

## **Report of the Leading Women to Headship Summit, 15<sup>th</sup> January 2016 at Mulberry School for Girls, London**

### **Summit Aspirations**

Women headteachers are still under-represented in our schools, with the number of female heads falling short of the proportion of women in teaching. Leading Women to Headship - The Summit, brought together 86 delegates as aspiring headteachers, policy makers and influencers and 28 speakers, researchers and facilitators, most of whom have researched and published in the field of equalities and diversity in headship. We considered ways in which we might address the gender imbalance in headship in our schools in order to build both the quantity and quality of headteachers, thereby improving the likelihood of every school, and groups of schools, being led by an effective Headteacher

The Summit provided both practical tips for women seeking to secure headships and considered the changes we need to make in the wider educational landscape to enable their progression. This culminated in the creation of a Women into Headship Pledge, to be adopted by schools and organisations around the country, thereby ensuring that equalities and diversity informs the school-led education system. In addition, a network of potential Coach /mentors and school leaders wanting mentoring into headship was established.

### **Aims**

The aims of the Summit were:

1. To provide top tips to women seeking headship/executive headship now or in the future, as well as advice for governors/recruiting panels appointing to headship.
2. To examine the systems and practices that deter and prevent women succeeding in headship applications, and identify what can be done about it.
3. To create and agree a Pledge for Action.

### **The Organisers**

The Leading Women to Headship Summit was established by the Leading Women's Alliance - an alliance of leadership and academic organisations (ASCL, Future Leaders, UCL/loE, #WomenEd) and schools (Mulberry School for Girls and Hackney Teaching Schools Alliance).

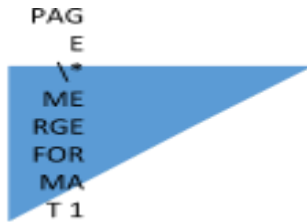
The Summit delivery group included Carol Jones, Chair of the Alliance and ASCL Specialist for Leadership Development; Dr. Kate Chhatwal, Chief Programme Officer at The Future Leaders Trust; Ruth Smith, Deputy Headteacher and Shanaz Begum Executive Assistant to Headteacher Dr. Vanessa Ogden, both from Mulberry School for Girls, as well as Helen Edwards, School Business Leader at Hackney Teaching School Alliance.

The day was informed by a range of research evidence and practical expertise. It provided practical tips for women seeking to secure headships and considered the changes we need to make in the wider educational landscape to enable their progression.

### **Evaluation**

The Summit was described by delegates as 'inspiring', 'life-changing', 'incredible', 'transformative'. It was certainly a dynamic and inspiring day which, hopefully, will have a positive impact on individual women leaders aspiring to headship, increase the headship talent pool and transform the systems that limit leadership recruitment. Our hope is that all of this will, in turn, improve the life chances of our children and young people by growing great headteachers and principals to lead our schools.

### **Outcomes**



The Leading Women's Pledge was developed and finalised by the planning group. In addition, of the 86 delegates in attendance, 80 wish to be in a Leading Women to Headship Network for coaching /mentoring – 68 mentees and 12 mentors who are NLEs and system leaders.

The planning group of the Leading Women's Alliance met on 10<sup>th</sup> February to agree the Leading Women to Headship Strategic Plan



## **The Leading Women to Headship Strategic Plan (2016-17) and Pledge**



**Launched on International Women's Day, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2016**

*Twitter @LeadingWomenHT*

The Leading Women to Headship Strategic Plan is an annual plan which aims to implement the outcomes, including The Pledge, from the Leading Women to Headship Summit, held on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2016 in London<sup>1</sup>, in which over 100 female school and system leaders and policy makers developed a set of strategies to address the gender imbalance in school headship. This serves to build both the quantity and quality of headteachers, thereby improving the likelihood of every school, and groups of schools, being led by an effective Headteacher.

The Leading Women to Headship Strategic Plan has been compiled by The Leading Women's Alliance (LWA), an alliance of leadership and academic organisations (*ASCL, The Future Leaders Trust, UCL/IOE and #WomenEd*) and schools (*Mulberry School for Girls and Hackney Teaching Schools Alliance*). The overall objectives summarised here are supported by a detailed action-plan held by the coordinating team who will monitor and evaluate actions on a half termly basis.

Our objectives have been prioritised as follows:

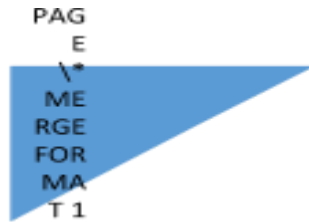
1. To disseminate and implement the Leading Women to Headship Pledge across schools, governing boards /recruitment panels, leadership organisations and government. The Pledge operates at both organisational, system level and at individual, professional level. It serves to influence change in practice across the school system in order to counteract factors that may deter or prevent women being recruited to headship and which supports authentic leadership for women in headship
2. To coach, mentor and apprentice a network of women considering headship/executive headship by matching aspiring heads to experienced, serving women headteachers who will encourage and support women into headship.

3. To create and deliver a professional development framework made up of programmes for the following groups:
  - (a) Governing boards /interview panels in order to challenge gender inequity through unconscious bias
  - (b) Aspiring women leaders which will enable them to approach headship with confidence, with a secure knowledge and skills base and with a peer network which nurtures women heads nationally
  - (c) Support for new women heads in their first year of headship.
4. To develop a Leading Women to Headship pool of researchers, speakers and facilitators who effectively present key issues to a wide range of audiences and who continue to research inequity in school leadership.

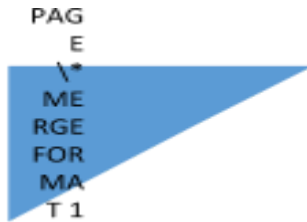
### **The Leading Women to Headship National Pledge**

***We want to encourage and empower more women to take up headship and pledge the following:***

- 1. As recruiters, to do all we can to manage explicit and unconscious bias in the recruitment process, and consider whether roles could be offered part-time or as job-share.**
  - a. Adverts stipulate openness to job-shares or part-time working where feasible
  - b. Use blind short-listing
  - c. Design interview and assessment to minimise impact of individual bias
  - d. Assessor training to include training on unconscious bias and taking unconscious bias test
  - e. Independent quality assurance of recruitment processes
  - f. Identify and monitor ineffective or discriminatory interview practice by governors, liaising with NGA to improve practice
- 2. As employers, to ensure there is no pay gap between men and women doing the same role.**
  - a. Develop and publish fair and transparent pay systems
  - b. Audit current pay structures and address any discrepancies



- c. Publish salary differences between male and female school leaders
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- 3. As leaders and mentors, to spot and nurture the female talent in our schools and communities, and champion aspiring female leaders at all levels (including in non-executive roles), promoting diversity wherever possible**
    - a. Use appraisal and professional reviews to systematically identify talent and potential – aiming to challenge our own unconscious bias to ensure diverse and underrepresented groups are equally spotted
    - b. Have explicit conversations with those whose talent has been identified – give them a ‘tap on the shoulder’
    - c. Work across schools in a MAT/LA/region to consider how best to identify, nurture and deploy talent to maximise opportunities for talented individuals
    - d. Create a culture of opportunity – distribute leadership opportunities; create/point people in the direction of training, mentoring and support programmes
    - e. Champion wellbeing, flexible working, job share etc. and ensure staff are aware of their rights
    - f. Be a role model of how to be a great leader and have a life
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- 4. As leadership development organisations, to provide programmes, mentors and support to empower women to feel confident about their own authentic leadership.**
    - a. Facilitate networking and match-making between people looking to job share
    - b. Provide more coaching/mentoring opportunities
    - c. More conferences and training opportunities – including pay negotiation; women-only personal development programmes; confidence building; voice projection and posture; ‘courageous leadership’ (BAME); ML to SL programmes
    - d. Give feedback
    - e. Encourage individuality
    - f. Share success stories
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- 5. As individuals, to be determined, resilient and committed to leading our schools so that every child receives a great education.**



- a. Always keep the 'why' in mind – vision, values and ethos with children at their heart – and revisit often
- b. Take time to reflect
- c. Look after own health and well-being
- d. Go for it! – recognising that you don't have to have mastered everything before taking the next step

**6. As colleagues and role models, to create a diverse and supportive network of female leaders and aspiring female leaders who share our goal of transforming the life chances of children and young people.**

- a. Walk the talk – be a role model of how to be a great leader and have a life; collectively demonstrate that there are many different approaches
- b. Join networking forums and contribute to them – as speakers, on twitter
- c. Commit to mentoring/coaching someone else and act as a role model – aspire and inspire; challenge and take risks
- d. Recognise and address your own unconscious bias
- e. Have the same high expectations and openness towards adults as we do to children
- f. Champion and advocate BAME leaders
- g. Be a governor
- h. Ensure male colleagues are attuned to the challenges women can face

*Please note that individuals and organisations may take on multiple roles in implementing the pledge. For example, a school could act as a recruiter, an employer and a leadership development organisation; an individual school leader might act as a recruiter, employer, leader and mentor, and colleague and role model; and a governing board/governors might act as a recruiter, employer, leaders and mentor, colleagues and role models.*