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Governors'  
Association

# Executive Headteachers: What's in a Name?

**A Full Report of the Findings**

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# 1. Key messages and recommendations for policy and practice

## 1.1 Overall messages

With currently around 620 executive headteachers (EHTs) in the school workforce, working with at least 970 schools, EHTs are a key part of the school leadership landscape. However, the remit and responsibilities of individuals working as EHTs varies in terms of the number of schools they work with, the structures linking those schools (e.g. academy trusts, federations), whether they have substantive headship in any of those schools (or not), and the schools' strategic priorities.

The roles of EHTs are distinctive from traditional headteacher (HT) roles in requiring higher levels of strategic thinking; greater emphasis on coaching, delegating and achieving change through others; and capacity to look outward.

Data on EHTs must be improved, but numbers are clearly increasing (by 240 per cent since 2010). There may be demand for at least 3200 more EHTs by 2022.

## 1.2 Recommendations for national system policy

- The self-improving school system is creating complex governance structures to support itself. Such a system requires an increase in leadership capacity within groups of schools.
- More clarity is needed at a national level around the true scale of the role and the purpose of EHTs in a school-led system.
- The DfE should facilitate a profession-led definition of executive headship with associated skills, competencies, organisational structures and indicative remuneration – allowing for a range of appropriate operating models.
- As a new level of system leadership, executive headship removes leaders from directly operational roles. Workforce planning must account for this, so sufficient numbers of leaders progress upward to fill both traditional HT/Head of School (HoS) roles and EHT positions.
- Guidance should be produced to enable governing boards to consider what role an EHT might play, and whether to appoint one.
- The role and effectiveness of EHTs should be carefully evaluated and kept under review, as this new and expanding leadership role develops.
- National data recording systems need to be developed to more accurately record information about EHTs' current and previous posts, and associated accountability arrangements.
- More research is needed to explore the role of Head of School (HoS) and CEO to further understand how they relate to EHTs.

## 1.3 Recommendations for governing boards

- An EHT is not interchangeable with a HT. Governing boards should review the school(s) leadership structure including pay when introducing additional posts, such as an EHT. They should actively decide whether to add a level of strategic leadership and must consider who will step into the HoS (or similar) role.
- Job descriptions should clearly define the purpose, expected benefits and remit of the EHT role and distinguish these from those of the HoS/HT and, if present, the chief executive officer (CEO). A scheme of delegation should outline the roles and responsibilities of different leadership tiers – for each EHT post.

- An effective HT will not automatically be an effective EHT. Those recruiting an EHT should focus on finding an individual whose perspective, experience and competencies align with their vision.

#### **1.4 Recommendations for developing the workforce**

- More professional development for aspirant and current EHTs is needed. This should include: leadership and change management theory; managing across school phases; managing human resources and finances in a larger business; and building partnerships.
- Collaborative networks should be promoted and developed nationally to support EHTs to share and improve practice.
- Action should be taken to understand and address the reasons why women are under-represented in executive headship as compared with the proportion of women in the headteacher population.
- Those planning progression pathways should consider how aspirant EHTs can acquire a breadth of practical experience and how to attract more women to the role.

## 2. About this research: why do EHTs matter?

Executive headteachers form an increasingly important part of the school leadership landscape. In the self-improving system they can provide strategic capacity and oversight across more than one school or equivalent responsibility. Analysis of the School Workforce Census (SWC) and Edubase shows there are over 620 EHTs working with at least 970 schools in England. This study explores the nature and prevalence of the EHT role in practice, in order to inform policy and practice implications for leadership development, for those appointing to the role, and for the wider school landscape agenda.

### 2.1 What is an EHT?

The post of EHT is used in the School Workforce Census (SWC) 2015 to denote a HT who 'directly leads two or more schools in a federation or other partnership arrangement' (DfE, 2015). The literature also defines an EHT as any HT with oversight of more than one school (Fellows, 2016; Chapman *et al.*, 2008; Hummerstone, 2012), and attempts to highlight the rationale and potential impact that an EHT can make to schools. Having an EHT can help improve leadership capacity in schools, and may potentially generate efficiencies although further research is needed (see NCSL, 2010, in Fellows and Odell, 2016 – the companion literature review accompanying this report). However, there is no clear consensus in the research literature on what the role of the EHT entails or how they should be deployed (STRB, 2014; NGA, 2013). Indeed, unlike the term 'headteacher', which is defined under Section 35 and 36 of the Education Act 2002, there is no legal definition of what an 'executive headteacher'

is, or what they should do – allowing multiple sector-led interpretations of the role. **This study explores how EHTs are appointed and deployed in practice, with a view to establishing greater consensus around the EHT role.** We put forward an up-to-date picture of the structural arrangements associated with the role (see section 2.4). Section 4 explores EHTs' strategic purpose and structural arrangements in detail.

### 2.2 What does their role involve?

Executive headteachers form a growing part of the school leadership landscape (NCSL, 2010). In the self-improving school system, they provide a leadership layer designed to increase strategic and collaborative capacity, and, ultimately, improvement, within the system (Hummerstone, 2012; Chapman *et al.*, 2011; NCSL, 2010). Executive headteachers often work to oversee the transition and improvement of schools; as well as to grow partnerships between schools. Indeed, the best leaders having 'a greater role across more schools, and spreading success for the benefit of more children than ever' is a key tenet of the DfE's recent White Paper *Educational Excellence Everywhere* (DfE, 2016, p.42). To achieve this, the Government states that EHTs, along with, for example, the CEOs of multi-academy trusts (MATs) and system leaders 'require a new and different mix of skills and experience' (*ibid*, p.42). However, as yet, there is no comprehensive guidance on the skillsets required by EHTs (over and above the national headteacher standards). **This study provides up to-date evidence on the skills and experience EHTs require in the role, with a view to informing workforce development.** Section 5 explores this in detail.



## 2.3 How many EHTs are there?

In recent years, EHTs have become increasingly prevalent within schools' management and governance structures. An early survey of EHTs in England estimated that there were around 400 EHTs in the school workforce in England (NCSL, 2010); although the SWC contains 180 entries for EHTs in 2010<sup>1</sup>. In this study, **we investigate the latest SWC data on the characteristics and distribution of EHTs, in order to understand recent and potential future growth in the number of EHTs.** Indeed, according to 2014 SWC data<sup>2</sup>, there were 621 EHTs in England. Edubase records in early 2016 showed that there were 628 EHTs, overseeing at least 971 schools<sup>3</sup> (although issues with data recording mean that the number of schools EHTs work with is under-recorded. Section 3 explores this in detail).

## 2.4 Where do EHTs sit in leadership tiers? Towards a definition

As highlighted, the SWC (DfE, 2015) considers that the 'post of executive headteacher should be used for a headteacher who directly leads two or more schools in a federation or other partnership arrangement'. Although our findings largely support this definition, we have found the wording given in the SWC does not wholly reflect the picture on the ground.

In practice, we found that EHTs can:

- lead formal groups of schools (MATs or federations)

- be the substantive leader of one school and have a contractual arrangement with one or more other schools (perhaps on an interim basis)
- be a leader of a school with more than one phase or site (that is, not necessarily two separate schools)
- have management responsibilities which go beyond that of a single-phase school (such as managing a teaching school alliance).

It is therefore helpful to think of an EHT as the strategic leader of more than one school or equivalent responsibility. Indeed, scale and size are important considerations. A lead practitioner of a single-phase school, with a traditional leadership structure and a significant operational role, but without another school, does not fit an EHT model. At a larger scale (for example, larger numbers of schools), or perhaps where EHTs do not have substantive headship, a CEO may be necessary as another leadership layer or another form of oversight. In addition, there is a wide range of governance models associated with EHTs.

We propose that an EHT be considered as a lead professional of more than one school; or a lead professional who manages a school with multiple phases; or who has management responsibility significantly beyond that of a single school site. In practice (based on our case studies), this includes EHTs with substantive headship in a home-school and oversight of another, and EHTs who have strategic leadership over multiple schools but no substantive headship in any of their schools. As the role of the CEO was outside the scope of this project, more research is needed to show at what stage an EHT with no substantive school becomes a CEO. As shown in Figure 1, the EHT is a strategic and management layer to oversee more than one school or equivalent.

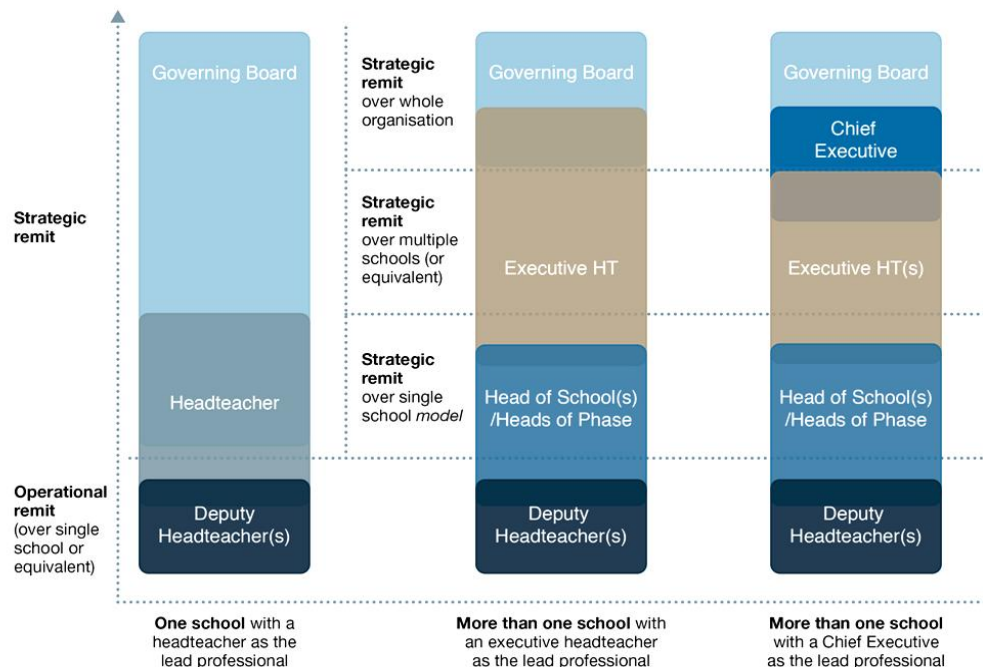
<sup>1</sup> See section 3.1 for data caveats.

<sup>2</sup> Note: no definition of an EHT is provided in the 2014 SWC data.

<sup>3</sup> See sections 3.1 and 3.5 for caveats around these numbers.

Should the Government look to facilitate a definition of EHTs, they should consider the spectrum of EHT sub-types discussed here, whilst still allowing the continued profession-led development of the role and operating models in the evolving school leadership landscape.

**Figure 1. Leadership arrangements associated with EHTs<sup>4</sup>**



<sup>4</sup> Note: throughout this report, the term governing board refers to governors/trustees in schools in the maintained and academy sectors.

## 2.5 About this research

Although exploratory, this study represents a substantial body of detailed qualitative and quantitative evidence about the EHT role in practice. The study is a collaboration between the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), the National Governors' Association (NGA) and The Future Leaders Trust (TFLT). Research questions included:

1. What are the characteristics and distribution of EHTs, as compared with the profile of other HTs?
2. What are the distinguishing features of the EHT role, skills required and implications for development, compared with traditional headship?
3. What are the distinctive aspects of appointing to the role as compared with traditional headship?

## 2.6 About this report

This report is based on:

1. a thematic review of HT application packs (15) and EHT application packs (15)
2. secondary analysis of School Workforce Census (SWC) data
3. 12 in-depth case studies with a total of 33 interviews (encompassing 12 EHTs, 10 governors/trustees or similar role, and 11 heads of school (HoS) or similar role).

Further methodological details can be found in a separate Technical Appendix (Harland and Bernadinelli, 2016).



## 3. Who and where are the EHTs in England?

According to the School Workforce Census, in November 2014 there were 20,560 HTs and 621 EHTs in schools in England. This section reports the findings from an analysis of EHTs and HTs as reported in the SWC 2010 to 2014. It provides key statistics to explore 'Who are EHTs?' and 'Where are EHTs?'

### 3.1 Data limitations

There are a number of caveats to our analysis (for a full discussion, see the Technical Appendix, Harland and Bernardinelli, 2016). Firstly, the SWC includes one record per individual so it may capture an EHT in their main school but not in any other school/s they may be involved with. Secondly, where EHTs do not have substantive headship in any of their schools, the SWC may not capture such leadership posts. The SWC collects data only on EHTs that identify themselves as part of the school-based workforce, and therefore may contain under-reported data on EHTs and other leadership posts above school-level (such as CEOs). Thirdly, the SWC may not capture temporary or interim EHT posts. Indeed, SWC analysis suggests that EHTs are less likely than HTs to be employed on permanent contracts (85 per cent of EHTs are employed on permanent contracts, compared with 95 per cent of HTs). These limitations present a challenge to understanding the most senior tiers of school management and leadership. Section 3.5 outlines limitations with Edubase data which we also used for this study.

### 3.2 EHTs are more qualified senior leaders

The vast majority of EHTs have qualified teacher status (QTS). This is also reflected in the EHT application packs, which all explicitly or implicitly

required applicants to hold QTS. The evidence also suggests that EHTs need higher levels of qualifications and experience than 'traditional' HTs – reflecting the more senior nature of the role. For instance, in application packs, EHT posts generally required a higher level of school leadership experience (e.g. as a head or deputy) than HT posts (e.g. deputy or assistant head). In most EHT packs, it was also either desirable or essential that applicants hold the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH). In contrast, while this qualification was still desirable in HT applicants, there were no cases where it was stipulated as being essential. Furthermore, most interviewed EHTs had other relevant qualifications including being National Leaders of Education (NLE), Local Leaders of Education (LLE), or had participated in specific professional development for EHTs. Some of our case-study EHTs were also qualified Ofsted inspectors or school improvement consultants, and found this useful in executive headship.

### 3.3 EHT positions offer higher pay than HT positions

We have limited data on pay in this study, as we did not request detailed data from the SWC, and qualitative information from application packs and interviews is partial. However, the latter does suggest that EHTs tend to be paid more than HTs. This reflects the more senior level of responsibility; wider remit (e.g. number of pupils, number of schools); involvement with schools in challenging circumstances; and higher level of qualifications and experience typically associated with the EHT role. The Technical Appendix provides an illustration of EHTs' versus HTs' pay based on analysis of application packs.

# Who are EHTs?

The distinctive characteristics of EHTs

Most EHTs have previously been HTs

**70%** of EHTs in **2014** had been in a HT role in **2010**

**98%** of EHTs hold **QTS\***

\*2014 only

The proportion of males is significantly higher for EHTs than HTs...



EHTs are more likely to have higher level qualifications

**24%**

of EHTs have a Masters or a PhD

**16%**

of HTs have a Masters or a PhD



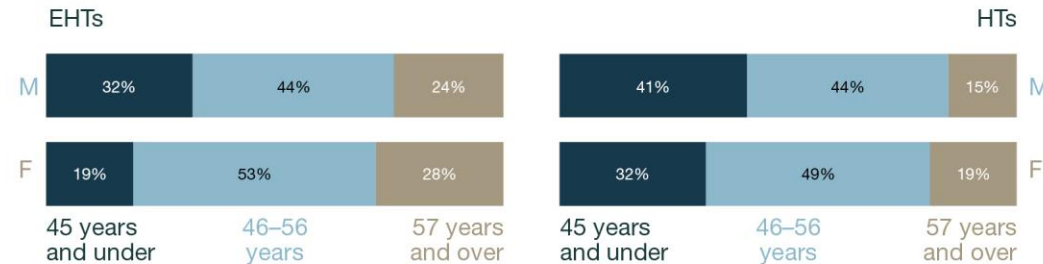
**51**

is the average age of an EHT

**49**

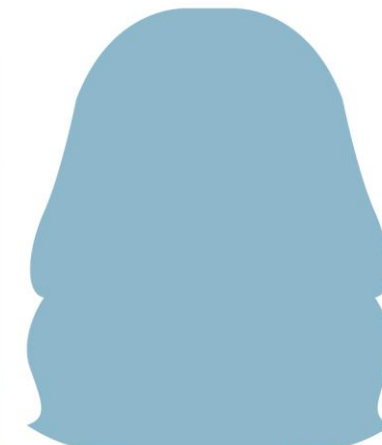
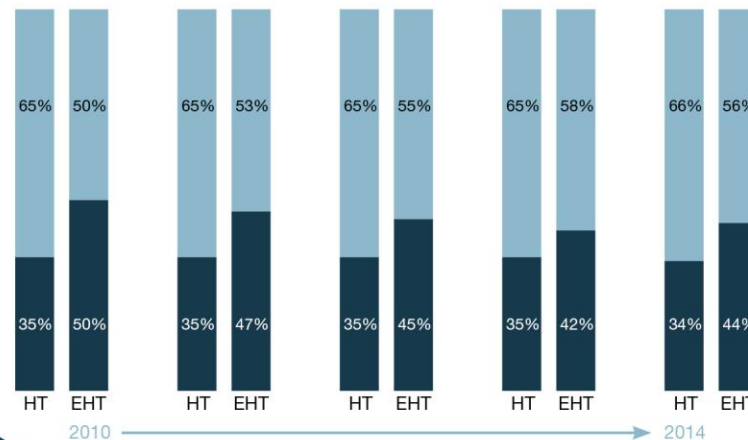
is the average age of a HT

EHTs are slightly older than HTs



Female EHTs tend to be older than male EHTs\* accentuating an existing gender trend amongst HTs

\*2014 only

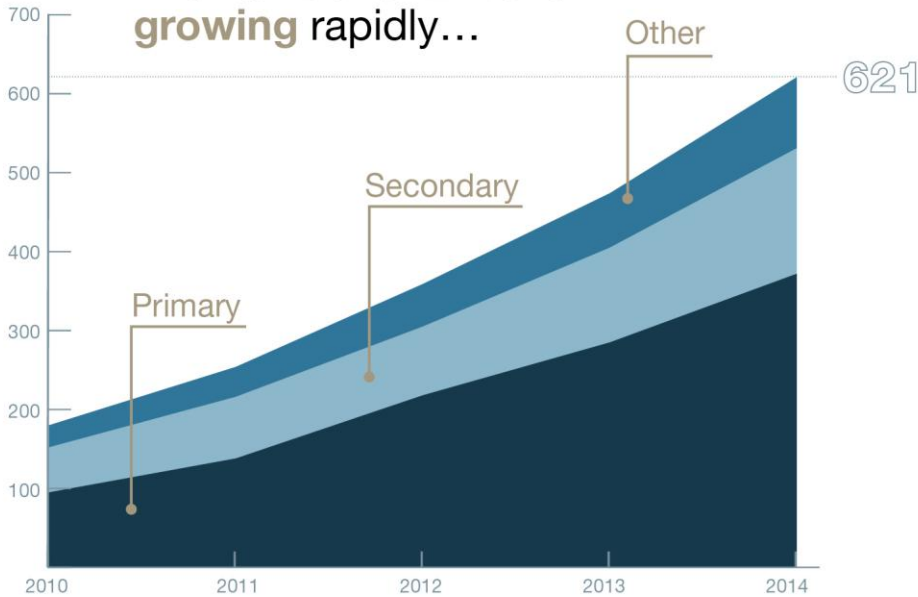


...the proportion of female EHTs has grown over time

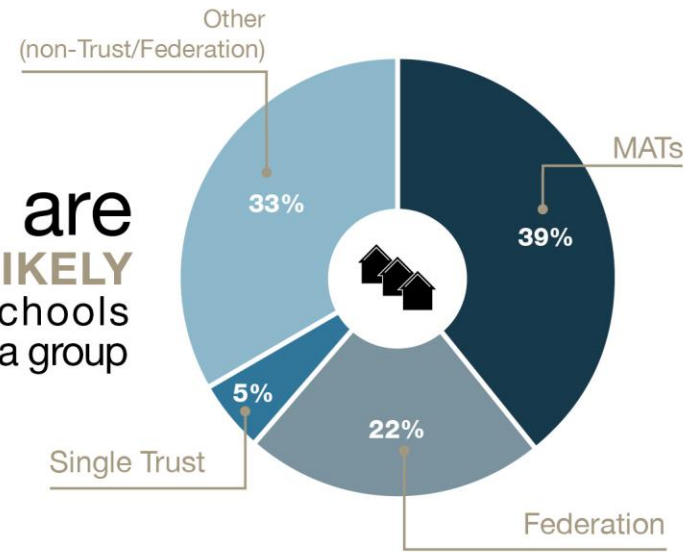
# Where are EHTs?

## The distribution of EHTs

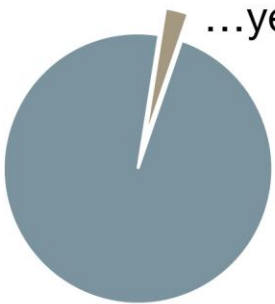
The number of EHTs is **growing** rapidly...



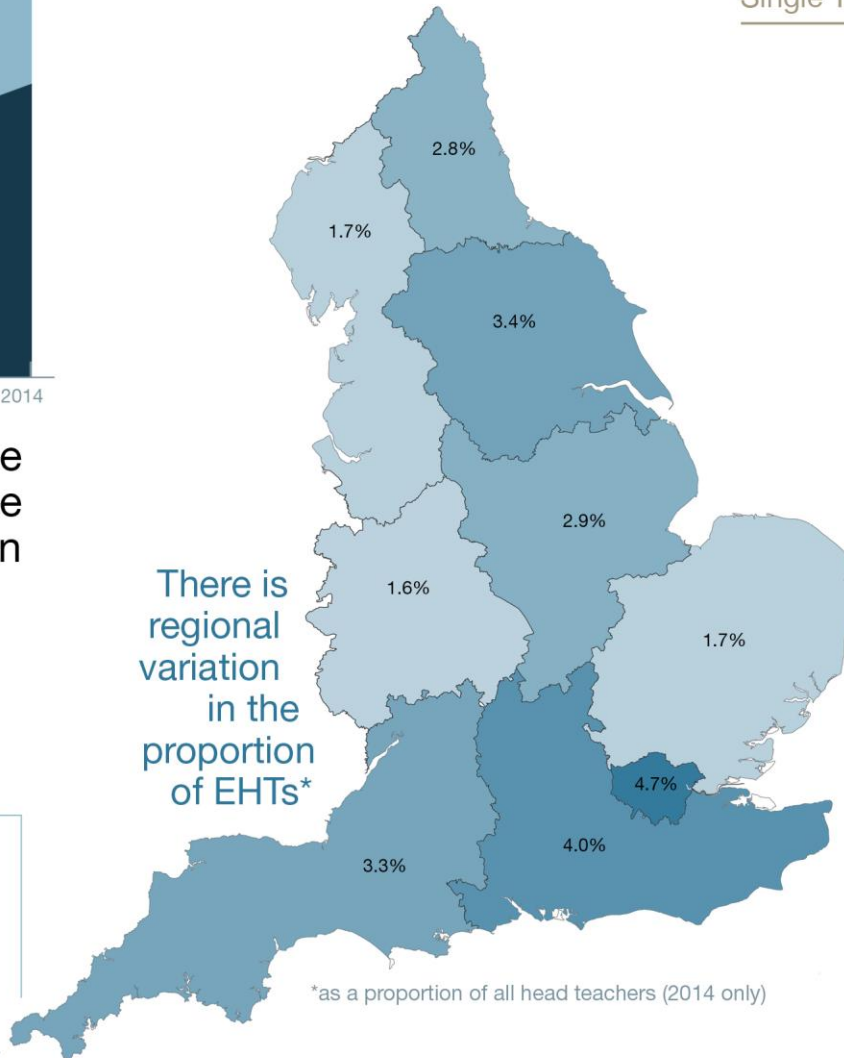
EHTs are **MORE LIKELY** to lead schools that are in a group



...yet by 2014, EHTs made up just **2.9%** of the overall HT population



Secondary schools are **more likely** to have EHTs than primary, but there has been **more rapid growth** in the number of EHTs in primary over time



There is regional variation in the proportion of EHTs\*

\*as a proportion of all head teachers (2014 only)



There is a higher proportion of EHTs in academies than maintained schools

In Academies

**6%**

of all heads are EHTs\*

In Maintained

**2%**

of all heads are EHTs\*

\*2014 only

### 3.4 EHTs' motivations

In interviews, EHTs identified a range of motivations for taking on the role:

- **professional development** – to progress their careers, develop new skills and take on a new challenge
- **moral purpose** – to make more of an impact on pupil outcomes, for instance by sharing expertise with another school
- **to meet a particular need** – EHTs were often asked (e.g. by governors/trustees, the local authority) to take on the role because of their particular skillset and to address a particular need (e.g. supporting a school in challenging circumstances).

Amongst our interviewees, it is worth noting that some EHTs felt they had taken on the role more by evolution than through any intentional move. These motivations reflect some of the key reasons highlighted in a survey of EHTs (NCSL, 2010, in Fellows and Odell, 2016), where the top three of ten reasons for moving into executive headship included: offers new challenges, to influence and improve standards, and to gain new skills and experience.

### 3.5 Do all EHTs lead more than one school?

It is not possible to tell from current SWC records how many schools or sites an EHT oversees (as entries are per individual, not per school). We undertook analysis of Edubase 'named headteacher' data from February 2016, and matched individual names to other school entries wherever possible. From this, we were able to identify that 40 per cent of the 628 EHTs on Edubase were the designated leader of two schools; and eight per cent were the named leader of three or more schools.

However, in 52 per cent of cases, we could only match an individual EHT to one school. If EHTs are the designated leader of just one school, then 'what's in a name?' becomes an important question; why do these individuals have a different title to HTs? Whilst instances of EHTs of a single school do exist, and have been reported in previous qualitative literature (e.g. NCSL, 2010; Fellows, 2016; and Hummerstone, 2012), the current study suggests that 52 per cent is likely to be an over-estimate of such cases. We identified, for example, a number of EHTs where official records did not capture all the schools for which they had responsibility. This reflects the issues with how data on EHTs is recorded (or not recorded) on national systems – which may result in under-estimating the number of schools EHTs work with.

In practice, an EHT who is recorded as the EHT in one substantive school entry may actually be seconded from a home school, or may be growing a number of school partnerships within a system. In addition, EHT leadership of a single school may be a temporary arrangement, either for 'school-turn-around' purposes or because a governing board intends to develop larger structures in the future (see Section 4.2). In addition, 'word cloud' analysis of EHT application packs highlights far more of an emphasis than in HT packs on 'schools' (plural), 'trust', 'federation' and 'MAT' (see Figure 3, Section 4.3).



## 4. Why have an EHT?

### 4.1 An evolution

The role of the EHT is still evolving at a national and local level. This is apparent from the quantitative SWC data, the review of application packs, and the case-study interview data. The case-study data indicates that in many schools the role is fluid and that it is helpful to have a degree of flexibility to modify the role dependent on need.

One EHT described how the 'evolution' of her role had been an 'organic process', a view that was supported by her Chair of the Trust Board who confirmed that the remit of the role was 'not a conscious decision' but one that 'emerged' (EHT and Chair of the Trust, case study D).

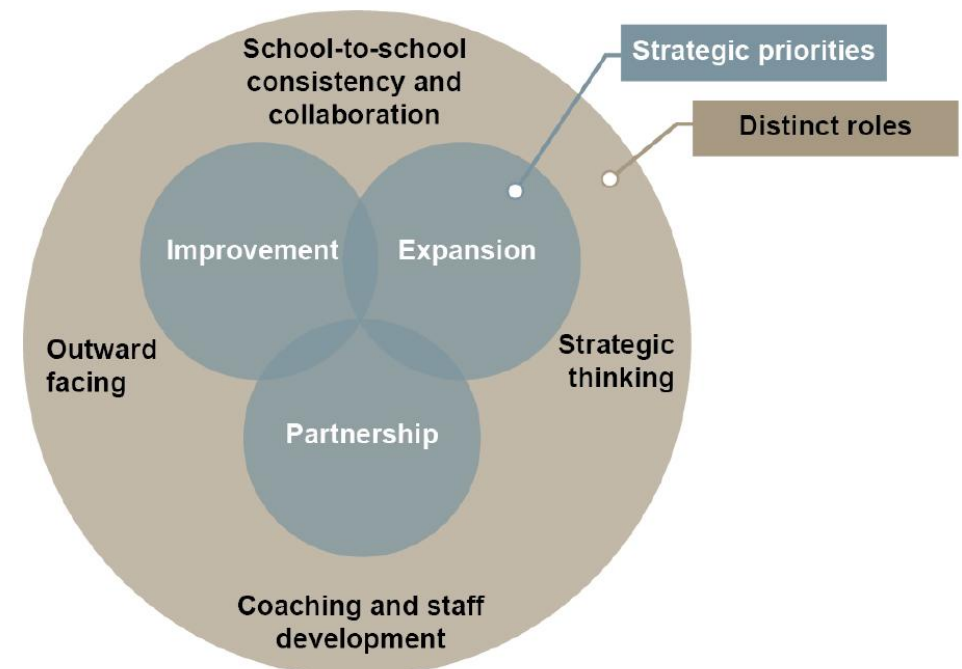
Allowing the role to evolve in order to respond to local circumstance, and to do so in dialogue with governors/trustees, school senior leaders and staff, seems crucial to the EHT role, although there are some challenges associated with this responsiveness (see Section 5.2).

That said, it is helpful to consider some defining features of the role. In this study, we have considered this by exploring the purpose of the HT and EHT. Whilst a HT is consistently positioned within a single strategic layer of traditional headship (see Figure 1, Section 2.4), EHT positions appear to be more varied – both in their positioning within broader leadership structures and in their purpose. We have identified three strategic purposes and four distinct functions or role areas which consistently distinguish the EHT role from the traditional HT (see Figure 2).

Our case study participants felt that the name, EHT, is also important, in that it includes 'headteacher' and indeed 'teacher' in the title.

*[I am] very proud of the name [executive] 'headteacher'. The word [...] 'headteacher' is a very powerful one, everyone understands what it means. It has moral purpose to it, as the word 'teacher' does (EHT, male, case study L).*

**Figure 2. Strategic purposes and distinctive role of EHTs**



## 4.2 Strategic purposes

The specific rationale for appointing an EHT varies across the EHT landscape. Three strategic priorities that EHTs focus on, to varying degrees, are: school improvement, organisational expansion, and partnership growth.<sup>5</sup> Whilst traditional HTs will also focus on these areas, it seems that EHTs are recruited to add capacity to fulfil particular aspects in these priority areas. That said, once in post, EHTs' purposes are not static or mutually exclusive; there is more than one kind of focus for EHTs.

**The improvement executive:** these EHTs 'turn around' failing schools. They focus on rapid school improvement and EHT posts are created specifically for this purpose (that is, a decision is taken by the governing board to appoint at this level). Examples from our study include:

- single-school EHT posts taken up by seconded heads or school improvement partners for rapid school-turn-around (that is, a temporary post)
- headteachers expanding their role to take on failing school(s) via newly created EHT posts but remaining as the HT in their 'home school' (with or without governance structures between the two schools)
- new and existing federations and MATs taking on schools in need of improvement and creating new EHT posts to do so.

<sup>5</sup> These three areas identified in our study map closely to existing literature on the purpose of EHT appointments (see NCSL, 2010) e.g. a school is failing, a school has failed to recruit a HT and is at risk of closure, schools in a locality join up, schools form a partnership or federation, or a school trust or academy sponsor develops a group of schools.

*You wouldn't appoint for 'aggrandisement', you do it where there is a need for impact and improvement (Governor, case study L)*

**The school/site expansion executive:** these EHTs oversee large (sometimes multi-school) sites. They focus on increasing management capacity and efficiencies, and sharing resources. The posts are created for pragmatic reasons, necessitated for example by pupil numbers, campus style mergers, and primary-secondary amalgamations.

*In a secondary school, expanding to become an all-through 4 – 19 school, the new EHT explained: '... you can't have a Head of Primary, an Associate Head [for the secondary] and a Head [overall], ... so we went for a clear: Head of Primary, Head of Secondary, and Executive Head' (EHT, female, case study B).*

**The executive partnership leader/partnership growth executive:** sometimes such expansions involve revised school structures (e.g. federations, MATs, and/or working in teaching school alliances). The executive partnership EHT focuses on building and growing new partnerships between schools, in particular looking outwards, and more so than in the school expansion mode noted above. Amongst our case studies, some of these EHTs were 'home grown' – previously having been the HT of one of the schools before federation or academisation, for example. These EHTs are recruited to create strategic and collaborative capacity when working with larger numbers of schools and pupils and the posts allow for sharing of practice and resources across groups of



schools and more efficient business and governance structures. 'It would be untenable for governors to work directly with five separate heads' (Governor, case study K).

*... there are economies of scale ... in the staff that you can share [including more specialist staff], and the expertise across schools, that you cannot possibly have in one school (EHT, female, case study G).*

### Strategic ... yet grounded

Having outlined three top-level strategic purposes, it is worth noting that EHTs' priorities are also grounded within their pupil community. Whilst their top down oversight brings a 'helicopter' perspective, they are also driven by a grounded and expansive approach to pupil outcomes. Indeed, EHTs themselves highlighted the 'moral purpose' they feel to make more of an impact on pupil outcomes, for instance by sharing expertise with another school.

*[I work] at the bottom of an inverted pyramid with the students at the top of the pyramid. They are the most important people in the [school]. The inverted pyramid must therefore be strong, well balanced and very stable (EHT, male, case study A).*

*I was looking for a post where I could have a larger impact across a larger number of staff and pupils (EHT, male, case study C).*

### A matter of context

While these roles overlap, context plays an important part in determining their relative importance. In case study A below, stating the context-specific reasons why this EHT would need to build connections with employers seems to have been a crucial part of recruitment. The EHT describes this as a key focus of his job, and in addition is working to make his organisation 'seated within' and more 'visible' within the community.

In the case of an all-through nursery-primary-secondary school, a key driver in recruiting an EHT, rather than, say, a campus manager, was that the governors/trustees wanted the benefits of someone leading children across the whole breadth of education. The recruited EHT had experience of middle and secondary school leadership previously, but not primary, and so spent the first year or so in post focusing on working with the primary school on site, to get buy-in from staff and parents.

*The chief executive of the Trust thought that the Trust needed a new perspective to make links between the children's education and the wider world and business community. This needed someone with skills as a business leader as well as a traditional teacher .... We needed [an EHT] to understand how to build connections with employers – to help address inter-generational unemployment in the area (Governor, case study A).*

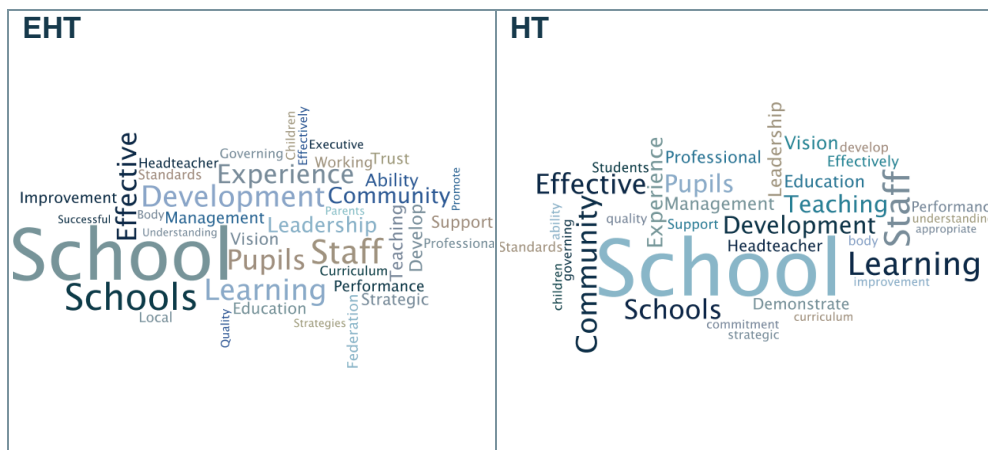
## 4.3 Distinct roles

A documentary analysis comparing HT and EHT application packs revealed small but important distinctions between the two roles. As

visually represented in the word clouds below, for example, the terms 'strategic', 'experience' and 'development' are mentioned more often in EHT packs, whilst 'community' seems to feature more in HT packs.

It is also interesting to note the similarities from the packs, for example 'staff' and 'learning' are amongst the highest priorities for both HTs and EHTs. Naturally, 'pupils' also feature highly in both – but interestingly, higher in EHT packs.

**Figure 3. Word clouds created from application packs**



From this data and the case studies it is apparent that the EHT role is less operational than a traditional HT role. Examples of operational tasks that EHTs delegated to HoS included:

- exclusions
- staff appointments
- attendance
- behaviour management
- dismissals
- teaching
- working with parents.

Many EHTs also emphasised that their input varies within the groups of schools that they are responsible for. They explained that, whilst they have an active role in all the schools they work with, some are less 'dependent' (EHT, female, case study K). Therefore responsibilities naturally vary, depending on the strengths and weaknesses of each school, 'filling in the gaps' and 'adding value' (EHT, male, case study L).

Using the data from the application packs and the case studies, we identified four functions or role areas that EHTs undertake to a greater degree and that therefore make them distinct from their HT counterparts. These are strategic thinking; coaching and staff development; consistency and collaboration; and being outward facing.

*It is important to not get into the stereotypical swanning around attitude, and be grounded in what the role actually is. It is not about being in front of the children every day. Indeed, most of the time is away from kids - it is about finishing the working day with a positive answer to the questions: 'what have I done which will have an impact on children and what will these children do?'* (EHT, male, case study C).

**Strategic thinking:** all strands of the research show that a key difference between the EHT role and that of the traditional HT is that the EHT role is more strategic. This was particularly notable where EHTs have no substantive headship in a school, but have strategic oversight across a number of schools. Here, case-study interviewees were very clear that it is not the EHT role to be 'headteacher' of the schools they oversee, but rather it is to propose to the governors/trustees a strategic direction for all

of them. That said, EHTs with a substantive headship role in a school, plus oversight of other school(s) also proposed the strategy across all schools in the group/collaborative arrangement. As one EHT put it, he is the 'chief strategist' (case study L) – (a turn of phrase, notwithstanding that strategy is set by the governing board).

*If you ask me what time the break is in one of my schools, I won't know, because that's operational* (EHT, male, case study H).

Whilst the tasks that were identified as strategic by the EHTs we spoke to varied, there were a number of common themes including coaching and staff development, consistency and collaboration, and a greater outward facing role. These are outlined below.

**Coaching and staff development:** many of the EHTs, governors/trustees and HoS that we spoke to felt that the EHT role carries a responsibility for coaching and mentoring the staff (particularly senior staff) in their school(s). One EHT regarded himself as 'a bit of a father figure' (case study A), whilst another labelled herself a 'critical friend' (case study B).

This was particularly important to the senior leaders and the HoS working with the EHTs. For example, in case study K, the Head of Academy explained how his EHT had undertaken a mentoring role and, as a result, the Head of Academy now feels more prepared for a HT role and the EHT has less day-to-day involvement.

*Develop a role and trust and empower a member of staff to fulfil the role, whilst holding them to account for fulfilling that role... [this is a] clear distinction between the executive role and other levels of leadership* (EHT, male, case study F).

**Consistency and collaboration:** in a number of case-study schools, a key part of the EHT's strategic role included ensuring that there is consistency across the schools they work with and, where appropriate, collaboration. This includes sharing best practice – as an interviewee emphasised, even when an EHT has been brought in to turn around a failing school, there are still things that the 'home school' can learn.

In order to ensure consistency across schools, EHTs monitor, ratify and quality assure what each of the schools is doing (case study I), which means that the role is often strongly reliant on data.

**An outward facing role:** some outward facing tasks undertaken by EHTs include parent and community/business relations in a similar way to traditional HTs. However, EHTs also take on a wider remit which is different to some traditional HT roles. An EHT summarised this by explaining that he deals with engagements relating to other schools, school-to-school support and, in his case, the teaching school; whilst engagements directly involving the children are taken on by other senior staff. Another HoS explained that s/he deals with the 'people in the school' whilst the EHT deals with 'the politics' and the 'external meetings'. S/he defined the EHT as the 'political figure [that] puts them on the map'.

In addition, the space that the role provides to interact with national policy was emphasised as a key difference to traditional HT roles. A Chair of

Governors explained that an EHT needs to be more open and aware of the 'educational and political... agenda both nationally and locally' (case study I).

#### 4.4 Management structures

The research identified a range of different management structures in place. In the review of application packs, for example, many different management structures were evident and there was noticeably more variation in EHT packs than in HT packs.

Comparing EHT schools with 'traditional standalone' schools, it seems that, in the majority of cases, the staffing structure below EHTs is similar or the same as structures in traditional standalone schools, but with a HoS working in place of a HT.

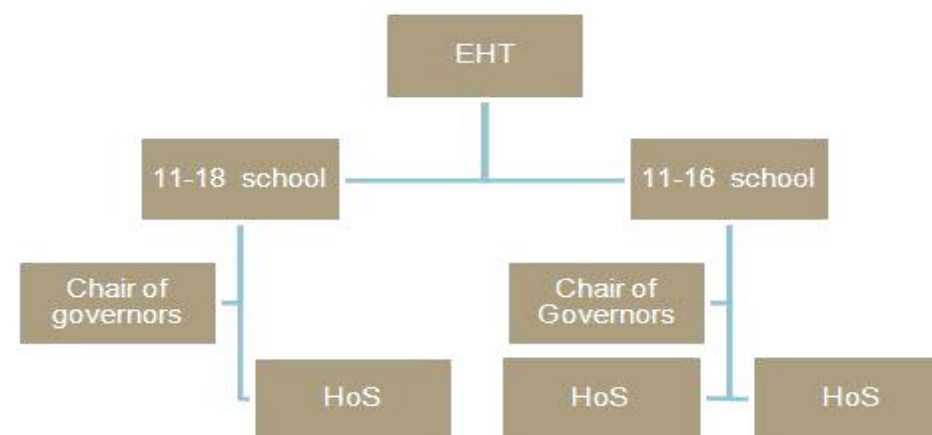
##### EHTs manage HoS

Within EHT schools, the EHT is responsible for a wide range of staff, but one unifying factor is that, in many cases, the EHT manages HoS (or equivalent).

In all but one of our case-study schools, the EHT was responsible for line managing the HoS (or equivalent). Figure 4 provides an example from one of the case-study schools.

Where this was not the case (e.g. case study L), while the EHT still performance manages the HoS, line management is undertaken by the respective governing board.

Figure 4<sup>6</sup>. EHT manages three HoS (case study E)



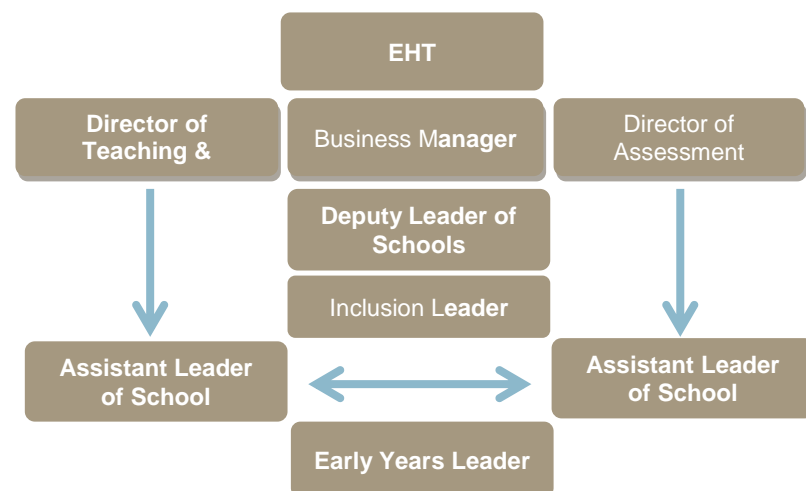
##### Executive business managers

One interesting structure that occurred in around half the case-study schools was the role of an executive business manager supporting the EHT. As can be seen in Figure 5, this model involves a business manager working across schools. In this case the business manager runs the offices for the three primary academies that the EHT is responsible for. His/her responsibilities include business systems, finances and accounting for all of the schools and line managing the caretaking and

<sup>6</sup> Note: the structure charts presented in Figures 4 and 5 are represented here as provided to the research team by the schools.

services team. The governor we interviewed explained 'we've got three Leaders of Schools and an Executive Business Manager which [makes up] the senior part of the Senior Leadership Team'.

**Figure 5. A business manager is central to the cross-school and within-school structure that the EHT manages (case study G)**



## 4.5 Governance and accountability structures

This section highlights the varying contexts in which EHTs are employed, and the varying governance arrangements associated with the EHT. As the self-improving school system moves forward, further understanding of these arrangements will be needed.

Data from the application packs and the case studies reveal that the governance and accountability structures that EHTs work within are

currently complex and often unclear. Some structures include an EHT having multiple contracts and performance management arrangements. This poses challenges, especially for setting the EHT's targets, monitoring performance and holding EHTs to account.

In a small number of the case studies, the EHTs highlighted their relationship and close working with the governing board as an aspect that distinguished their role from the HoS.

The EHT in case study L explained that each of the five schools that he is responsible for have a local governing body working closely with their respective HoS. He said that his role on the local governing body is 'minimal'. In contrast, his relationship with the Trust Board is 'considerable'.

The application pack summary data exposed greater variation in the accountability arrangements of EHTs than traditional HTs. While all but one of the traditional HT application packs<sup>7</sup> stated that the HT would be solely accountable to a single governing board, EHT packs included a range of different accountability structures.

Case-study data highlighted how this operates in practice and enabled identification of four of the most common governance models used when an EHT is in post.

<sup>7</sup> Not all application packs gave details of accountability arrangements.

### i. EHT reporting to a governing board of trustees and governing committee (GC)

	Attends GC	Member of GC	Performance managed by GC	Attends Board	Member of Board	Performance managed by Board
EHT <sup>8</sup>	●			●		●
HoS	●	○	○			

We found this model only in MATs. Here, there is a board of trustees overseeing the whole of the Trust, and a governing committee<sup>9</sup> (GC) for each individual school. The case studies varied as to whether the EHT would attend GC meetings and MAT board meetings, and as to whether the HoS would attend both GC and MAT board meetings.

Some GCs contribute to the performance management of the EHT by having a member of the GC on the EHT's performance management review panel. However, even if the GC is not directly involved in the performance management of the EHT, the GC can still hold the EHT to account indirectly. In one case, the chair of the GC was also a MAT director and reported directly back to the trust board on the intricacies of schools' performance. Case-study schools indicated that they found the GC arrangements helpful for holding the HoS to account. However, there were some issues with this model, particularly in terms of blurring lines of accountability.

<sup>8</sup> ● Common within case studies ○ Occasional within case studies

<sup>9</sup> Often given a different name, e.g. local advisory board or local governing body.

### ii. EHT reporting to one governing board (GB)

	Attends GB	Member of GB	Performance managed by GB
EHT <sup>10</sup>	●	●	●
HoS	●	○	

In this model, the EHT reports to one governing board (GB) which is responsible for multiple schools (such as a federation), or to a single governing board of one school with multiple phases. This model is often straightforward, as the performance management arrangements are usually clearly defined and done through various committees. For instance, in case study I, the EHT attends all of the governor meetings and his performance is managed by the Chair, the Vice Chair and another governor where available.

Challenges associated with this model include ensuring that the governing board thinks about the group as a whole, and the board feeling 'staff heavy' with all HoS as members. One solution is to allow HoS to attend meetings without having voting rights. In federations, this is only possible if the HoS are not listed as HTs of individual schools, as where this is the case they are entitled to be a governor by virtue of their office.

<sup>10</sup> ● Common within case studies ○ Occasional within case studies



### iii. EHT reports to multiple governing boards (GBs)

	Attends home school GB	Member of home school GB	Performance managed by home school GB	Attends GB2	Member of GB2	Performance managed by GB2
EHT <sup>11</sup>	●	●	●	●	●	●
HoS				●	●	●

Only one case study had a structure where the EHT reports to multiple governing boards – an arrangement which presented some challenges. This structure had arisen when an EHT had taken on a secondment position to support a failing school in addition to his 'home school'. The EHT has multiple contract agreements and multiple performance reviews. Although admitting that the model was not ideal, the EHT outlined that it had helped to 'streamline' the performance management arrangements by having the same objectives across both schools.

### iv. EHT reports to governing committee (GC) and is line managed by executive tier

	Attends GC	Member of GC	Performance managed by CG	Attends Board	Member of Board	Performance managed by CEO
EHT <sup>12</sup>	●			●		○
HoS	●	○	○			

The EHT was managed by the executive branch in two case studies. In one case, the EHT oversees three schools in a six-school MAT. The CEO leads the performance management of the EHT with input from the three

Chairs of the GCs that have oversight of the EHTs' schools. The contribution made by the GC Chairs is unclear and the interviewees outlined that performance management arrangements are still developing. In another example, the performance management of the EHT is led by a 'primary director', who is then accountable to the MAT CEO, rather than the EHT being accountable to the CEO him/herself. One case study was considering adopting a CEO structure, as the EHT currently oversees a large number of schools. This would involve promoting the current EHT to CEO and having two other EHT beneath him/her.

As this section shows, there are varying contexts in which EHTs are employed and varying governance arrangements associated with EHTs. As the self-improving school system moves forward, further clear understanding and management of these arrangements will be needed.

<sup>11</sup> ● Common within case studies ○ Occasional within case studies

<sup>12</sup> ● Common within case studies ○ Occasional within case studies

## 5. Facilitators, challenges and developing the EHT role

### 5.1 What skills do EHTs draw on?

#### Executive headship is as much about the person as the role

In case studies and application packs, it was apparent that, like HTs, EHTs need to possess a plethora of personal qualities to fulfil the role. Consistent with other literature (e.g. Hummerstone, 2012; NCSL, 2010; Barnes, 2006), we found in this study that EHTs need to be resilient, optimistic, emotionally intelligent, determined, decisive, creative and have a strong moral purpose and passion to improve the life-chances of children through education.

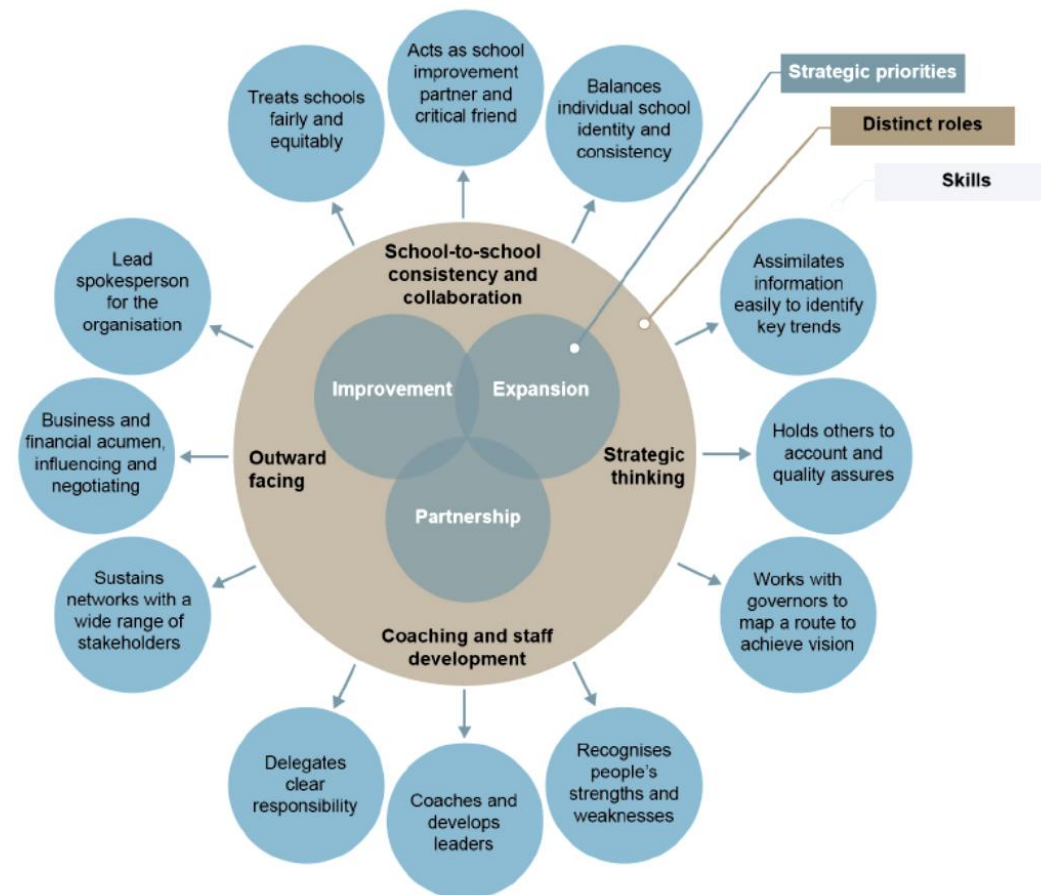
*'[Executive headship] is very much about personality' (Governor, case study L).*

#### Great executive heads need the same skills as great headteachers...

All of the EHTs we interviewed were experienced headteachers<sup>13</sup> who had progressed from being classroom teachers. In most cases, this background appeared to be fundamental to the EHT role. In one case, a governor explained that leadership skills were even more crucial than a teaching background: 'we decided to have a teacher but could have had a non-teacher' (Governor, case study F). In EHT application packs, prospective candidates were required to have previous school leadership experience.

The skills and knowledge acquired in running a successful school as a HT – and particularly in securing improved performance – are central to those

Figure 6. Skills needed in relation to the distinct roles of EHTs



<sup>13</sup> One executive headteacher was previously a Head of School.

of an EHT. One EHT explained that a 'package of school improvement skills' and the experience of having 'turned a school around' are 'non-negotiable' requirements for an EHT (EHT, female, case study G). Indeed currently, almost all EHTs in the school workforce are from school workforce backgrounds.

From analysis of both interviews and application packs we found that, in many ways, the skills that EHTs need are similar to those necessary for a more traditional HT role.<sup>14</sup> Both EHTs and HTs need to think strategically; communicate effectively; support others to develop; build effective teams; and be well organised. However, the EHT role requires individuals to demonstrate these skills at a higher level.

### **...But EHTs need to emphasise particular skills even more so than HTs**

Moreover, EHTs need to emphasise particular skills more so than 'traditional' HTs, to reflect their typically more strategic role in more complex and larger systems. These skills may vary depending on the particular purpose and remit of the executive post. As evidenced in the wider literature, being able to select and deploy the right mix of skills for the context(s) in which EHTs work is essential (Fellows and Odell, 2016). The core skills identified in this study – which are outlined in Figure 6 – echo those found in the wider literature and relate to the distinct roles of EHTs.

<sup>14</sup> For example, see the 'Leadership qualities' outlined in The Future Leaders Trust report: *Heads Up: Meeting the Challenges of Headteacher Recruitment* <http://www.future-leaders.org.uk/insights-blog/heads-up-challenges-headteacher-recruitment/>.

## **5.2 Wider factors that challenge and facilitate the EHT role**

Our analysis revealed a number of wider factors that challenge and facilitate the EHT role and structure, each summarised below.

### **Defining the EHT role**

At a system level, the challenge is in clarifying the defining features of the EHT role when EHTs can have such different remits and work in a range of contexts. At a local level, a challenge is for governors/trustees to understand whether an EHT is needed in that context and in place of a traditional headship structure. In application packs, the purpose and accountability structures for the EHTs' role were often poorly defined. In case studies, the EHTs' role in practice did not always reflect the job description and there was a sense that each organisation was creating its own bespoke and customised interpretation of the role, given the lack of a more widely accepted definition. While interviewees valued the responsiveness of the role to particular needs and contexts, they also felt it was important to more clearly articulate the rationale, purpose and objectives for the role, including in application packs, job descriptions and performance management.

### **The division of leadership**

Interviewees mentioned the challenge of 'blurred' distinction between the EHT and the HoS role. For EHTs with no substantive headship role in any of their schools, 'letting go' of the operational management of their school/s while maintaining sufficient oversight was, for some, a challenge. For EHTs with a substantive HT role in one of their schools, their job

description needs to clearly reflect associated leadership and operational responsibilities for that site, in addition to strategic oversight of other school(s). The EHT model had also introduced some confusion for staff and parents who were unsure about which leader to consult in relation to particular matters. Where this challenge had been overcome, the division of leadership was facilitated by clear communication, accountability and delegation protocols to distinguish leadership roles.

### **Governance and accountability**

Challenges associated with governance were cited in some cases. In our case studies, this related to governors/trustees not having sufficient knowledge and training to be able to challenge and drive the direction of the organisation, both in terms of broad knowledge of educational policy or specific business expertise, as well as specific knowledge relating to EHT appointments. There were also instances of governing boards being reluctant to merge and take responsibility for other schools in multiple-school grouping arrangements. Conversely, the EHT role was facilitated by knowledgeable and engaged governors/trustees, and clear and direct lines of accountability between EHTs and governors/trustees, as well as between different layers of governance (e.g. Governing Committees and Director Boards).

In addition, interviewees mentioned that accountability arrangements for the range of leadership roles in schools (for example, EHTs, HoS, CEOs) could be blurred in practice, for example where roles were new and evolving. However, such challenges were overcome with clear governance arrangements: some of our case studies suggested that having an EHT can make accountability arrangements more streamlined,

with governing boards finding it more efficient to hold a single EHT to account for the performance of several schools (rather than holding several HTs to account).

### **Balancing the needs of multiple schools**

A key challenge for EHTs working across a number of schools is understanding and keeping abreast of different systems and approaches in each school and responding to their different needs and circumstances. In our case studies, opportunities to centralise practices and processes across schools, aided consistency, efficiencies and improvements. School group-wide roles, such as executive business manager or leader of teaching and learning, facilitated the EHT role in ensuring consistency of these areas across a number of schools, sites or phases.

### **Size and capacity**

A number of challenges that EHTs face relate to size and capacity. Firstly, if the EHT has too many schools it becomes untenable for him/her to manage the role and make a meaningful contribution to the leadership of each school. Depending on school numbers, pupil numbers and context, a further tier, or another form, of strategic management may be required and this would normally be a decision taken by the governing board and EHT (for example, in creating a CEO post). Some of our case studies suggested that overseeing between three to six schools was manageable for an EHT role, but that numbers beyond this would be similar to operating as a CEO. However, this would depend on the overall size and complexity of structures and circumstances. Secondly, EHTs may fulfil more operational duties to cover staff shortages, consequently reducing their capacity for their more strategic role. Some EHTs were aided by

administrative support and/or a central team of staff, while others identified this as lacking. Capacity challenges were linked to funding restrictions and whether the size of the organisation made a central team viable.

### Recruitment and retention

Several interviewees identified challenges in relation to current educational policy requirements. These included a notable concern regarding maintaining autonomy, as well as the challenge of recruiting and retaining staff in smaller organisations in competition with larger, multi-school organisations, with larger budgets and workforces that could offer greater opportunities. On the other hand, smaller school groups were valued in comparison to 'standalone schools' for providing increased development opportunities and scope for specialisation of staff, as well as opportunities to share practice and increase management capacity and efficiencies.

### 5.3 EHTs even more prevalent in future?

In this study we have seen how EHTs are commonly (though not always) associated with schools in groups and collaborative arrangements. In future, the number of schools in multiple-school grouping arrangements is likely to rise – whether as part of formal groups such as MATs or federations, or in informal collaborative arrangements. This will be driven by the imperatives of a decentralised and self-improving system and the likely efficiencies, particularly for small primary schools, of sharing management structures. Both this study and wider literature show that EHTs aim to contribute to improvements and collaboration within the

system (e.g. Barnes, 2006 cited in NCSL, 2010). As such, they are likely to be an important feature of the education leadership landscape going forward. However, further research is needed on the impact of EHTs.

It is difficult to foresee how many EHTs are likely to be needed in the future, not least because of the previously mentioned issues with data recording of the leadership workforce. Also, current EHT models may be based on temporary arrangements (e.g. seconded EHTs) and/or highly responsive to the period of transition linked with academisation.

Nevertheless, based on current school numbers;<sup>15</sup> assuming school groupings of between three to six schools;<sup>16</sup> if all school groupings involve an EHT<sup>17</sup>; and allowing for the retirement of existing EHTs<sup>18</sup>, there could be a demand for between 3203 and 6786 more EHTs by 2022. To achieve these quantities, EHT numbers would need to continue to grow at a similarly rapid rate to that seen in the period 2010-14.<sup>19</sup> Given that EHTs are more prevalent in academies than local authority- (LA-

<sup>15</sup> Currently there are 21,495 schools in England (includes all state-sector mainstream, special and alternative provision in primary, secondary, all-through and sixth form).

<sup>16</sup> We have based our estimates on groupings of three to six schools as there are currently a higher number of small – rather than larger - MATs (that is, small MATs comprising two to five schools) (e.g. Hill, 2015) (and, in groupings of six or more schools, the EHT role is more like that of a CEO with a central team (e.g. ASCL *et al.*, 2015)). Our research also highlighted many two-school groupings and we have assumed groupings will grow.

<sup>17</sup> We acknowledge that some school groupings will be led by a CEO (without an EHT or EHTs).

<sup>18</sup> We have estimated that, on average, EHTs will retire at age 60.

<sup>19</sup> An average annual increase of 36 per cent between 2010 and 2014.



)maintained schools, and that many primary schools are yet to academise, increasing primary academisation in the coming years is likely to continue to drive up the numbers of EHTs needed. In addition, in light of existing challenges with the leadership pipeline, there appears to be a considerable need to support the development and supply of EHTs in order to meet future needs.

#### **5.4 What further support and training do EHTs need?**

The EHTs interviewed highlighted a range of qualifications and prior continuing professional development (CPD) that they felt had been useful to draw on when progressing to the EHT role (e.g. NPQH, NLE, LLE, Masters in Educational Leadership, experience as an Ofsted inspector). Two EHT interviewees had received formal CPD or qualifications specifically to prepare for an EHT role (e.g. the NCTL Primary Executive Headship programme (PEH)). All interviewees (EHTs, governors/trustees, HoS) felt that prior experience was important, in particular in school leadership and management, school improvement, and school-to-school support. Indeed, some EHTs had been recruited because of specific expertise (e.g. in 'school turnaround'). All felt that HT-level experience was essential, although some governors/trustees were open to considering candidates from non-education backgrounds. In application packs, organisational leadership and management skills were seen as being crucial preparation for the more strategic EHT role. Some packs, and some interviewees, also highlighted the importance of having prior business-related experience including, for example, of undertaking 'due diligence' (the process of assessing schools prior to joining a partnership).

Once in the role, the EHTs interviewed felt that there was little formal CPD available to them. That said, most were accessing more informal support. Some EHTs had benefited from networks of support, for instance, from fellow EHTs and strategic colleagues in their own or other organisations; from independent advisors; and from accessing other forms of CPD, such as conferences offered by Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) and LAs. However, most interviewees identified the need for enhanced EHT support – both formal and informal - to help support their development in the role (e.g. skills and knowledge to support them in growing their organisations) and share emerging good practice.

Most HoS we spoke to were considering progression to EHT posts at some point in the future. However, several were deterred by the prospect of an increasingly strategic role, including one that took them further away from direct contact with, and direct influence on, pupils. Aspiring EHTs identified needing further experience as heads including across different schools; experience of working more directly with governors/trustees; and experience of the EHT role in different contexts, such as a very large MAT. In order to progress to EHT positions, HoS particularly wanted to develop skills around quality assurance, business development and financial management. Generally, HoS indicated that they were being well prepared for a future EHT role by working directly with an EHT. Furthermore, HoS supported by an EHT structure were able to progress more quickly than in a standalone HT structure because of the coaching and mentoring role provided by the EHT. This suggests that existing EHTs have a key role to play in training future EHTs. Enhancing the availability of support for current and aspiring EHTs will be important to ensuring the effectiveness of EHTs and to meet future workforce needs.



## 6. Concluding comments

In this research, we have seen the strategic role that EHTs currently play in the school leadership landscape. The findings complement and build on previous research. For example, amongst our case studies we have examples reflecting NCSL's five key reasons for having an EHT.<sup>20</sup> Our findings also highlight that these reasons are not static and that, once in post, the EHT's role continues to evolve. Hence, we offer three key overlapping strategic purposes for an EHT namely: improvement, expansion, and partnership – to help governors/trustees and EHTs to position their specific role and remit in their given context at any one time.

Our findings also build on previous research into the skills that EHTs require (Fellows, 2016), by highlighting the distinct skill areas that EHTs need to emphasise compared with HTs – namely: strategic thinking, coaching and staff development, school-to-school consistency and collaboration, and looking outwards.

Executive headteachers will continue to play an important role in schools in multiple-school groupings. In order to secure the quality and quantity of leaders required, a greater focus is needed on:

- supporting aspiring leaders on a clear career path to executive headship

<sup>20</sup> Namely: i) a school is failing or underperforming; ii) a school has failed to recruit a head or is at risk of closure unless it teams up with another school(s); iii) schools in a locality or town want to adopt a broad-based multiagency approach to education and child development; iv) schools decide to form a partnership or federation focused on improving teaching and learning through shared professional and curriculum development; v) a school trust or academy sponsor decides to develop a group or chain of schools.

- ensuring governors/trustees have the relevant guidance, clarity and understanding of contracting and performance management arrangements to recruit and manage EHTs, as well as an understanding of the potential role EHTs can play
- developing high quality training and CPD support for EHTs and aspiring EHTs, and increasing the proportion of women in the role
- supporting the development of other leadership roles associated with EHTs, such as HoS and executive business managers; and indeed of other wider executive leadership roles (such as deputy heads leading on professional learning across a group of schools).

Further research needs to consider: the effectiveness and impact of EHTs compared to other governance models, the circumstances under which EHTs generate efficiencies in the system, and whether particular EHT models or types of individual are more or less effective in particular circumstances. In addition, the relationships between HT/EHT at one end of the scale/size spectrum and EHT/CEO at the other, need further exploration; as does women's under-representation amongst EHTs when compared with women in the HT population. Whilst there have been some recent surveys of the school leadership landscape (e.g. Earley *et al.*, 2012), a further up-to-date survey with a specific focus on leadership roles, to inform the range of roles that the SWC needs to collect data on, could be valuable. Further exploration of data on pay may also be helpful. Finally, in the evolving leadership landscape, further research might explore the emergence of wider executive leadership (for example a head of subject across more than one school), and whether any key factors, challenges or skills associated with EHTs can act as lessons learnt to support the development of these or other executive leadership roles.

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## Outputs suite

### A Full Report of the Findings

The full report of findings, including key messages and recommendations for policy and practice, why executive headteachers (EHTs) matter, the distinctive characteristics and distribution of EHTs, the circumstances under which schools appoint an EHT, and the facilitating factors, challenges, and development of the EHT role.

#### How to cite this publication:

Lord, P., Wespieser, K., Harland, J., Fellows, T. and Theobald, K. (2016). *Executive Headteachers: What's in a Name? A Full Report of the Findings*. Slough, Birmingham and London: NFER, NGA and TFLT.

### Executive Summary

A two-page concise summary of the full report.

#### How to cite this publication:

Theobald, K. and Lord, P. (2016). *Executive Headteachers: What's in a Name? Executive Summary*. Slough, Birmingham and London: NFER, NGA and TFLT.

### Technical Appendix

The technical appendix provides a detailed account of the methodology used to obtain the data on which the full report is based.

#### How to cite this publication:

Harland, J. and Bernardinelli, D. (2016). *Executive Headteachers: What's in a Name? Technical Appendix*. Slough: NFER.

### Literature Review

The literature review encapsulates existing research on the EHT position in England. It covers three main areas: the history of EHTs in England; the skills, qualities and motivations identified in EHTs; and the governance and school structures associated with EHTs.

#### How to cite this publication:

Fellows, T. and Odell, E. (2016). *Executive Headteachers: What's in a Name? A Review of the Literature*. Birmingham and London: NGA and TFLT.

### Case Study Compendium

The compendium provides an overview of each of the 12 case studies that were conducted as part of the research. Each case study includes a description of the setting, the purpose of appointing an EHT, the focus of the EHT role, qualifications of the EHT and replicable features.

#### How to cite this publication:

Wespieser, K. (Ed) (2016). *Executive Headteachers: What's in a Name? Case Study Compendium*. Slough: NFER.

### Infographic Poster

The infographic poster – included in the full report - displays quantitative data about the distinctive characteristics and distribution of EHTs.

All outputs are available from the following websites:

[www.nfer.ac.uk](http://www.nfer.ac.uk)

[www.nga.org.uk](http://www.nga.org.uk)

[www.future-leaders.org.uk](http://www.future-leaders.org.uk)

## About the organisations who carried out this research



The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) is the UK's largest independent provider of research, assessment and information services for education, training and children's services. Our purpose is to provide independent evidence which improves education and training for children and young people.

The research team at NFER for this project included: Daniele Bernardinelli, Jennie Harland, Pippa Lord, and Karen Wespieser.

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The National Governors' Association (NGA) is an independent charity representing and supporting governors, trustees and clerks in maintained schools and academies in England. The NGA's goal is to improve the wellbeing of children and young people by increasing the effectiveness of governing boards and promoting high standards. We do this by providing information, guidance, research, advice and training. We also work closely with, and lobby, UK government and educational bodies, and are the only campaigning national membership organisation for school governors and trustees.

The research team at NGA for this project included: Ellie Cotgrave and Tom Fellows.

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The Future Leaders Trust's mission is to give children equal opportunities in life, regardless of background, by developing a network of exceptional school leaders. We run a range of leadership development programmes, providing a progression pathway from middle leadership right through to system leadership. All of the programmes are informed by evidence and the expertise of leaders within and beyond education. They all support participants to develop more effective leadership behaviours, so they can drive improvement in schools and multi-academy trusts and help close the attainment gap.

The research team at TFLT for this project included: Evan Odell, Katy Theobald and Rosaria Votta.

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