bradford	34	15	44.1
Calderdale	13	4	30.8
Kirklees	26	14	53.8
Leeds	40	14	35.0
Wakefield	18	9	50.0
<i>Total West Yorkshire</i>	<i>131</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>42.7</i>
<b>Total GMDs</b>	<b>710</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>40.0</b>
Local authority – NMDs	No. of schools (2015–16)	No. of women (2015–16)	% of women head teachers
Bath & North East Somerset	13	2	15.4
Bedfordshire	16	3	18.8
Bedford Borough Council	8	2	25.0
Blackburn with Darwen	10	3	30.0
Blackpool	7	2	28.6
Bournemouth	11	3	27.3
Bracknell Forest	6	4	66.7
Brighton and Hove	10	3	30.0
Bristol	22	15	68.2
Buckinghamshire	37	12	32.4
Cambridgeshire	32	11	34.4
Cheshire East	25	7	28.0
Chester West and Chester Council	19	7	36.8
Cornwall	32	14	43.8
Cumbria	37	8	21.6
Darlington	8	5	62.5
Derby	16	6	37.5
Derbyshire	45	14	31.1
Devon	39	10	25.6
Dorset	22	7	31.8

(continued)

**Table 7.** (continued)

Local authority – NMDs	No. of schools (2015–16)	No. of women (2015–16)	% of women head teachers
Durham	34	9	26.5
East Riding of Yorkshire	18	7	38.9
East Sussex	30	13	43.3
Essex	79	30	38.0
Gloucestershire	41	11	26.8
Halton	8	4	50.0
Hampshire	70	29	41.4
Hartlepool	5	2	40.0
Herefordshire	16	2	12.5
Hertfordshire	81	26	32.1
Isle of Wight	8	3	37.5
Kent	104	53	51.0
Kingston-Upon-Hull	12	5	41.7
Lancashire	86	27	31.4
Leicester	18	8	44.4
Leicestershire	50	17	34.0
Lincolnshire	54	16	29.6
Luton	13	6	46.2
Medway Towns	18	9	50.0
Middlesborough Borough	9	4	44.4
Milton Keynes	13	6	46.2
Norfolk	54	17	31.5
North East Lincolnshire	10	5	50.0
North Lincolnshire	14	7	50.0
North Somerset	11	2	18.2
North Yorkshire	43	13	30.2
Northamptonshire	42	18	42.9
Northumberland	16	7	43.8
Nottingham	16	5	31.3
Nottinghamshire	46	12	26.1
Oxfordshire	37	15	40.5
Peterborough	12	3	25.0
Plymouth	19	10	52.6
Poole	8	4	50.0
Portsmouth	10	6	60.0
Reading	10	6	60.0
Redcar and Cleveland	12	5	41.7
Rutland	4	2	50.0
Shropshire	21	6	28.6
Slough	14	6	42.9
Somerset	29	10	34.5
South Gloucestershire	18	6	33.3
Southampton	12	4	33.3
Southend-On-Sea	14	4	28.6
Staffordshire	56	21	37.5
Stockton-On-Tees	13	4	30.8
Stoke-On-Trent	15	4	26.7
Suffolk	44	17	38.6
Surrey	55	25	45.5
Swindon	12	6	50.0
Telford and Wrekin	13	3	23.1
Thurrock	10	7	70.0
Torbay	9	3	33.3
Warrington	14	5	35.7
Warwickshire	35	8	22.9
West Berkshire	10	4	40.0
West Sussex	40	12	30.0
Wiltshire	31	10	32.3
Windsor and Maidenhead	11	4	36.4
Wokingham	9	6	66.7
Worcestershire	31	9	29.0
York	9	2	22.2
Total non-metropolitan districts	2071	748	36.1
Total England	3266	1240	38.0
Isle of Man	5	3	60.0
Isles of Scilly	1	1	100.0