

Education recruitment expert responds to looming headteacher crisis

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Following research by three education leadership organisations, which has found that schools in England could face a shortage of almost 20,000 heads by 2022, education recruitment expert, Baljinder Kuller, has outlined possible reasons behind failing talent pipelines.

The report, by the Future Leaders Trust, Teaching Leaders and TeachFirst, concluded that England could be facing a shortage of up to 19,000 senior teachers by 2022 if action is not taken to plug the gap. It found that one in four schools across the country could be affected by a lack of headteachers, deputy heads and assistant heads. It also argues that an increase in pupil numbers and more school leaders retiring and leaving the profession early, along with increasing demand for senior staff to work at academy trusts, means that more people are needed to step into top roles.

Baljinder Kuller has been on the front line of teacher recruitment for over 15 years, working both within local authorities and third party recruitment consultancies before becoming managing director of online portal, The Supply Register.

Commenting on the analysis, Kuller said:

"It's unsurprising that leading organisations have forecast a looming headteacher crisis. According to the NUT, 92% of schools are expecting to have real term cuts by 2020. Teachers are dropping out of the profession at an alarming rate and without robust pipelines there will not be sufficient talent available to lead schools for the next generation. According to the Public Accounts Committee, the Department for Education has 'repeatedly' missed its own targets to fill teacher training places and warns of 'significant' shortfalls for teachers. Furthermore, it criticises the DfE for showing 'little curiosity' about the size and extent of teacher shortages, claiming it does not understand the gravity of the situation and assumes that head teachers will deal with gaps. Against this backdrop, how are schools supposed to develop future leaders?"

"This climate is creating what some commentators have labelled a supply paradox. As teacher shortages mean the traditional 'black book' approach to supply staffing becomes less feasible, agencies are increasingly called in to source talent. The lower pay and poor CPD support offered by some agencies can demotivate and discourage teachers – worsening the shortage. Put simply, the agency 'solution' could be contributing to the problem."

"Add to that the fact that the new breed of headteachers are expected to manage schools as businesses, with the requisite procurement capabilities, and it's clear that there must be a shift in the way that leaders are trained and talent is pipelined. This could spell the end of the role of the traditional headteacher, where those training to be teachers become subject specialists and a new form of school leader is developed."

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