Department for Education

Evaluation of the Talented Leaders programme

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CFE Research

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Glossary

Ambition Institute: The name of organisation contracted to deliver the Talented Leaders programme (from September 2018), formerly known as Ambition School Leadership (2016-18) and prior to that, when the programme began, as Future Leaders Trust. Further information can be found on the website.[1]

DfE: The Department for Education is responsible for children's services and education, including early years, schools, higher and further education policy, apprenticeships and wider skills in England.

NCTL: The National College for Teaching and Leadership has been repurposed and no longer exists. NCTL's aims were to improve academic standards by recruiting and developing a workforce to meet the needs of the school system, and to help schools to help each other improve.

Matching pool: leaders who successfully completed the rigorous assessment and interview process and were invited to enter the matching process, with no guarantee of being matched to a school.

Matched and deployed: leaders who were successfully matched to a school and then took-up the position as part of the three-year Talented Leader programme.

SPA: Sampling Point A refers to fieldwork/research activities carried out within leaders/participants' first winter term on the programme (2015 for Cohort 1, 2016 for Cohort 2).

SPB: Sampling Point B refers to fieldwork/research activities carried out within leaders/participants' second winter term on the programme (2016 for Cohort 1, 2017 for Cohort 2).

SPC: Sampling Point C refers to fieldwork/research activities carried out within leaders/participants' final year of the programme (2018 for Cohort 1, 2019 for Cohort 2).

Talented Leaders programme: A programme designed by the Department for Education to tackle under-performance in schools by placing high quality leaders in headship roles within schools that were in challenging circumstances. These leaders were provided with support to develop and implement strategies for improving standards.

Talented Leaders: High quality leaders placed in headship roles within a school in challenging circumstances as part of the Talented Leaders programme. Talented Leaders were either existing headteachers or undertaking their first headteacher role.

Unmatched schools: Schools that did not recruit a headteacher through the Talented Leaders programme but started the matching process.

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[1] Ambition Institute web site: https://www.ambition.org.uk/

Executive Summary

Background and context

The Talented Leaders programme was launched by the Department for Education (DfE) in September 2014 and operated until July 2019. The aim of the Talented Leaders Programme was to tackle under-performance in schools by placing high quality leaders within underperforming school facing challenging circumstances and provide them with support to develop their skills and implement strategies to improve standards. The programme was designed to have an impact on four areas: leadership of school culture, leadership of the school, leadership of people, and leadership of teaching and learning.

Ambition Institute (then the Future Leaders Trust) was contracted by DfE to deliver the programme. As the delivery body, they were contracted to recruit, match and deploy at least 100 headteachers over two cohorts to schools in challenging circumstances and provide bespoke support packages to ensure commitment and engagement. In applying for the programme, leaders were expected to commit to relocating, to transform the school they were matched with and to remain in post for at least three years.

Evaluation aims and objectives

In February 2015, DfE contracted with CFE Research to undertake the evaluation of the programme. The overarching aim of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness and impact of the Talented Leaders programme in terms of enabling sustainable improvement in schools in challenging circumstances. Specifically, the evaluation looked to assess how effectively the programme was delivered; the extent to which the programme achieved its objectives including recruitment targets; and the programme's impact on school performance, staff, pupils and Talented Leaders.

Methodology

The approach was designed to draw on existing data as well as primary research through three inter-related phases. The evaluation captured evidence at key points throughout the programme to inform development of the programme and assess the overall impact.

A review was undertaken of 27 successful applications received from Talented Leaders who were part of the programme. Throughout the evaluation, Talented Leaders and wider staff and governors were consulted to capture their perceptions and experiences of the programme as well as its impact. Talented Leaders were invited to participate in an online survey at three sampling points to explore their experience of the programme and their self-reported impact. Staff and governors participated in an online survey at two sampling points.

A range of semi-structured interviews were undertaken with Talented Leaders, mentors and senior staff across the lifetime of the evaluation. The interviews explored their experience of the programme and the outcomes and impacts they had seen in the school. Interviews also included representatives from schools that expressed an interest in the programme but did not recruit a Talented Leader to capture their early reflections of the programme.

Key findings

Recruitment to the programme

At the outset of the programme, the aim was to recruit and match a total of 100 Talented Leaders across two cohorts to schools across England. However, only 32 Talented Leaders were matched and deployed to a school and 21 completed the full three-year programme. Reasons given to account for this by Ambition Institute staff highlighted a range of challenges. The programme did not attract sufficient numbers of applicants who were existing headteachers who were willing to relocate, and this was a key factor in opening the programme up to deputy headteachers; subsequently, more than half of all Talented Leaders recruited were previously deputy headteachers. Encouraging schools to apply was also a challenge due to concerns about the loss of control over who would be recruited as a headteacher of their school.

Overall, Talented Leaders were satisfied with the application and assessment process; however, there were lower levels of satisfaction with regard to the matching process provided by Ambition Institute and this did not improve between the two cohorts despite changes introduced to speed up the process (such as new exception processes to recruit schools and Talented Leaders). Instead of being matched to a school that had already signed-up to be part of the programme, a significant proportion of Talented Leaders applied directly for a headship position in a school and the school's engagement with the programme followed. This highlights the limitations of the matching process (due to the challenges highlighted above). Moreover, half of all Talented Leaders were interviewed alongside external candidates which suggests that the programme was not successful in addressing the concerns of schools in relation to compliance with employment law, (even after Ambition Institute shared a letter from DfE). That said, there was recognition by some employers that the programme offered high quality candidates which provides evidence that the credibility of the programme was high.

School level challenges

Almost all the schools Talented Leaders joined faced significant challenges. Some schools were in special measures and faced a range of urgent issues.

Common areas which Talented Leaders prioritised included:

- Developing a clear school vision
- Improving school leadership and management
- Implementing strategies to improve student outcomes
- Improving communication across the school, especially between the Talented Leader and senior leaders
- Improving teaching and learning (to influence pupil attainment)
- Improving pupil behaviour

In the majority of cases, Talented Leaders were considered by staff and governors to have made most of the major changes required to improve their school; however, further changes were still needed across a range of areas such as improving leadership of teaching and learning and/or improving pupil behaviour difficulties.

Reflections on the programme

Overall, Talented Leaders were satisfied with their experience on the programme. Satisfaction with the different elements of the programme was high across both experienced headteachers and deputy headteachers undertaking their first headship role. The programme components were considered to offer necessary and helpful support for both headteachers and deputy headteachers in carrying out their role even though it was initially designed for experienced headteachers. Talented Leaders reported very high satisfaction and effectiveness ratings for the Headship Reward Fund, Leadership Sustainability Fund and the mentor.

Despite the available access to support, some Talented Leaders would have welcomed additional support or training. Views on what any extra support should consist of this varied according to the issues within their school, and suggested the need was for this to be flexible, timely and tailored.

The key findings associated with each element of the programme are summarised below:

Mentor: Mentors were required to have considerable experience within a headship role and went through a selection process before joining the programme. Where an effective relationship was formed with the mentor this had a significant impact on the Talented Leader providing them with essential impartial support and advice. Key to the relationship was a good match between personalities and the mentor having significant experience of turning around a school in challenging circumstances. All Talented Leaders interviewed strongly valued the opportunity to gain support from an experienced headteacher, and often indicated that the mentor was the most valuable component of the support package provided. Pupil behaviour management was an area in which mentors often played a helpful role, as they were able to draw on their own experiences and share learning about what might work.

Leadership Sustainability Fund: All Talented Leaders accessed the Leadership Sustainability Fund and believed it was influential in the development of their serving senior and middle leaders. The Fund was a key motivating factor for Talented Leaders when deciding to participate in the programme and was described as vital to transform a school and develop the skills of staff.

Cluster meetings: Cluster meetings were co-ordinated and led by mentors. There were mixed views regarding the effectiveness of cluster meetings, primarily due to limited number of clusters across the programme. Where Talented Leaders were in geographically close clusters, meetings were more regular and therefore more successful which allowed networking opportunities and the sharing of ideas.

Residential training: There were mixed views regarding the residential training provided through the programme. Process and/or strategic sessions were of most use and networking opportunities were valued. However, those that had undertaken Future Leaders training considered that sessions were often similar to those previously undertaken and consequently found it less useful than those that had not undertaken this training.

Headship Reward Fund: This Fund was designed to support Talented Leaders' continued development and reward their achievements. The majority of Talented Leaders received this as a salary uplift, as intended by the programme although there were examples of this having been used to develop other staff in the school and for the development of the Talented Leader.

Impact

School level impacts

Talented Leaders reported school level impacts across the four key areas designed by the programme, alongside improvements in school morale:

Leadership of school culture: Talented Leaders reported making a positive impact on pupil behaviour and establishing a stronger overall school vision. Typically, staff and governors agreed with Talented Leaders and highlighted the positive impact of setting a clear vision at the outset. Some Talented Leaders reported that prioritising 'quick wins', particularly with regard to addressing behaviour issues, had been successful. However, these were not always well received by parents and attracted negative attention. Although some staff recognised progress had been made, they felt there was less impact seen on pupil behaviour than that reported by Talented Leaders. Progress had also been made on pupil attendance and staff effectively engaging with parents.

Leadership of the school: Staff witnessed a positive change in school management, particularly highlighting the effectiveness of having clear strategies in place to improve outcomes and Talented Leaders having a good working relationship with governors.

Leadership of people: Most Talented Leaders had experienced considerable staff turnover in the first couple of years at the school. This occurred for a variety of reasons: some left due to them not sharing the vision of the school or thought they could not meet the expectations required of them; some through restructuring to save money; and others as a result of the Talented Leader addressing underperformance.

This was challenging for Talented Leaders, staff and the schools as encouraging new staff to join an underperforming school was difficult. Initially, this led to a temporary increase in use of supply staff; something parents were often critical of in the first year. However, in the medium-term, this led to a more stable structure once permanent staff were recruited. Where required, effective performance management processes were established. Communication between the Talented Leader and the senior leadership team was also shown to improve, and headteacher visibility in general was raised.

Leadership of teaching and learning: Improvements in teaching and learning were reported by both Talented Leaders and staff and governors. This relates to a school-wide approach and the quality of teaching and learning. The development of a school plan was frequently reported, and improved leadership was utilised to cascade knowledge and skills through the school.

School morale: Many schools faced considerable challenges at the outset, and consequently staff morale was often low. Staff and governors indicated that the appointment of the Talented Leader had resulted in staff morale being higher than before the Talented Leader had been in post, though the extent of improvement varied.

The positive changes that had been achieved in the school were, in part, as a result of the training, support and funding offered through the programme, although attribution rates ranged considerably (between 15% and 80%). Talented Leaders were also able to draw upon skills and funding from the programme and other support (often from their MAT or local authority), alongside utilising the skills they already had.

Skills development for Talented Leaders and staff

Talented Leaders reported that the programme had a considerable impact on the development of the skills required to be a headteacher in a school in challenging circumstances. The types of skills Talented Leaders described as having been developed were wide-ranging; this reflected the diversity of experience encountered during their time on the programme, and existing skills.

Talented Leaders were able to pass on the leadership skills and capabilities they had developed onto senior leaders, middle leaders and others in their school. Senior and middle leaders reported that Talented Leaders had supported them and colleagues to develop new skills. Staff were often inspired by the change in leadership and regularly cited the positive effect it had on their levels of confidence through exposure to new experiences and tasks.

When joining the Talented Leader Programme, leaders were expected to remain with the school for at least three years (if relocation costs were given to a Talented Leader and they did not remain at the school for the three years they were required to pay all or part of this back). After three years, nearly half of the Talented Leaders planned to stay-on as the headteacher at the school whilst the others had already moved-on from the school or were planning to leave. Of those who had already moved on or planned to leave, none stated that they had only envisaged that it would be a three-year commitment when starting at their school. Reasons for leaving varied but included personal circumstance and wanting a new challenge. In most schools they had already secured a replacement head. Those who were staying at their school highlighted they wanted to 'finish the job' and ensure changes were sustained.

Chapter 1: Introduction and methodology

CFE Research was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to undertake the evaluation of the Talented Leaders programme that was implemented in September 2014 and ran until July 2019. The findings presented in this report will help DfE develop its understanding of the effectiveness and impact of the programme, and its component parts.

Background and context

Effective leadership is a key characteristic of well-performing schools and improving pupil outcomes. However, there is evidence that some schools, particularly those in challenging circumstances and/or in certain parts of the country, often struggle to recruit and retain excellent headteachers and this lack of leadership capacity forms a barrier to improvement.[2] The purpose of the Talented Leaders programme was to tackle under-performance in schools by placing high quality leaders within schools that were in challenging circumstances and providing them with support to develop and implement strategies to improve standards.

The Talented Leaders programme was established in order to provide schools in challenging circumstances with:[3]

- Additional opportunities to benefit from excellent proven leadership.
- Another route to find the headteachers that they need to boost leadership capacity, and to improve pupil outcomes.

Participants involved in the programme were offered:

- The opportunity to obtain experience and develop their skills in turning around an underperforming school.
- Support to enable them to develop professionally and to progress in their careers.
- Support for their first three years in post, with clear expectations about what they will deliver for the school in that time.

In return, DfE and NCTL anticipated that the Talented Leaders programme would strengthen succession planning and support effective exit strategies ensuring a sustainable future for participating schools should the headteacher decide to leave after the three-year deployment. Launched in September 2014, the Talented Leaders programme intended to match underperforming schools in challenging circumstances with headteachers who were outstanding leaders.

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[2] Day, C. et al (2007). *The impact of school leadership on school outcomes*. DCSF Research Report 108. London: NCSL & DCSF.

[3] NCTL Talented Leaders programme specification and procurement document.

Ambition Institute (then the Future Leaders Trust) was commissioned to deliver the Talented Leaders programme over a five-and-a-half-year period. As part of this they were required to recruit, match and deploy at least 100 participants to schools in challenging circumstances and provide bespoke support packages to ensure commitment and engagement. Initially the aims were as follows:

- **By September 2015:** Recruit, match and deploy Cohort 1 – at least 40 high quality participants for the programme within schools that meet the eligibility criteria for both the local area and the characteristics of the individual school.
- **By September 2016:** Recruit, match and deploy Cohort 2 – up to 60 high quality participants for the programme within schools that meet the eligibility criteria for both the local area and the characteristics of the individual school.

Those successfully recruited to a headship position through the programme were required to commit to transforming their school and to remain in post for at least three years. Central to the programme offer was a package of training[4] and support for Talented Leaders and their school that comprised of:

- Access to a £50,000 (excluding VAT) Leadership Sustainability Fund for each school
- Up to an additional £15,000 for Talented Leaders' continued development and reward
- Access to the Ambition Institute network through the Headship Institute
- Access to support from a mentor
- Residential training sessions
- Cluster meetings and networking with other Talented Leaders

Talented Leaders were expected to commit to relocating and received a contribution towards relocation costs as part of their support package. Following an extension to the period available to Ambition Institute for recruitment activity, the total number of Talented Leaders matched and deployed to a school was 32 in total (16 in each Cohort); however, of these, 3 left the post shortly after deployment and 21 completed the full three-years on the programme. More information on the programme and the recruitment challenges can be found in Appendix 1.

Evaluation aims and objectives

The overarching aim of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness and impact of the Talented Leaders programme in terms of enabling sustainable improvement in schools in challenging circumstances. This included exploration of the initial design, set-up and implementation of the programme, to better understand the reasons for the shortfall in recruitment as well as its operation and impact. Specifically, the evaluation assessed how effectively the programme was delivered; the extent to which the programme achieved its

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[4] More information about the package of training and support available is available in Appendix 1.

objectives including recruitment targets; and the programme's impact on school performance, staff, pupils and Talented Leaders.

The evaluation ran concurrent to the programme. The findings presented in this report provide a summative assessment of its impact and will inform the development of subsequent programmes by DfE and its partners.

Methodology

Since the number of recruited Talented Leaders were lower than anticipated, the scope of the evaluation and method was altered to ensure the research design was proportionate to the programme and deliverables.

The section below summarises the revised methodology for the evaluation.

Talented Leader survey – unchanged from original method

Talented Leaders were invited to participate in an online survey at three sampling points to explore the short, medium and longer-term outcomes of the programme:

- Sampling Point A (SPA) within their first winter term on the programme (2015 for Cohort 1 and 2016 for Cohort 2);
- Sampling Point B (SPB) within their second winter term on the programme (2016 for Cohort 1 and 2017 for Cohort 2)); and
- Sampling Point C (SPC) within their final year on the programme (2018 for Cohort 1 and 2019 for Cohort 2)).

In total:

- 26 responses were received to the SPA survey[5]
- 21 responses were received to the SPB survey[6]
- 15 responses were received to the SPC survey[7]

Staff and governor survey – unchanged from original method

Staff and governors were invited to participate in an online survey disseminated by Talented Leaders at Sampling Point A and C; by cascading the survey in this way, the number of staff and governors invited to participate is unknown.

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[5] Out of 30 (from across Cohorts 1 (n=14) and 2 (n=12)). Two Talented Leaders were confirmed as participants after the survey had closed.

[6] Out of 28 still on the programme (from across Cohorts 1 (n=13) and 2 (n=8)).

[7] Out of 19 still on the programme (from across Cohorts 1 (n=8) and 2 (n=7)).

In total:

- 354 submissions were received to the SPA survey from staff and governors[8]
- 103 submissions were received to the SPC survey from staff and governors[9]

Case studies – amended

The original method included 14 case study visits which was reduced to five. Originally, the case studies were planned to involve yearly visits and include interviews with: Talented Leaders, senior leaders, governors, Local Authority representatives and heads of neighbouring schools, complemented by focus groups with parents and students. An initial visit was undertaken with five schools in Cohort 1 (as planned). This was then supplemented with follow-up research conducted by telephone with two of the five schools (due to three Talented Leaders no longer working in their school) in the third year of a Talented Leaders' involvement in the programme (summer 2018).

The sample of 5 case study schools and associated research across Cohort 1 is highlighted in the table below (Table 1).

Table 1: Case study breakdown

School number	School Phase	Research undertaken Year 1	Research undertaken Year 2
School 1	Secondary	• 1 Talented Leader interview • 11 staff interviews (paired or single) • 1 parent focus group • 1 local authority interview	• 1 Talented Leader interview • 1 senior leader interview
School 2	Primary	• 1 Talented Leader interview • 4 staff interviews (single) • 1 parent focus group • 1 Academy Chief Executive • 1 Chairperson of the Board of Governors interview	• Not applicable
School 3	Secondary	• 1 Talented Leader interview • 6 staff interviews (paired) • 1 local authority interview • 1 Chairperson of the Board of Governors interview	• 1 Talented Leader interview • 2 senior leader interviews
School 4	Primary	• 1 Talented Leader interview • 3 staff interviews (paired) • 3 parent interviews (paired)	• Not applicable
School 5	Secondary	• 1 Talented Leader interview • 1 mentor interview • 1 Academy Trust Chief Executive	• Not applicable

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[8] Cohort 1 (n=136) and 2 (n=218).

[9] Cohort 1 (n=30) and 2 (n=73).

Depth interviews with Talented Leaders – new aspect added

Five semi-structured interviews with Talented Leaders not in case study schools were undertaken. This increased the breadth of qualitative views gained from Talented Leaders due to the reduction in the number of case studies. The interviews explored their experience of the programme and the outcomes and impacts they have achieved in their school.

Depth interviews with mentors and senior leaders – new aspect added

Four semi-structured interviews with mentors and one senior leader (not in a case study school) were undertaken. This increased the breadth of qualitative views gained and complemented the interviews undertaken with senior leaders during the case studies. The interviews explored their experience of the programme and the outcomes and impacts achieved within the schools.

Depth interviews with unmatched schools – new aspect added

Two semi-structured interviews with representatives from schools that expressed an interest in the programme but subsequently recruited a new school leader through other channels and, therefore, were not part of the programme. Interviews were undertaken with respondents involved in the decision-making process to capture their early reflections of the programme, their reasons for not recruiting a Talented Leader and subsequent changes in their school.

Depth interviews with contractor – amended

Yearly depth interviews with staff employed by Ambition Institute was initially planned. This was undertaken in the first two years of the evaluation but was then discontinued.

Review of Talented Leader application data

Twenty-seven successful applications from those Talented Leaders who were still on the programme were shared by Ambition Institute. This application data was reviewed, primarily focusing on the regions they were happy to relocate to and reasons for not wanting to relocate to other areas.

About this report

This report presents the findings from the five surveys and the qualitative research. Survey responses for Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 have been combined for each survey wave (e.g. SPA). Differences in the findings by school phase, cohort of the programme and prior role of the Talented Leader have been explored across all Talented Leader survey responses. All differences have been tested for statistical significance and only those that are statistically significant at the 5% level are reported in the commentary of the report. Very few sub-group differences were identified and any that were identified are described in the report. The apparent absence of sub-group differences may in part be due to the reduced scale of the research and low participant numbers, and caution should be applied when reviewing the findings.

The interviews produced a significant volume of qualitative data which were thematically coded. Due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews no inferences can be drawn about the scale or frequency of attitudes or opinions. For this reason, responses to a theme have not been quantified. To aid the reader an assessment of the proportion of interviewees who have commented under a given theme have been provided. However, please note that other interviewees may have had similar opinions or undertaken these activities but did not describe them during their interview. Throughout the report, findings from interviews are presented alongside survey findings.

This report is structured around five key chapters. Chapter 2 provides an overview of motivations for schools and Talented Leaders joining the programme and their perceptions of the recruitment process. Chapter 3 describes Talented Leaders' experiences of the different elements of the programme. Chapter 4 outlines the impact of the programme on skills development and capabilities for Talented Leaders and staff. Chapter 5 focuses on the impact that the programme has had on the school. The final chapter draws out conclusions and assesses the extent to which the programme achieved its aims and objectives.

Chapter 2: Experience of the recruitment process

Introduction

This chapter describes the success of the programme in meeting recruitment targets and provides a summary of the motivations and challenges underlying Talented Leaders and schools' decision to participate in the programme. It explores the influence of the programme's support package on participants' decision to apply. The chapter also examines the experience of the application, assessment and matching processes from the perspectives of the Talented Leader and the school. Findings are based on analysis of survey data and follow-up interviews with Talented Leaders and school staff.

Key findings

- In total 32 Talented Leaders were matched and deployed to a school, and 21 stayed at the school for the full three years. This was significantly lower than the target of 100 recruited and matched recruits. This highlights the challenge of recruiting experienced headteachers and encouraging leaders to relocate in order to work in the most complex and challenging schools.

- Almost all Talented Leaders were experienced deputy or headteachers having worked in the teaching profession for over 11 years. Most were already looking for a headship role prior to applying to the programme, whether they were already at this level or not.

- Although the initial design of the programme was the expectation that Talented Leaders would relocate, contribution towards relocation costs was not a strong influencing factor for Talented Leaders to join the programme for either those who did or those who did not relocate. Talented Leaders were primarily motivated to engage with the programme to make a positive impact on pupils and the school rather than for their own development or personal gains.

- From the training and support options available through the Talented Leaders programme, access to support from a mentor, participation in cluster meetings and access to the Leadership Sustainability Fund had the most influence on Talented Leaders' decisions to apply to the programme.

- Overall, Talented Leaders were satisfied with the application and assessment process. However, they were less satisfied with the matching process; this was despite changes made between Cohort 1 and 2 to speed up the process, such as new exception criteria.

- All schools that participated in the recruitment process (and successfully appointed a Talented Leader) were satisfied with the quality of the Talented Leaders presented for consideration to them, and stated the matching process worked well.

Recruitment against targets

The original aim of the Talented Leaders programme was the requirement to match and deploy at least 100 Talented Leaders to eligible schools. Individuals who were in a headship post or who had at least one year's experience in an interim headship post and met a series of associated criteria were invited to apply to the programme. Successful candidates then joined the Talented Leaders matching pool. Schools were recruited from specific areas[10] across the country that would potentially benefit most from the Talented Leaders programme. A process of negotiating and decision-making between Talented Leaders, participating schools and other stakeholders (such as local authorities, governors or academy trust members) was undertaken to create a match. In total, across two cohorts 32 Talented Leaders were matched and deployed to a school; this was significantly lower than expected. Two-thirds (21) stayed on the programme for the full three years.

Interviews with Ambition Institute highlighted that the set-up and implementation phase was more complex and challenging than originally expected, the challenges are outlined below:

- The programme did not attract sufficient numbers of applicants who were existing headteachers. It appealed more to those in a deputy headship role.
- Although relocation was a key aspect of the programme, when matched, some applicants were not willing to relocate.
- Eligible schools within selected priority areas were not always interested in applying for a Talented Leader.
- Schools did not want to be constrained during the recruitment of a headteacher by the expectation they would recruit through the Talented Leaders programme only; a method they would have little control over. Schools were also concerned about whether this contravened recruitment guidelines set out by their local authority.
- Low numbers of schools and leaders contributed to a mismatch between the phase of schools who were interested in the programme and the phase experience of the Talented Leaders in the matching pool (see appendix 1 for details).

Motivations of Talented Leaders to join

About Talented Leaders

The overwhelming majority of Talented Leaders (25 out of 26) who responded to the SPA survey (Sampling Point A – undertaken at the start of a Talented Leaders engagement in the programme) had been working in the teaching profession for 11 years or more. Prior to becoming a Talented Leader, 14 were deputy headteachers, 10 were headteachers and two were acting headteachers. One-third (9) of all Talented Leaders also reported

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[10] Predominantly those in rural, coastal or deprived areas.

previous leadership experience through having a paid professional role which involved leadership and management prior to entering the teaching profession.

Most (21 out of 26) Talented Leaders were already looking for a headship role in another school before they applied to the programme. This includes deputy headteachers looking for their first headship post and existing heads looking for a new role. Of these, most (15) reported that they would have applied for a role as a headteacher in a school in challenging circumstances without the support of the programme. However, only six stated that they would have relocated to take up a headship post without the Talented Leaders programme. Twelve Talented Leaders stated they did not want to relocate and 3 were unsure; only 5 (responding to the survey) relocated through the programme.

The majority of respondents (21 out of 26) were aware of Ambition Institute before they applied to the programme. Of those who were aware, 11 had previously taken part in one of their programmes or received support from them. Talented Leaders reported they found out about the programme through a variety of methods, the most common being direct communications from Ambition Institute (9) or from TES (8).

Reasons for applying to the programme

It is clear that Talented Leaders were motivated primarily by wanting to bring about a positive impact on pupils and the overall school (see Figure 1).[11] This reflects the initial intentions of the programme and indicates the programme had successfully recruited those with the desired characteristics. Statements such as having job security, involvement in a prestigious programme, and working in a different school environment tended to be considered as lower priorities. However, internal drivers (for example developing leadership skills, access to development opportunities and career progression) were rated fairly highly.

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[11] Talented Leaders were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with statements about why they wished to become a Talented Leader (on a scale of 1-7, where 1=strongly disagree and 7= strongly agree).

Figure 1: Mean score for reasons for applying to the Talented Leaders programme

Reason	Mean score
Ensure all pupils have the same opportunities regardless of background	6.8
Improve the educational experience of pupils	6.8
Improve pupil outcomes	6.8
Transform a school	6.7
Improve the quality of teaching within schools	6.7
Make a positive impact on the local community	6.7
Improve the quality of leadership within schools	6.5
Develop my own leadership skills	6.4
Access the development opportunities available through the programme	6.2
Develop the leadership skills of other staff	6.2
Progress in my career	5.7
Work in a different school environment	4.8
Be involved in a prestigious and high-profile programme	4.3
Have job security	2.7

To what extent participants agree with statements about why they applied to become a Talented Leader (Scale of 1-7, where 1=strongly disagree and 7= strongly agree).

Nearly half (11 out of 26) of all Talented Leaders stated that 'transforming a school' was the most important reason for applying to the programme; a similar number (10) stated 'ensuring all pupils have the same opportunities regardless of background'. For three Talented Leaders, their main reason was personal (to develop their leadership skills, access development opportunities, and become a headteacher).

These views were largely supported through the case studies and depth interviews, with most highlighting the need to make a difference and improve the lives of children:

> I'm completely driven by a sense of moral purpose to make sure that children make progress and have the best possible start in life, regardless of their background. –*Talented Leader*

> I came from a very similar neighbourhood… it's that moral purpose of the importance of education and it's absolutely changed my life, and it's about me giving that back now, to make sure that I use that power to change other students' lives. –*Talented Leader*

Most interviewed were also motivated by the chance to work in a school in challenging circumstances (even if they had not themselves worked in those schools before). On joining they were looking forward to the opportunity and challenge of 'turning around' or 'transforming' a school. A range of other factors motivated headteachers who were

interviewed to join the Talented Leaders programme. The support available on the programme was referred to by some (as described in the next section). Some deputy headteachers valued the career progression opportunity since they were at a point in their career when they were ready to progress; one indicated they had been actively seeking a headship for some time without success.

The influence of support packages

Talented Leaders had the opportunity to access a range of different sources of support through the programme. Talented Leaders responding to the SPA survey were most influenced to apply to the programme to gain support from a mentor as demonstrated in Figure 2 (5.8 out of 6). This was closely followed by access to the Leadership Sustainability Fund and cluster meetings/networking with other Talented Leaders (both at 5.6). Although relocation was a key aspect of the programme, the contribution towards relocation costs was not an influential factor for either those who did or those who did not relocate.

Figure 2: The extent to which Talented Leaders agree that training and support from the programme influenced their decision to apply
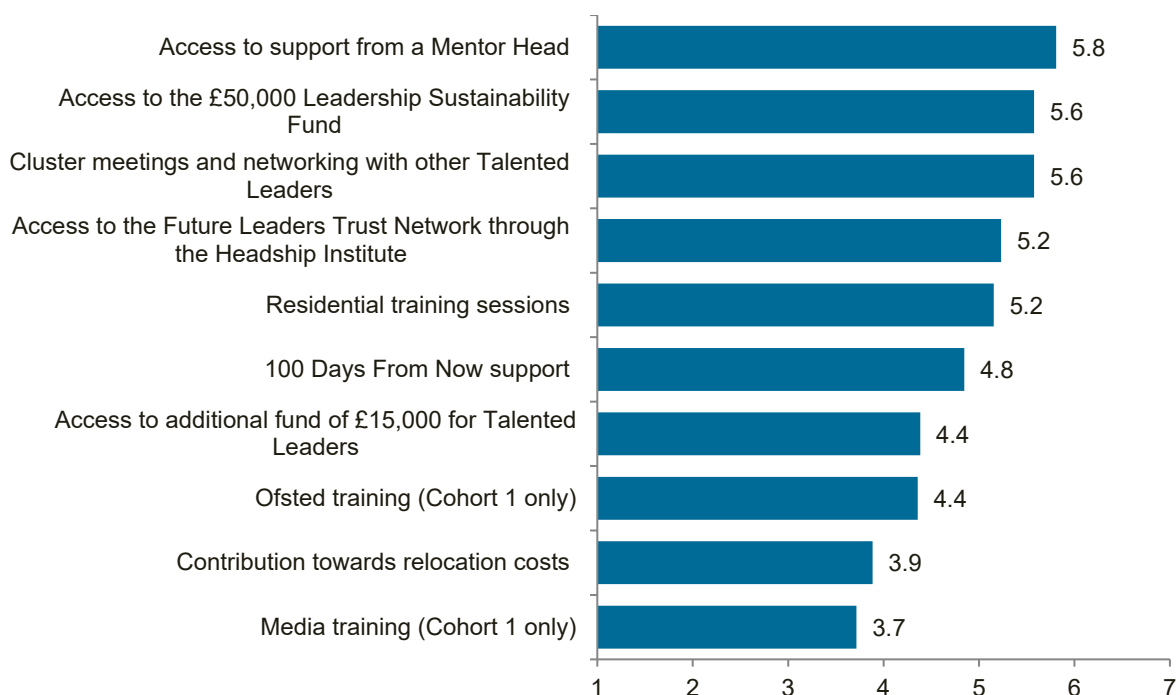
Mean score for influencing factors: on a scale of 1-7, where 1= strongly disagree and 7= strongly agree. If you were unaware of the training and support packages available, please select not applicable.

Talented Leaders were also asked to identify the element that was most influential on their decision to apply to the programme. One-third (8) stated support from a mentor, six stated access to the £50,000 Leadership Sustainability Fund, four access to the Headship Institute (called the Future Leaders Trust network when the survey was undertaken) and three cluster meetings and networking. Only one Talented Leader stated contribution towards relocation costs had influenced their decision.

Analysis of case studies and depth interviews reinforced these findings. These highlighted the importance of the Leadership Sustainability Fund as a key motivating factor in their decision to apply for the Talented Leaders programme as it was perceived to be vital to transform a school and develop the skills of staff.

Access to support was particularly influential for those in their first headship post giving them reassurance they weren't *"going into it alone"*. The type of support differed with some highlighting the role of the mentor whilst others reported networks and cluster groups.

> As a new head… I thought it would be another level of support which I could tap into, so that was certainly something which I thought would be a positive thing. –*Talented Leader*

School motivations for joining the programme

In total, 29 respondents to the staff and governor survey at SPA had been either involved in the school's decision to appoint a headteacher from the Talented Leaders programme and/or involved in recruiting the headteacher (three were involved in both aspects).

Respondents to the staff and governor survey frequently reported they did not specifically choose to recruit a candidate who was on the Talented Leaders programme, rather this had occurred as a result of the Talented Leader applying for the role of headteacher outside of the programme (Table 1). This reflects the challenges identified earlier in the chapter with the matching process. Only two indicated that they wanted to recruit someone from the programme to fill a vacancy that they had not been able to fill for a long time through other channels.

The same staff and governors were asked to describe the difficulties their school had experienced in recruiting and retaining[12] a headteacher. Nine stated that they experienced difficulties recruiting a headteacher whilst six encountered no problems. Five of 11 respondents (who provided a response) experienced difficulties retaining a headteacher (of which three also experienced difficulties recruiting a headteacher).

> Great difficulty. Several heads were unable to provide good leadership until the current headteacher. –*SPA staff and governor survey respondent*

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[12] The retention question was only asked of staff and governors whose Talented Leader was in Cohort 2 of the programme.

Table 2: Reasons given for why a respondent reported their school had decided to recruit someone from the Talented Leaders programme.

Category	Number of respondents
Headteacher applied directly for post (not through programme)	12
Thought the programme would offer high quality candidates	8
Headteacher was the best candidate and not as a result of being a Talented Leader	3
We had a vacancy that we had not been able to fill for a long time	2
Our Regional Schools Commissioner/MAT put us forward	2
Don't know	4
Base (Number of respondents answering the question)	**29**

Multiple response question, staff and governor survey.

Most interviewed schools had not gone through the matching process (they had recruited a Talented Leader through a traditional recruitment process). However, they were supportive of the headteacher participating on the programme. For some this was partially due to the support package that comes with the Talented Leader. Some, particularly those who had prior knowledge of Ambition Institute, regarded the organisation highly:

> [Talented Leader] said he had done the Future Leaders programme, I obviously supported [the programme] 100 per cent and thought it would be a brilliant move for him, but also for the Academy going forward. –*Executive headteacher*

Interviews with unmatched schools (schools that did not ultimately recruit a headteacher through the programme) identified difficulties with recruitment as the main reason for wanting to join the programme:

> One of the issues when you are working in difficult to recruit areas is exactly that – encouraging people to move to coastal towns in the North West of England which are not very sexy. It was about how do we get the word out? How do we attract a high-quality candidate for this challenging environment? You want to draw from the widest possible pool of talent available. –*Unmatched school interview*

One also highlighted that this was a lower cost alternative to traditional recruitment routes.

Experience of the process of becoming a Talented Leader

Overall satisfaction levels

Talented Leaders who were successfully matched to a school were satisfied with the overall process of becoming a Talented Leader (as reported at SPA). However, they were less satisfied with the matching process (see Figure 3)[13]. There was little change between Talented Leaders in Cohort 1 and 2 despite changes having been made to the matching process.

Figure 3: How satisfied Talented Leaders were with aspects of the programme

Aspect	Score
The support received from your Mentor Head	6.3
The overall assessment process	6.3
The assessment centre	6.3
The support received from the Future Leaders Trust	6.2
Your overall experience of the programme so far	6.2
The written application form	6.0
The residential training	5.9
The matching process	5.0
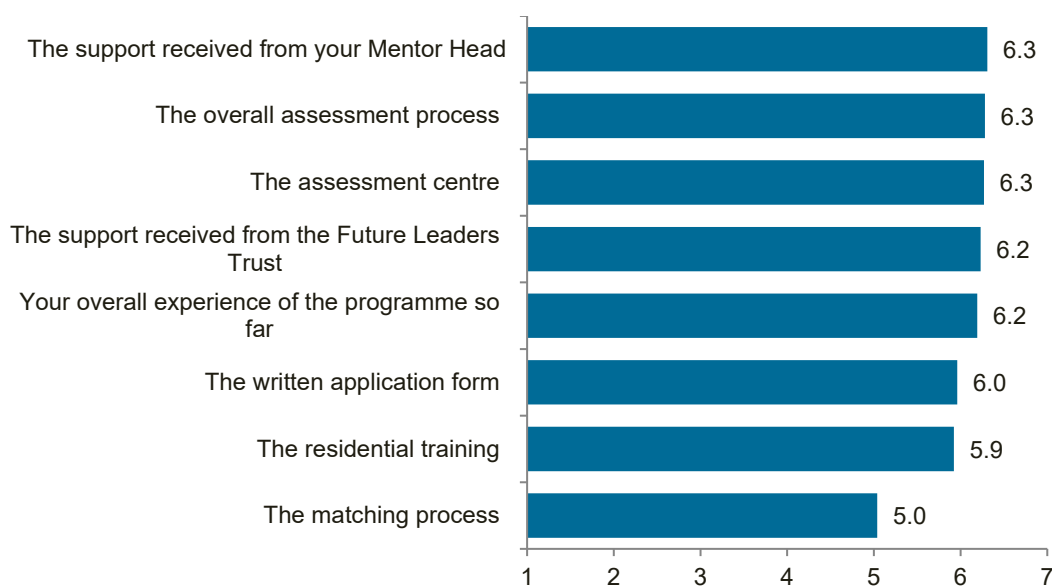
Mean satisfaction score on a scale of 1-7, where 1=very dissatisfied and 7= very satisfied. If unaware of an aspect select not applicable.

Experience of the assessment process

Most Talented Leaders who were interviewed were positive about the assessment process. Those that had been through the Future Leaders programme indicated that the process was similar with no major surprises. Most described that the process was well organised and provided them with the opportunity to 'make their case' as to why they want to be a Talented Leader.

> I felt as if when I walked out of the place I thought, well if they don't know me now,' I mean, I'm an honest person, and I spoke very freely, and they got a sense of who I am and what I'm about, what sort of leader, so I was very happy that I was given the opportunity to communicate what sort of leader I was. From that perspective, what more could I ask? –*Talented Leader*

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[13] Talented Leaders were asked to rate how satisfied they were with different aspects of the application, assessment and matching process (on a scale of 1-7, where 1=very dissatisfied and 7= very satisfied).

One Talented Leader indicated that the assessment process was challenging and felt 'delivering your first staff meeting' was an artificial aspect that did not assess their skills accurately.

Experience of the matching process

The Talented Leader experience

Most Talented Leaders (18 out of 26) reported through the SPA survey they were only matched to one school. The remaining eight were matched to two, three or four schools. Of these, five Talented Leaders turned down one or more of the schools they were matched to. The participants who did turn down a matched school had different reasons for this including location, short timescales for the interview and the vision of the school not aligning with their views.

In some instances, the Talented Leaders who were interviewed found their own post and then worked with Ambition Institute to get the school approved to be on the programme.

> I went through the assessment process and then it was that I found this school, rather than being placed in this school. So I found a school that matched my ethos, rather than them saying, 'will you go to this school'. *–Talented Leader*

One Talented Leader was highly critical of the matching process, suggesting that it "failed completely in my instance". On this occasion the participant was asked to apply for three headships in one local authority area all of which were unsuccessful. The Talented Leader reported this was because the schools had not themselves agreed to consider applicants from the programme but had been influenced by external pressures. Another participant described how schools did not necessarily have the confidence in the Talented Leader recruitment process and therefore still required candidates to go through their own assessment procedures which made the process lengthy. This again reflects the challenges highlighted by Ambition Institute.

School experience

The staff and governors directly involved in the recruitment of the Talented Leader were satisfied with the quality of the Talented Leaders presented for consideration (6.5) and the support received from the mentor at the start of the programme (6.3) (see Figure 4). However, as Figure 4 demonstrates, a considerable number of respondents answered 'don't know' to each question. For those that did answer the series of questions, most thought the matching process worked well for them; however, this may be as a result of them being able to continue to use their own processes alongside the Talented Leader matching process.

Figure 4: How satisfied staff and governors were with aspects of the programme

Mean score | Actual scores

The quality of the Talented Leader/s presented for consideration (base=22): 6.5 — actual scores: 2, 7, 13, 7

The support received from the Mentor Head (base=16): 6.3 — actual scores: 1, 3, 3, 9, 13

The matching process with your school (base=16): 6.1 — actual scores: 3, 8, 5, 13

The support received from the Future Leaders Trust (base=18): 5.9 — actual scores: 3, 3, 4, 8, 11

Your overall experience of the programme so far (base=25): 5.9 — actual scores: 1, 2, 4, 9, 9, 4

Scale: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 — 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 dk

Mean score rated on a scale of 1-7, where 1=very dissatisfied and 7= very satisfied. dk represents 'don't know'

There were mixed opinions from the two unmatched school interviewees about the process. Both had either a prior awareness of the programme through professional contacts or experience of staff who had been through the Future Leaders programme. In both instances they were aware of the quality assurance procedures that Talented Leaders went through and had confidence in this. Interviewees reported that communication during the process was positive, with one indicating that any delays in the process were completely school related rather than due to the programme itself.

One of these schools described how they had felt restricted by the expectation that they should only interview prospective Talented Leader candidates, rather than as part of a wider pool of candidates. For this individual, the ability to draw from as wide a candidate pool as possible was a 'deal breaker' and consequently pulled out of the process:

> As I understood it at the time was that they'd make the decision on which person would be allocated for this particular post. I wasn't prepared to hand over that decision to another organisation. I felt that was our decision. I wanted to be able to select from the widest pool but I did not want an external organisation to make that critical decision for us. That was a bit of a deal breaker. *–Unmatched school interview*

In the second instance the interviewee indicated that they interviewed two Talented Leader candidates, however, both were unsuccessful. They reported that one candidate did not demonstrate sufficient commitment to relocating and the other did not have the right personal qualities and skills to work in their school.

Chapter 3: Experience on the programme

Introduction

In this chapter we report on the effectiveness of the components of the support package and any underlying facilitators or barriers to their use. It also describes the extent of take up of each across the programme. Analysis is based on self-reported data provided by survey responses and follow-up interviews with Talented Leaders as well as interviews with staff, governors and mentors. Finally, the chapter explores the influence that relocation had on Talented Leaders' experience of the programme.

Key findings

- Talented Leaders interviewed at various stages in the programme were positive about their experience of the programme. The support package provided them with resources to help them transition into what was often their first headship position and to make changes in a school that was experiencing multiple challenges.

- Talented Leaders engaged with most components of the programme, they considered the majority of these to be satisfactory and to have enabled them to make the changes required.

- All the Talented Leaders interviewed valued the opportunity to gain support from an experienced headteacher and often indicated that the support of a mentor was the most valuable component of the support package provided.

- Talented Leaders used the Leadership Sustainability Fund to offer considerable programmes of CPD to staff and had enabled them to build a strong leadership team. For the most part this was resource that would not have been accessed without the fund.

- Networking opportunities provided through cluster meetings and residential training sessions were welcomed by Talented Leaders. However, not all cluster meetings functioned as effectively as others, in part, due to the low numbers on the programme which made distances required to travel significant.

- There were mixed opinions about the usefulness of residential training. Talented Leaders with previous experience on Ambition Institute training programmes described the content as repetitive.

- A high proportion of Talented Leaders who were undertaking their first headship role, typically in a school in challenging circumstances, indicated that they were able to access support when faced with difficult situations (often for the first time). This suggests the programme components offered necessary and helpful support for them in carrying out their role even though it was initially designed for experienced headteachers.

- Whilst there were some examples where Talented Leaders did relocate, most did not, therefore highlighting the challenges associated with implementing this feature of the programme.

Experience of engagement with the different elements of the programme

Talented Leaders responding to the SPB survey had engaged with most elements of the programme (see Table 2). Talented Leaders considered the majority of these to be satisfactory and effective in enabling them to introduce change (see Figure 7).

Table 3: Aspects of the programme Talented Leaders reported using

Category	Number of respondents
Received support from a mentor	21
Accessed the Leadership Sustainability Fund	20
Attended cluster meetings and networking with other Talented Leaders	18
Attended residential training sessions	17
Received the additional fund of £15,000 for the continued development and reward of Talented Leaders	17
Submitted programme monitoring data (e.g. development tracking forms, performance management targets and 360 feedback tool)	17
Accessed the Ambition Institute network through the Headship Institute	12
Received Ofsted training*	3
Received Media training*	1
Another aspect of the programme not listed	3
Base (Number of respondents answering the question)	**21**

*Only available for Cohort 1 Talented Leaders

Multiple response question.

Talented Leaders found that in practice the most impactful elements of the support package were those that initially motivated them to apply to the programme.[14] The £15,000 development fund for Talented Leaders and the Leadership Sustainability Fund received mean scores above 6 (out of 7) for both satisfaction and effectiveness in enabling them to bring about changes in their school.

The majority of the remaining elements of the programme scored fairly highly, although some that were regularly accessed did receive lower scores such as access to the Headship Institute and programme monitoring requirements. The overall structure of the programme gained a mean score of 5.4 for satisfaction and 5.5 for effectiveness. Further detail on different elements of the programme are discussed in the next section.

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[14] Talented Leaders were asked how satisfied they were with the elements used (on a scale from 1-7, where 1=very dissatisfied and 7=very satisfied) and the how effective these aspects had been in enabling them to make changes which have led to a positive impact on their school (on a scale from 1-7, where 1=very ineffective and 7=very effective).

Figure 5: Talented Leaders' satisfaction with, and effectiveness of, different elements of the Talented Leaders programme

Mean satisfaction score

Element	Score
The additional fund of £15,000 for Talented Leader's continued development and reward (base=17)	6.5
The Leadership Sustainability Fund (base=20)	6.4
Support from a Mentor Head (base=21)	6.0
Attending residential training sessions (base=17)	5.6
The overall structure of the programme (base=21)	5.4
Cluster meetings and networking with other Talented Leaders (base=18)	5.3
Ofsted training (base=3)	5.0
The programme monitoring required from the Future Leaders Trust (base=17)	5.0
The Future Leaders Trust network through the Headship Institute (base=12)	4.9
Media training (base=1)	4.0

Mean effective score

Element	Score
The additional fund of £15,000 for Talented Leader's continued development and reward (base=17)	6.1
The Leadership Sustainability Fund (base=20)	6.4
Support from a Mentor Head (base=21)	5.8
Attending residential training sessions (base=17)	5.5
The overall structure of the programme (base=21)	5.5
Cluster meetings and networking with other Talented Leaders (base=18)	5.4
Ofsted training (base=3)	5.7
The programme monitoring required from the Future Leaders Trust (base=17)	4.9
The Future Leaders Trust network through the Headship Institute (base=12)	5.1
Media training (base=1)	2.0

Both questions used a mean score, scale of 1-7 where 1= very dissatisfied and 7= very satisfied

Overall, Talented Leaders who were still on the programme at SPC were satisfied with the overall experience of programme (n=15) with a mean score of 6.0 out of 7[15]. All Talented Leaders scored this at 5 or more out of 7 indicating they were satisfied with the programme.

> This has been the best CPD that I have undertaken in the whole of my career. –*Talented Leader*

Talented Leaders interviewed at various stages in the programme were positive about their participation. The support package provided them with resources to help them transition into what was often their first headship position. That is not to say that there were not criticisms of aspects of the programme, particularly around the matching process (as previously discussed) and certain aspects of the support package.

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[15] On a scale from 1-7, where 1=very dissatisfied and 7=very satisfied.

One Talented Leader indicated that while the programme was hugely beneficial to them, they were disappointed that the programme ended with low numbers of Talented Leaders and suggested that this influenced the overall quality of the provision. They described how it felt that at a government level the priority of the programme diminished which resulted in a gradual diminution of resources available centrally.

> It started off in these amazing places. It's not about the money, but it's about how they make you feel about yourself and where you fit into everything. Then as it dwindled away and became a side room in a hotel in Birmingham, you just knew what was happening to the programme. It was disappointing. The content I think as well wasn't as inspiring towards the end as it was at the beginning. –*Talented Leader*

About the different elements of the programme

In this section we provide more detail about the different elements of the programme. These are presented based on frequency of use by Talented Leaders reported at SPB.

Use of a mentor

Each Talented Leader had access to support from a mentor.[16] All Talented Leaders interviewed strongly valued the opportunity to gain support from an experienced headteacher, and often indicated that this was the most valuable component of the support package provided. Mentors were found to be extremely helpful as a source of independent and impartial advice across a range of issues that Talented Leaders had limited or no prior experience of. Most commonly this was described as advice on HR and legal issues, engaging with governors and how to work in a MAT. In some instances, mentors were helpful in facilitating access to additional support for the Talented Leader such as consultants and staff in other schools.

Key factors critical to a successful relationship include:

- **A strong match between mentor and mentee:** Where strong matches existed, relationships were expected to last beyond the lifetime of the programme.
- **Support must be from knowledgeable and experienced individuals:** One of the key benefits for Talented Leaders was the ability to draw upon learning from a mentor that had been through similar experiences.
- **Geographic location:** Most relationships worked, despite logistical challenges including location, with individuals able to work round these challenges using other forms of communication. However, some described they would have benefitted from more opportunities to communicate face-to-face.

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[16] See Appendix 1 for more information about the mentor role, see Appendix 2 for a more detailed description of the support received from Talented Leaders and challenges to accessing this support.

Use of the Leadership Sustainability Fund

The Leadership Sustainability Fund was highly valued by Talented Leaders[17]. This allowed them to offer a package of support and training for school staff that would not otherwise have been possible. The Fund allowed Talented Leaders to focus on improving professional development of middle and senior leaders within the school.

Talented Leaders were able to make use of the Leadership Sustainability Fund for staff in their school to secure improvements and build a strong leadership pipeline. Only two Talented Leaders (out of 15 Talented Leaders responding to the end of programme survey – SPC) stated they would have found *some* of the resource elsewhere if the Fund had not been available. Ten respondents indicated they would not have been able to find the resource elsewhere and three were not sure. All Talented Leaders through the SPC survey reported they had used all of the Fund that was available to them.

> [I have spent] all of it. It has been instrumental in the development of outstanding leadership at all levels in our school. –*Talented Leader, SPC survey*

During the interviews there was no consensus on the level of training and continuing professional development available to staff prior to the arrival of the Talented Leader; however, there was a view that where it was present its usefulness was limited. It was reported to be reactive and in some instances of limited relevance to their work. Talented Leaders and other leaders in the school placed much importance on CPD, and the Fund enabled this to be acted upon.

> Definitely more than what's been available in the school before. There's been about five or six members of staff doing the NPQSL, who wouldn't have had the opportunity, and they'll have the vision to move on [in their careers]. Which maybe, wouldn't have been pushed or even seen that avenue before. –*Senior leader*

All Talented Leaders interviewed placed a strong emphasis on CPD for senior and middle leaders. This led to increased opportunities for training which was welcomed by staff. Talented Leaders funded a wide range of activities and no interviewees indicated that it had been spent on a single qualification or type of activity. The most common use of the Fund was to enable staff to undertake National Professional Qualifications (NPQs). The Fund was also commonly used to 'buy-in' external provision to support leadership development.

Despite the Fund being used to pay for upfront training costs, some Talented Leaders were concerned about their ability to ensure staff would be able to complete those courses that remained unfinished (at the end of the three-year programme) due to

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[17] See Appendix 1 for more details of the Fund.

additional costs, such as supply teacher cover. One Talented Leader also stated that the administrative burden that went along with the Fund was substantial and questioned whether processes could have been streamlined (more information on how the Fund was used and the limitations are described in Appendix 2).

Use of cluster meetings

Talented Leaders expressed mixed views regarding the effectiveness of cluster meetings, and consequently attendance had varied.[18] Interviewees described how cluster meetings were more frequent during the first year and this gradually decreased through the programme. Participants with positive views of cluster meetings suggested this worked well and meetings were of most use in the first year of delivery. However, this may also have been due to some participants stating that at the start they were better structured and followed a clear agenda whereas over time some felt they became more of a 'talking shop'.

Talented Leaders that had positive experiences described their value in terms of the opportunities for networking (something also valued through the residential training sessions). Often Talented Leaders were attempting to address similar challenges (for example, tackling pupil behaviour and non-attendance) and appreciated the opportunity to discuss strategies that others might have had success with.

For some cluster meetings were perceived to be extremely useful, and participants were able to outline demonstrable impacts. In these instances, participants were more likely to continue the meetings after the programme ended. For example, one mentor indicated that the Talented Leaders within their cluster will continue to meet, and plan to use their own schools' funds to ensure the mentor could continue to work with them. This cluster also pooled their resources to coordinate a joint offer of bespoke middle leadership training between schools using the Leadership Sustainability Fund bringing cost efficiencies, allowing more staff members to access the training.

The most common reason given for the failure of cluster meetings was school location. In the most successful examples, Talented Leaders were geographically close to each other (which was how the programme was initially designed), and cluster meetings rotated across schools; however, this was not always possible. Where clusters encompassed a large geographic catchment area with a small number of schools this had an adverse effect on attendance and/or perceived value.

> The initial idea around the cluster was completely flawed. They were expecting me to travel an hour and a half, or expecting others to travel an hour and a half to each other's locations and it just wasn't feasible… I lost touch with people in my coaching group because of

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[18] See Appendix 1 for more information about cluster meetings.

that but that was a conscious decision by me because I wasn't getting anything out of it. –*Talented Leader*

One Talented Leader cited (lack of) relevance as a mitigating factor in non-attendance at cluster meetings. This Talented Leader was the only secondary school headteacher within the cluster so reported there were limited opportunities to share good practice with others which ultimately limited the relevance of the networking.

> It's not like going to a secondary network, where you can say, 'right, well what are you doing about curriculum reform, what are you doing about accountability measures, Progress 8, what are you doing about Life After Levels? –*Talented Leader*

Some Talented Leaders highlighted that cluster meetings often got cancelled due to workload pressures.

Use of residential training sessions

Across the Talented Leaders interviewed there were mixed opinions about the usefulness of residential training and/or specific sessions. Those who had previous experience of the Future Leaders training felt that sessions were similar to previous training, and consequently of less use, although one participant still found it a useful 'refresher'. Of those that found the experience positive, most found the strategic sessions useful, particularly those relating to mission and values. A small number of participants found the more practical components of the training of most use, such as those relating to understanding processes such as HR and finance.

Most Talented Leaders valued the opportunities the sessions provided to network not only with other Talented Leaders but other experts, mentors and speakers.

> My personal development has been the workshops, primarily. What I've got the most out of are the workshops that Talented Leaders have put on. The weekends that we've done have been very good, absolutely brilliant, and give you time to reflect on what you need to do, what does that look like. –*Talented Leader*

Some participants talked about the benefits of time for reflection, although were unable to cite specific outcomes or impacts that occurred as a result. Others were clear about the impact of the sessions. In one instance, the Talented Leader stated that the opportunity to engage in these sessions was where they gained the most knowledge over the entire programme.

Amongst those attending the training sessions a frequent criticism was the need to tailor the content to the specific needs of the Talented Leaders. A number described that the sessions would have been more effective if they had been engaged prior to delivery to ensure it was more relevant to their specific circumstances.

> The quality of the training programme [was less effective], I didn't go to the majority of it… I went to some of the leadership development sessions but I felt it was a waste of my time as it wasn't giving me what I needed and we weren't asked before those sessions what we collectively needed. –*Talented Leader*

Practical considerations (such as location and securing release time) also impacted on attendance at residential sessions, and subsequently many Talented Leaders interviewed reported they had not attended the majority of sessions offered.

Use of the Headship Reward Fund

During the depth interviews Talented Leaders were asked how they had used the Reward Fund[19]. The most common answer given was as a salary uplift. In these instances, the Talented Leader had successfully negotiated with their Board of Governors or Trust for the salary uplift, although not all Talented Leaders had been successful. One Talented Leader took a salary uplift in their final year only, which they intended to use to access mentoring to help them in their role in a new school:

> It's coming to me in a different way, but I still want to use it because I've had the most amazing mentor through Talented Leaders. But I would like to continue via telephone and skype to help me through the next part of my journey. –*Talented Leader*

Another interviewee stated that the salary uplift was temporary (during the three years of the programme) and therefore would drop after the programme finished. A couple of Talented Leaders also experienced challenges when accessing the Fund.

One Talented Leader used the Fund for support and development for their senior leadership team. For two years running, the funding covered the costs of a residential away day for the senior leadership team (including the Talented Leader), travel off site and an external facilitator. It allowed the head to work collaboratively with the senior leadership team and develop a strategic plan for the year ahead. The practical experience of bringing the team together also served as a learning opportunity for the Talented Leader.

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[19] See Appendix 1 for more details of the Fund.

Additional support received from other sources

During the SPA survey 17 out of 26 Talented Leaders were part of an Academy Trust. Of these, 14 highlighted that they were receiving additional support, funding or resourcing outside of the programme to help them in their role. The majority (10) reported some form of support from their director/executive head or other adviser. Other support included central services support, networking opportunities with other schools, and professional development opportunities. When asked at SPC Talented Leaders reported still gaining support through their Academy Trust. Other support that was referenced included support from a National Leader of Education or Specialist Leader of Education, receiving school-to-school funding and been part of an Opportunity Area.

Some Talented Leaders interviewed in schools that are part of a MAT were able to draw on a wide range of different sources of support. In some instances, the CEO was described as someone who had played a proactive role in providing support to the Talented Leader. These individuals typically provided support alongside challenging participants to ensure the school was progressing. In at least one instance this support had been considerable.

> I see [Talented Leader name] every week for a monitoring meeting that is usually two hours long. [Talented Leader name] phones me probably every other day and it's actually growing. –*Executive headteacher*

Talented Leaders described how being part of a MAT enabled them to draw on central services for support (for example, HR) which helped considerably those schools who were undertaking staff restructures. Talented Leaders sometimes described having been part of the wider Trust Board as an opportunity to access support from other headteachers within the Trust; however, two did not feel comfortable seeking support in this way.

They also described how their MAT set the strategic direction for their school or had standard policies. The majority had policies which were standard across the MAT and therefore the Talented Leaders were able to draw on the experience of others when implementing these. This, however, did create a challenge when headteachers were unable to create or influence these policies to fit with their vision for the school.

Talented Leaders also accessed support through the programme as a result of successful mentor/mentee relationships. In many of these instances the mentor had been instrumental in introducing the participants to key experts, trainers and other headteachers.

Support from the local authority was less common and cited by only three Talented Leaders. In one school the Education, Learning and Skills Department of the County Council provided a range of support and services; this included providing staff to assist in

the recruitment process and council improvement advisors carrying out curriculum and behaviour reviews and, funding for specific learning resources.

Additional support needed through the programme

Seven out of 15 Talented Leaders during the SPC survey indicated they would have welcomed additional support or training to address particular issues within their school (there were no differences by previous role[20]). However, there was no consensus as to what this training or support should have been. Those areas listed were:

- How to deal with MATs and the process of academisation.
- Funded coaching programme for teachers.
- A bigger team in the school - one leader in isolation may struggle.
- Mentor retired and the school was isolated.
- Support from HMI due to school going into special measures.
- Localised training.
- Signposting to local training.

Overall, interviewees were satisfied with the level of support the programme provided them. Where interviewees reported they would have liked additional support this was to address challenges they were facing including how to deal with academisation or acting within current funding restraints. However, others related specifically to the programme, and included the need for localised training and changes to the mentor/cluster relationship due to inaccessibility.

Despite access to support through cluster meetings and from their mentor, some Talented Leaders would have welcomed further opportunities to access additional specialist advice and guidance. One Talented Leader would have welcomed support 'of any kind' to help with recruitment and support in identifying and establishing links with outstanding leaders in other schools.

> A lot of my time is spent trying to find out where they are, whereas if there was sort of central location 'right well if you've got an issue, where are the good maths schools? Where are the good maths leaders in this locality? Where can I send somebody to? Where can I get some help from? That would be helpful. –*Talented Leader*

A further challenge highlighted by a minority of Talented Leaders during depth interviews was leading a school within an academy trust where the vision and working styles of the Talented Leader and the CEO/executive headteacher were not the same.

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[20] Headteachers vs deputy headteachers

Relocation

A review of matched Talented Leader's application data found that the majority had clear preferences as to the region they would prefer to work. Of the 27 applications reviewed only four stated they did not have a preference and were happy to be relocated anywhere (as envisaged in the programme design). On average Talented Leaders cited three different regions each that they would prefer to work in. Those with a specific preference reported different reasons for this. The most common response (16 out of 27) was that they wanted to stay close to home because of family responsibilities. Four highlighted they did not mind moving to selected regions (but not others) because they had family connections there, whilst three explained how they did not want to work in certain regions because they had no family or friend connections. This further highlights the challenges in encouraging individuals to relocate.

Of those Talented Leaders who responded to the SPA survey, only half (13 out of 26) had relocated to a new area as a result of joining the programme. More Talented Leaders from Cohort 1 relocated compared with Cohort 2 (9 from Cohort 1 and only 4 from Cohort 2); this in part may be as a result of the rules regarding relocation being relaxed to try and increase the number of Talented Leaders recruited onto the programme. Of those who did relocate five respondents moved less than 100 miles to join their new school whilst a more significant relocation was required for eight programme participants: four Talented Leaders had moved between 100 and 200 miles, and four had moved over 200 miles. Of those who relocated, only one stated they would have searched for a job in the area they were relocated to if they had not joined the programme. Seven respondents stated they might have relocated whilst five reported they would not.

Common challenges amongst those who had relocated related to finding a house, gaining employment for their partner, suitable schooling for their children, being away from family and familiarising themselves with the area. For those participants who were commuting, the main challenges were the time it takes to travel, the costs involved and the impact this had on their work-life balance. Talented Leaders that had access to strong local social support outside the school were less likely to report feelings of isolation.

> I have carried the expense myself as I know the school needs sustained high quality leadership. The commuting time still remains a challenge as we are in special measures and I am reluctant to cut my day down to compensate and improve work life balance! School comes first. *–Talented Leader, SPB survey*

Chapter 4: Skills development

Introduction

The Talented Leaders programme was designed to contribute to overall skills development across schools for Talented Leaders and for staff. This chapter explores the self-reported impact across Talented Leaders and staff within the schools by drawing on analysis of Talented Leaders' SPC (end of programme) survey responses as well as interviews with Talented Leaders and school staff.

> **Key findings**
> - Talented Leaders reported that the programme had a considerable impact on the development of the skills required to be a headteacher in a complex and challenging context. A wide range of developed skills were described; this reflected the diversity in the experiences during their time on the programme, and existing skills of the participants.
> - Mentors also reported that Talented Leaders had developed their leadership skills through exposure to a range of experiences.
> - Talented Leaders were able to pass on the leadership skills and capabilities they had developed onto others in their school.
> - Senior and middle leaders reported that Talented Leaders had supported them and colleagues to develop new skills.
> - Staff were often inspired by the change in leadership and regularly cited the positive effect that it had on their levels of confidence through exposure to new experiences and tasks.

Talented Leaders readiness for the role

During the end of programme (SPC) survey, Talented Leaders were asked to rate on reflection how ready they thought they were for a headship role in a school in challenging circumstances when they started the Talented Leaders programme compared to how ready they felt by the end of the programme. [21] Talented Leaders on average retrospectively scored themselves at 3.7 out of 7 on starting the programme compared to 6.7 at the end of the programme (with no difference at the start or end by the Talented Leaders role on joining the programme). All Talented Leaders scored themselves at 6 or 7 out of 7 by the end of the programme. The majority of Talented Leaders reported an increase in this score (14 out of 15) whilst on the programme.

Those who reported an increase in their score were asked to what extent the programme had developed the skills they needed to be a headteacher in a complex and challenging

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[21] On a scale from 1-7 where 1=not at all ready and 7=very ready, based on their leadership knowledge, skills and attributes how ready they were for headship.

context[22]. An average score of 6.1 out of 7 was given which highlights most Talented Leaders were positive about the programme's ability to develop their own skills for headship in challenging circumstances: seven scored this at 7 out of 7, three at 6 and two at 5. Only two Talented Leaders scored this 4 out of 7 highlighting they neither agreed nor disagreed the programme had developed their skills.

It is worth noting that participants with prior experience of the Future Leaders programme for the most part found it difficult to disaggregate the specific impact of either programme, typically considered the experience as one, and cited the positive impact the combined experience had on them.

Impact on Talented Leaders' leadership skills and capabilities

At the end of the programme, Talented Leaders were asked to what extent they agreed that the Talented Leaders programme had enabled them to develop new leadership skills or capabilities[23]. On average Talented Leaders scored this at 5.8 out of 7 with 13 out of 15 Talented Leaders scoring this at 5 or more. Those participants who scored this element at 5 or above were asked what the three most important leadership skills and capabilities were that the programme had enabled them to develop. A wide range of skills were reported which reflected the diversity in the experiences and prior skills of the participants. 13 Talented Leaders reported developing skills relating to individual capabilities (e.g. compassion, self-awareness, confidence), 11 cited developing practical skills needed to run a school effectively (e.g. able to manage resources, school improvement planning, thinking strategically and developing others), six Talented Leaders reported resilience, and four reported the ability to hold others to account.

Participants interviewed commonly talked about the development of their leadership skills through the programme and how they had developed the confidence to lead.

> It has had a massive impact for me. I have learned so much… I
> certainly would not have grown as a leader and would've struggled
> an awful lot more. So yes, I found it valuable. –*Talented Leader*

Talented Leaders described how support from a mentor and the opportunity to network with others in cluster meetings and at residentials allowed them to share ideas and learn a wide range of skills (as described in the previous chapter). Mentors provided guidance to Talented Leaders on topics such as HR and working with governors allowing them to develop as headteachers. Opportunities to participate in training sessions during residentials also allowed them to learn new leadership skills such as how to develop a vision for their school.

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[22] On a scale of 1-7, where 1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree.
[23] On a scale of 1-7, where 1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree.

For first time headteachers, having the opportunity to lead, particularly in often very challenging circumstances, allowed them to gain on the job experience and develop their leadership skills. Common skills areas reported were dealing with staff, developing staffing structures and securing staff buy-in to a vision on arrival at the school.

> I have learned the skills of being a lot more measured around decisions, recognising where it is crucial to make a quick decision as opposed to making a decision that needs to be more thought out and not necessarily jumping the gun. I've learned to deepen my knowledge and understanding around leadership. –*Talented Leader*

Impact on school staff

Talented Leaders were able to pass on the leadership skills and capabilities they had developed onto senior leaders, middle leaders and others in their school. Senior and middle leaders reported that Talented Leaders had supported them and colleagues to develop new skills (as described below). Staff were often inspired by the change in leadership and regularly cited the positive effect it had on their levels of confidence through exposure to new experiences and tasks.

Figure 6: Extent to which Talented Leaders have transferred leadership skills and capabilities developed through the programme to other school staff

	To some extent	Completely
Senior Leaders	5	8
Middle Leaders	7	6
Other leadership positions in your school	10	3
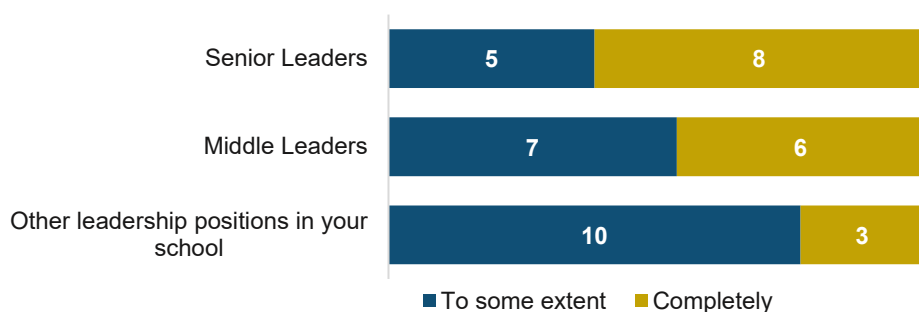
Number of Talented Leaders transferring leadership skills

Through the end of the programme survey, all staff employed at the school (excluding governors) were asked to describe the skills and capabilities (if any) their Talented Leader had enabled them to develop. This was in addition to those skills that were developed through training received using the Leadership Sustainability Fund (described in the previous section as focusing on developing leadership skills of senior and middle leaders). More than half (69 out of 103) reported one or more skills that were developed directly by the Talented Leader. This was reported by staff in different roles across the school including senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers and non-teaching staff. The most frequently reported skills were developing the confidence of individual staff members, building resilience, holding staff to account, and developing a strategy and vision.

Staff who were interviewed reported they were inspired by the change in leadership and regularly cited the positive effect it had on their own confidence levels. Most senior and middle leaders interviewed reported that working with the Talented Leader had a positive impact on them personally, as well as the wider team(s). Skill development was a common area of positive change for interviewees. In some instances, interviewees indicated that the Talented Leader introduced one-to-one coaching or support which helped them to develop as individuals.

> [Talented Leader name] might sit in on a line manager's meeting and then give me feedback at the end about how I could have done that more effectively. Previously that would have scared the living daylights out of me because I'd be thinking somebody was judging me, criticising things I wasn't doing right, but I really don't feel like that with [Talented Leader name]. I feel like she's doing it to make me a better leader. –*Senior leader*

There were also examples where a Talented Leader had introduced internal development programmes delivered in-house by members of the senior leadership team, to middle leaders and teachers.

Some staff reported they had been given more exposure to new experiences and tasks. This was viewed positively and described how there was still a 'safety net' offered by the Talented Leader which made it easier for them to operate outside of their comfort zone but still be supported. In one instance a teacher indicated that the Talented Leader had positively influenced their intention to pursue a headship role in the future.

> As a result I'm no longer thinking 'No I don't want to go into headship.' I'm actually thinking 'oh I wouldn't mind trying a headship and you know, let's face it in our country we need people to step up to the big chair. –*Senior leader*

One experienced member of a senior leadership team reported there had been more opportunities to discuss theoretical ideas and concepts since the arrival of the Talented Leader. This had given him the opportunity to reflect on his own leadership style. For one teacher in the early stages of their career, the Talented Leader's introduction of new practices to tighten-up procedures and processes around the learning environment had been hugely beneficial:

> Over time, it's quite apparent that it has worked for me, and again, because I'm new to this I do feel it has provided some scaffolding for my lessons. To be honest it's actually made my planning a lot easier. –*Teacher*

Chapter 5: Impact on the school

Introduction

This chapter starts by exploring the issues Talented Leaders perceived they faced upon arrival at their school. Analysis of self-reported data from surveys and interviews with Talented Leaders, staff and governors identifies the impact of their involvement on the school and the extent to which the Talented Leaders programme overall is responsible. Impact is explored across the four areas in which the Talented Leaders programme was designed to have an impact. These are leadership of school culture; leadership of the school; leadership of people; and leadership of teaching and learning. We also include an assessment of the extent to which Talented Leaders thought they met the objectives of their school and the most common challenges that schools have faced.

Key findings

- Talented Leaders encountered a wide range of challenges on arrival at their school. Schools were often in special measures and faced a range of urgent issues.
- In the majority of cases, Talented Leaders were considered to have made most of the major changes required to improve their school; however, further changes were still needed to address specific additional difficulties or ensure changes made are sustainable.
- The impact of the Talented Leader was judged to be positive by both mentors and staff. Talented Leaders have experienced improvements across the four key areas the programme was designed to address: leadership of school culture, leadership of school, leadership of people, and leadership of teaching and learning. Improvements in staff morale and job satisfaction were also reported.
- The most common areas where Talented Leaders indicated they had made the most progress was in improving pupil behaviour, followed by improving teaching and learning and raising attainment.
- Staff agreed and reported improvements for pupil behaviour, improved pupil attendance, better school managements and improved school morale.
- Almost two thirds of Talented Leaders responding to the SPC survey reported they had also provided leadership support across a range of issues to one or more schools in their local area. This included supporting a school improvement agenda, joint procurement of training opportunities, and networking and mentoring.

Challenges facing schools

At the outset, the majority of Talented Leaders (23 out of 26 responding to the SPA survey) anticipated challenges in fulfilling their role in the school. Achieving change in a limited amount of time within an existing school culture of low aspiration was a common concern. Many respondents also mentioned the difficulty in recruiting and retaining good

teaching staff alongside expected resistance to restructuring and financial constraints. A recurrent theme was the challenge of dealing with so many urgent issues at the same time. At a more personal level, some respondents expressed concern at their ability to maintain a work-life balance, and the pressure and expectation that accompanied the label of being a 'Talented Leader'.

Talented Leaders were asked to identify the main challenges that their school faced before they took on the role. Many respondents reported their school was in special measures or having a poor Ofsted inspection as the headline challenge. Beyond this, responses varied amongst participants. Some discussed challenges relating to pupil intake, such as falling pupil rolls, poor pupil behaviour, differential attainment between groups of pupils, and the English language requirements of pupils. Others emphasised institutional problems such as budget deficits; a lack of high-quality classroom staff; poor teacher training and CPD; and low aspirations among staff, parents and the community. Two responses mentioned the 'academisation' agenda as a specific challenge. Interviews with participants confirmed these findings, with most indicating their school faced a range of challenges. Similarly, some highlighted that alongside these challenges, the additional requirements of being part of a MAT added a further layer of challenge. In another instance one participant (first time headteacher) highlighted the significant challenge of having to merge two schools.

Meeting objectives in the school

There was a consensus across Talented Leaders, staff and governors that Talented Leaders had made changes to improve the school. During the SPC survey Talented Leaders were asked to what extent they met all the objectives set out for their school at the start of the programme[24]. On average a score of 5.9 out of 7 was given by Talented Leaders with nine out of 15 stating 6 and two stating 7.

A further question highlighted that a minority of SPC survey respondents considered that all changes needed had been made, with the majority reporting that 'most' of the major changes had been made:

- 3 out of 14 stated all of the major changes needed in the school had been made to improve the school.
- 9 stated most of the major changes needed in the school had been made to improve the school.
- 2 stated a lot of changes needed to improve the school had been made but there were still some major changes to make.

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[24] On a scale of 1-7, where 1=met no objectives and 7= met all objectives.

Staff and governors through the SPC survey were also asked the same question about their school which overall reflects the views of Talented Leaders:

- 15 stated all of the major changes needed in the school had been made to improve the school.
- 39 stated most of the major changes needed in the school had been made to improve the school.
- 17 stated a lot of changes had been made but some major changes were still needed.
- 10 stated a lot of major changes were still needed to improve the school but progress had been made.
- 7 reported 'other' usually stating things had not improved.

All Talented Leaders interviewed reported there was still considerable progress required in their school and many felt that their school was not yet at the stage they would want it to be highlighting that three years was not always long enough to transform a school in challenging circumstances. Where a school was now rated as 'Good' by Ofsted, Talented Leaders often talked about the need to ensure it remains a good school. Several highlighted the need for a constant drive to ensure that quality of teaching and learning keeps improving to ensure that future pupil academic results improve.

In some instances, Talented Leaders also highlighted new and/or ongoing challenges that are present within their school. One school had received a forced academy order and there were no sponsors in the area which was causing difficulties. In another the requirement for continued budget savings was challenging and made recruitment and retention of staff problematic.

Overall views on impact

Talented Leaders were able to articulate the positive impact that participation in the programme had on the school across a range of areas. Most commonly they encompassed improving behaviour, followed by improving teaching and learning and raising attainment (discussed in more detail later in the report). A wide range of other changes were also referenced and were able to cite the cumulative effect these had, for example, in 'improved results' or Ofsted inspection grades.

> I've restructured the school, the teaching and leadership. Restructured everything really. The pastoral system, the assessment system, approaches to teaching and learning. But basically we were in special measures in February 2017 and we just came out of special measures in May 2019. We're very good for leadership and management, which I think can be attributed to the Talented Leaders programme. *–Talented Leader*

In one instance a participant highlighted how they were still in post at the school and this was a positive measure of impact. In this instance the school had historically suffered from a lack of stability that had a detrimental effect on the school and pupils.

> I would have to say that fundamentally, I'm here. Previously you had headteachers or assistant heads who were here a year, or ill, or not here, or asked to leave the building and they haven't had for many many years anyone who is just here for the long haul. And with leadership that consistent approach is so important. –*Talented Leader*

Staff and governors (thorough the SPC survey) were asked to reflect on what they thought the three most significant changes made by Talented Leaders were that had a positive impact on their school. Sixty nine respondents answered this question whilst five stated that no positive changes had been made. The most frequently reported impacts again were improved pupil behaviour, improved pupil attendance, better school management, increased morale and positive improvements to the curriculum (discussed in more detail later in the report).

The impact of the Talented Leader was described as overwhelmingly positive by all staff interviewed and almost all 'other' interviewees; for example, CEOs of Academy chains or mentors.

> I think [Talented Leader name] is a brilliant head, they are really really good. [Talented Leader name] has transformed the Academy. It's a different place now, [Talented Leader name] has made a lot of positive changes… She's got a great vision as well, like she knows where she wants the Academy to go. She's quite strategic in that respect. –*Teacher*

> There's no two ways about it, the school will be absolutely successful now. It used to be the place that was a graveyard for careers but now expectations are raised across the board. The school is absolutely powering forward and that would have happened without her [Talented Leader name]. –*Senior leader*

There was one interviewee that held a largely positive view but was slightly disappointed that more progress had not been made in the school (at SPA). However, they were still happy with the Talented Leader's appointment in the school and were positive about the future.

There was evidence that Talented Leaders had engendered a collective sense of the school as 'one big team' and brought in a sense of consistency that was often lacking prior to their arrival. It is worth noting that a number of the staff interviewed had been recruited and/or promoted after the arrival of the Talented Leader and, there was a

perception across the case study areas that, staff who 'were not on board' with the new vision of the school had typically left the school, and both factors had helped to create a collective sense of unity.

> You see every member of staff seems to be sharing in the common goal. You know they're all doing the right thing at the right time, when they need to be, which hasn't before, this consistency. The people can see the consistency so they are getting the same message which then has a knock-on effect behaviour and teaching and learning. – *Senior leader*

Impact on school culture

This sub-section explores the impact of the Talented Leaders programme on improving school culture. This includes the impact on school vision and values and improvement on pupil behaviour and attendance

There was agreement across Talented Leaders, staff and governors that school culture had improved. This was attributed to both the Talented Leader themselves, and wider benefits of participating in the Talented Leaders programme.

In the SPC survey Talented Leaders were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed they had made changes which had a positive impact on their school across a number of areas (where 1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree). Where they scored a statement at 5 or above, they were then asked to what extent they agreed the Talented Leaders programme had enabled them to make these positive changes in their school (see Figure 7 which shows the mean scores given).

Overall, Talented Leaders gave high mean scores for ensuring the behaviour of pupils was well managed across the school (6.3) and setting a clear vision for the school (6.2). Talented Leaders scored the impact of the programme on setting a clear vision high at 6.6 whilst behaviour management received a slightly lower score of 5.5 out of 7. Addressing non-attendance and effectively engaging with parents were given lower scores out of 7, but Talented Leaders still reported progress in these areas had been made and that the programme had enabled them to some extent to make these changes.

Figure 7: Extent to which the programme had enabled Talented Leaders to implement positive changes: school culture
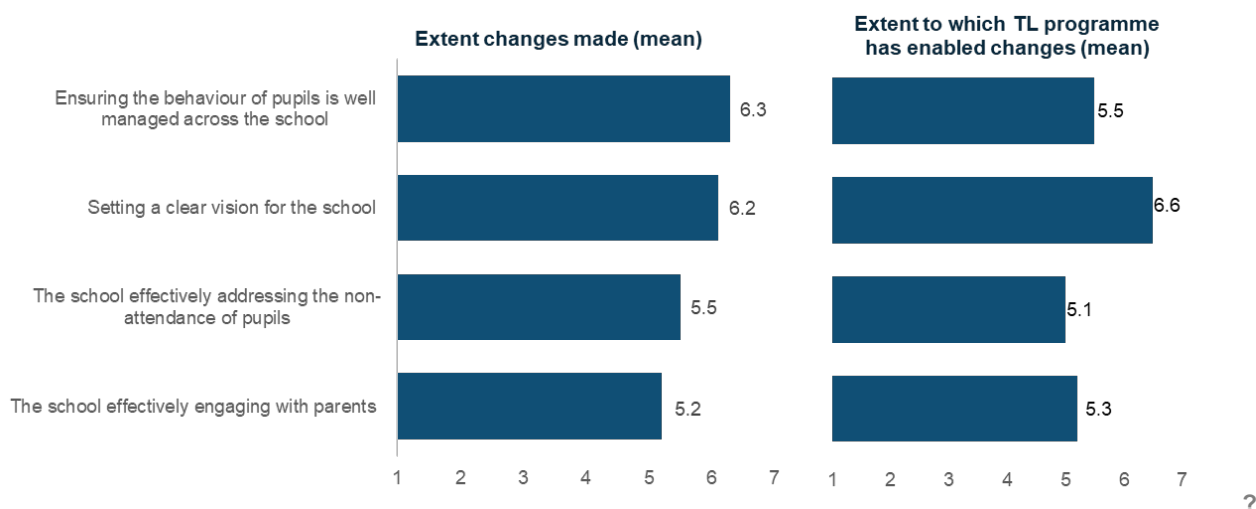
Both questions calculated using a mean score, scale of 1-7, where 1=strongly disagree and 7= strongly agree
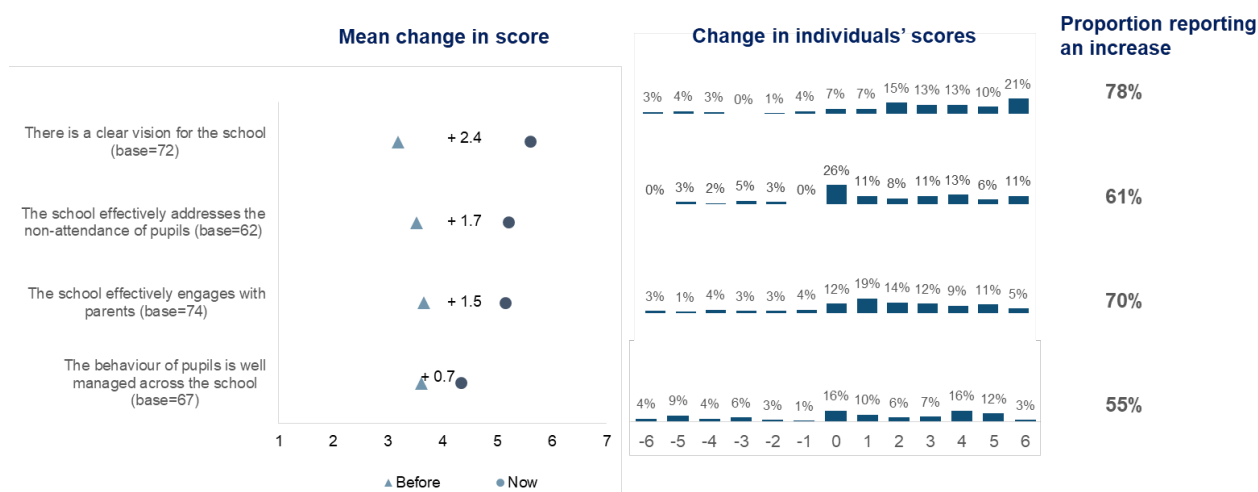
Analysis was then undertaken to explore whether the positive impacts reported by Talented Leaders were reflected in the views of staff and governors. Staff and governors were asked to assess the impact of their Talented leader by providing scores across a range of categories prior to the Talented Leader joining the school and then again when completing the survey. Figure 8 provides both the mean change in scores across all respondents as well as the actual change in score for each individual respondent. The purpose of this analysis was to generate a greater understanding of the true perceived impact of the Talented Leader on the culture of the school at the overall level and amongst each staff member.[25]

Over half of all respondents reported an increase in their score from baseline to the end of the programme across all areas reflecting the views of Talented Leaders that these areas had improved. The school having a clear vision received the highest scores with 78% of respondents reporting a higher score between baseline and the end of the programme and a mean change across all respondents of +2.4. Staff and governors provided more mixed views on pupil behaviour. With 55% who reported an increase in their score whilst 28% thought behaviour management had got worse.

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[25] The mean change in scores across all respondents (e.g. if the mean score was 6.0 prior to the Talented Leader joining the school and 6.5 when completing the survey this would be a mean change of +0.5 as indicated on the first part of the graph). The actual change in score for each individual respondent (e.g. if someone reported 5 prior to the Talented Leader joining and then scored the statement at 6 when completing the survey a this would be an increase of '1' in their agreement each change in score is indicated on the second part of the graph highlighting positive and negative changes). The proportion of individuals who reported a positive change in score were then calculated for each statement (1 or above as show in the last section of the graph).

Figure 8: Change in school culture by staff and governors

	Mean change in score	Change in individuals' scores	Proportion reporting an increase
There is a clear vision for the school (base=72)	▲ + 2.4 ●	3% 4% 3% 0% 1% 4% 7% 7% 15% 13% 13% 10% 21%	78%
The school effectively addresses the non-attendance of pupils (base=62)	▲ + 1.7 ●	0% 3% 2% 5% 3% 0% 26% 11% 8% 11% 13% 6% 11%	61%
The school effectively engages with parents (base=74)	▲ + 1.5 ●	3% 1% 4% 3% 3% 4% 12% 19% 14% 12% 9% 11% 5%	70%
The behaviour of pupils is well managed across the school (base=67)	+ 0.7 ▲●	4% 9% 4% 6% 3% 1% 16% 10% 6% 7% 16% 12% 3%	55%

Scale: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7   -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

▲ Before ● Now

Mean score and actual change in scores. Scale of 1-7, where 1=strongly disagree and 7= strongly agree

The following sections explore the impact that the Talented Leader, and the programme had on each of these areas:

Impact on clear vision for the school

All Talented Leaders and staff who were interviewed described that establishing a clear vision for the school was an immediate area of focus as soon as the Talented Leader joined the school. Focusing on the school's vision was perceived to be integral to enabling the Talented Leader to make a positive impact on the school, though it was acknowledged that this took time.

> Although it took us a year to vision the school out, once it was done the school just started to fly. And it took off in a rapid and sustained pace. The school just transformed from really deeply inadequate to excellent, very very quickly after we'd embedded some of the training and the staff were on board. –*Talented Leader*

Receiving training in developing a vision was important for Talented Leaders undertaking their first headship role which was included in the residential sessions. Those who had undertaken previous Future Leaders vision and values training also indicated this had helped considerably when implementing their vision. When interviewed, an experienced headteacher reported having a clear vision of the type of school they wanted to lead prior to the training and therefore the programme had a limited impact on this

A few Talented Leaders talked about the importance of all school involvement when setting the vision for their school. In these schools gaining collective buy-in from staff, governors, pupils and parents was key. To do this, consistency across all staff in the vision and expectations of pupils was considered crucial to transforming a school.

> It is a lot calmer now. Students are all falling in line with the
> expectations. These are all simple things, but uniform is a lot – we
> spent a whole year sweating the small stuff, even down to black
> socks, and they all look smart. So they are falling line and they know
> that if we are saying 'right we are going to do this', that it will happen.
> So there's no grey area and they don't fall through the cracks. –
> *Talented Leader*

Staff interviewed recognised the positive effect the Talented Leader had on implementing the vision of the school and as a consequence were more inclined to 'buy-into' the vision. The value of this should not be underestimated as a high proportion of schools presented immediate and deep-rooted challenges which often had not been addressed having a negative effect on overall levels of staff morale.

> The one thing that it has brought is a sense of real gravitas of
> leadership and a real sense of purpose. Vision and values were
> something on the side of a mug before, but they are now what we do
> and exist for. –*Senior leader*

Many Talented Leaders described how they had prioritised 'quick wins' within the school when they joined to establish school values such as implementing or changing uniform policy or changing the branding of the school by developing a new logo. However, it was often these small changes that generated the most reaction from parents (rather than the quality of teaching and learning). During the focus groups some parents stated the reinforcement of school uniform by the Talented Leader had been excessive and had a detrimental effect on their child's attitude to school. In this instance they perceived the school had got its priorities wrong.

> There was so much fuss over uniform. They can't wear this jumper.
> They can't wear that. They can't wear this. To me they cared more
> about what the kids were wearing than actual lessons because they
> were quite prepared to send them home and make them stay at
> home until they had that uniform. –*Parent*

However, Talented Leaders highlighted how enforcing these small changes then reinforced the bigger changes and ensured that pupils understood they needed to follow all rules setting clear values for the school.

One Talented Leader introduced a daily pledge that children said every day as a way of helping to create a feeling of 'a new start' for the school which had been welcomed by all. In another school the Talented Leader outlined the importance of revisiting mission and values every half-term and celebrating successes at the same time.

Impact on pupil behaviour and attendance

Pupil behaviour and attendance were cited as serious challenges by most Talented Leaders. Talented Leaders explained that tackling behaviour required a whole school approach which included system level change; for example, embedding the importance of behaviour in mission and values as well as a determined focus on school standards. This was an area in which mentors often played a helpful role, able to draw on their own experiences often sharing learning about what might work.

> With [name of school] the main source of advice in the very early stages was some practical help in establishing a behaviour policy for the school. Whilst the Head could do that on their own, my experiences with other schools helped in teasing out what she wanted and I was able to bring various policies and practices from other schools, which she could pinch, or utilise, or change to her own advantage. *–Mentor*

Having arrived in post at an academy, one Talented Leader's priority was to restructure their team in order to establish and develop new middle leadership roles. Use of the Leadership Sustainability Fund allowed the Talented Leader to bring in a full-time behaviour consultant who worked with middle leaders to establish a climate for learning in the classroom and address behaviour in the school. In 18 months, the Academy went from an Ofsted judgement on pupil behaviour of 'requires improvement' to 'good'.

One school reported how they had recruited an attendance officer which had successfully improved attendance within their school. Another Talented Leader had focused on improving the extra-curricular offer available at the school to create a better school environment which they hoped would improve attendance. Others were keen to implement similar but reported that this would be a medium-term goal once the school was 'stabilised'.

> We've got the music going, we've got a lot of PPE activities going. It feels much more vibrant and that will be something that I hope, in three years will feel even more so. You know, you walk in and you've got to feel that culture in the school, being beyond just what happens in lessons. *–Executive headteacher*

In one school there was a perception by parents that student behaviour had deteriorated since the arrival of the Talented Leader due to more pupils being in trouble for breaking rules. They highlighted how their child described how they found some teachers rigid and unyielding in their manner. This, however, was described by Talented Leaders as important to ensure a consistent approach to behaviour management in the school (as described above under school values).

Impact on engagement with parents

Talented Leaders interviewed were less likely to consider parental relations as a particular challenge facing them at the outset of the role and consequently it was not considered an area for immediate or urgent action. However, despite this, most described that engagement of parents had improved. A minority of Talented Leaders had implemented a range of strategies to improve communication between the school and parents. In one school the Talented Leader reported an increase in attendance at parents evening from 40 per cent to 75-80 per cent. The school invites those that were unable to attend to come to the school at a later date or to have a telephone discussion. The Talented Leader also reported there had been an increase in levels of parental aspiration with parents more likely to ask about higher education and training opportunities.

On the whole parents interviewed in the first year of the Talented Leader joining the school reported that the school was now more approachable, and that in some instances new methods introduced (for example newsletters) had improved communication. A considerable proportion of parents interviewed at the start were unaware there were serious issues with their child's school:

> Well to be honest when it went into special measures I was shocked because I wasn't aware of that happening with all my children having been here previously…it wasn't any different. There didn't seem to be any difference in the way the children's' work was or homework was coming, it didn't seem to be anything different. To be honest, when we were told it was going to become an academy, I was really outraged. *–Parent*
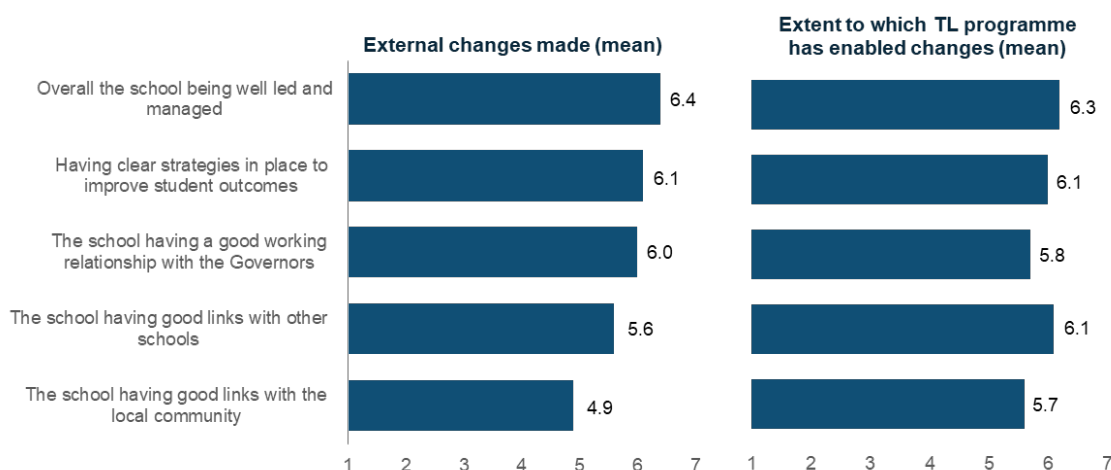
Leadership of the school

This sub-section explores the impact of the Talented Leaders programme on improving overall school leadership. This includes the impact on overall school management as well as on parents and the wider community.

Talented Leaders were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed that the changes made had a positive impact on their school and to what extent they agreed that the Talented Leaders programme had enabled them to make these changes (see Figure 9).

The highest mean scores were given to the school being well-led and managed (6.4) and having clear strategies in place to improve student outcomes (6.1). Talented Leaders also agreed that the Talented Leaders programme had enabled them to make these changes. It is clear from the survey that overall Talented Leaders thought they had made less progress making external links with other schools or the local community; but where this had happened, they believed the programme had helped them to make these changes.

Figure 9: Extent to which the programme had enabled Talented Leaders to implement positive changes: leadership of the school

	External changes made (mean)	Extent to which TL programme has enabled changes (mean)
Overall the school being well led and managed	6.4	6.3
Having clear strategies in place to improve student outcomes	6.1	6.1
The school having a good working relationship with the Governors	6.0	5.8
The school having good links with other schools	5.6	6.1
The school having good links with the local community	4.9	5.7

Mean score, scale of 1-7, where 1=strongly disagree and 7= strongly agree for both questions

Staff and governors responding to the SPC survey were again asked to score their school at the end of the programme (reflecting on before and now). These findings reflect those of the Talented Leader with the biggest increase in the statements 'clear strategies in place to improve student outcomes' and 'the school is well led and managed'.

Figure 10: Change in leadership of the school by staff and governors
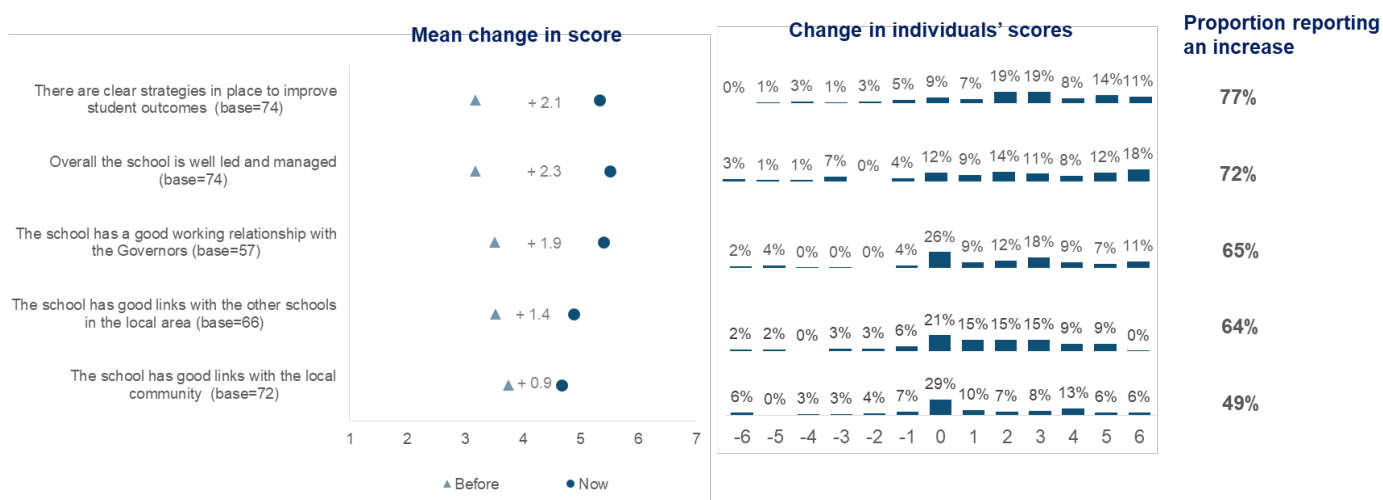
Mean score and actual change in scores, Scale of 1-7 where 1= strongly disagree and 7= strongly agree

The following section explores the impact that the Talented Leader, and the programme had on those areas discussed during interviews:

Impact on the school being well led and managed

When Talented Leaders joined the school, they were initially reacting to inherited problems that were often interlinked and consequently, a number reported that until they had created a sense of stability they could not start thinking about addressing other issues within the school.

From a school I felt was essentially broken, we've built it from the ground up and every system and process has had to be redone. I would say it has taken me three years to transform the school. Just little indicators now when we interviewed for head boy and head girl with the governors last week, the way that the children carry themselves, the way that the children talk about their school is so different to when I first came. –*Talented Leader*

Senior and middle leaders highlighted how Talented Leaders had implemented a comprehensive 'plan of action' to address key challenges and lead the school well, building on the school vision (as highlighted in the previous section).

Every area of the school is mapped by an Ofsted priority but they're all tracked around the school now, whereas in previous years it was chucked at stuff and hoping it sticks. Everything we've done and hit, and wanted to improve, attendance, behaviour, teaching and learning, safeguarding, every area has been meticulously planned beforehand. –*Senior Leader*

Impact on schools and the wider community

Two thirds of Talented Leaders in the SPC survey reported they had provided leadership support to one or more schools in their local area. When asked how they had supported them they described a wide range of support and roles they have undertaken:

- Supported a school to improve attendance.
- Supported a school with special educational needs and/or disabilities strategy.
- Networking/buddy support.
- Interim executive headteacher.
- Supported a school to improve behaviour.
- Chaired a local headteacher group and carried out peer reviews for schools on 'vision and values, behaviour, curriculum design, teaching and learning and student voice.'
- Procured training with another school to reduce costs.
- Mentoring for new heads.
- Supported a school that requires improvement. Support in teaching and learning and behaviour systems. Impact in reducing behaviour incidents and improving quality of teaching and learning.

Two Talented Leader schools during interviews reported they had a priority to re-establish relationships with the community and other schools.

> I'm a great believer in partnerships, and not staying within [school name] because you learn from outside and particularly important here is actually developing relationships with our feeder infant school because they are the same kids and the same families… actually amazingly, they've never had a good relationship before with this school. The head's practically going 'oh my god, this is amazing that we're talking. –*Talented Leader*

In another school, each department was making links with at least two other schools to help ensure the standardisation of teaching and accuracy of marking. This had helped to ensure that staff receive accurate feedback to develop them and ultimately improve attainment amongst pupils.

Wider community impacts were referenced less. In one school, that was working with the Department for Work and Pensions, the Talented Leader designed an adult learning component as part of the overall school offer. In an area suffering from deprivation parents were interested in improving their employability skills and wanted to progress in jobs they were already in. The school offered a range of courses, from functional skills in maths and English, ICT skills and social care. For the school, the primary benefit was that it increased engagement with parents as courses were held on-site.

Leadership of people

This sub-section explores the impact that Talented Leaders had in relation to the leadership of staff within their school. This includes the impact on school communication and performance management.

During SPC, Talented Leaders were asked to rate the changes they had made in relation to the leadership of people within their school. Effective communication between the Talented Leader and their senior leadership team was scored the highest at 6.5 out of 7 by Talented Leaders with the contribution of the programme to this scored at 6.3 out of 7. Ensuring an effective performance management process scored 6.2 and all staff dedicated to raising attainment across the school scored 6.0. Talented Leaders reported a slightly lower score for effective communication between the senior leadership team and teachers/non-teaching staff.

Figure 11: Extent to which the programme had enabled Talented Leaders to implement positive changes: leadership of people
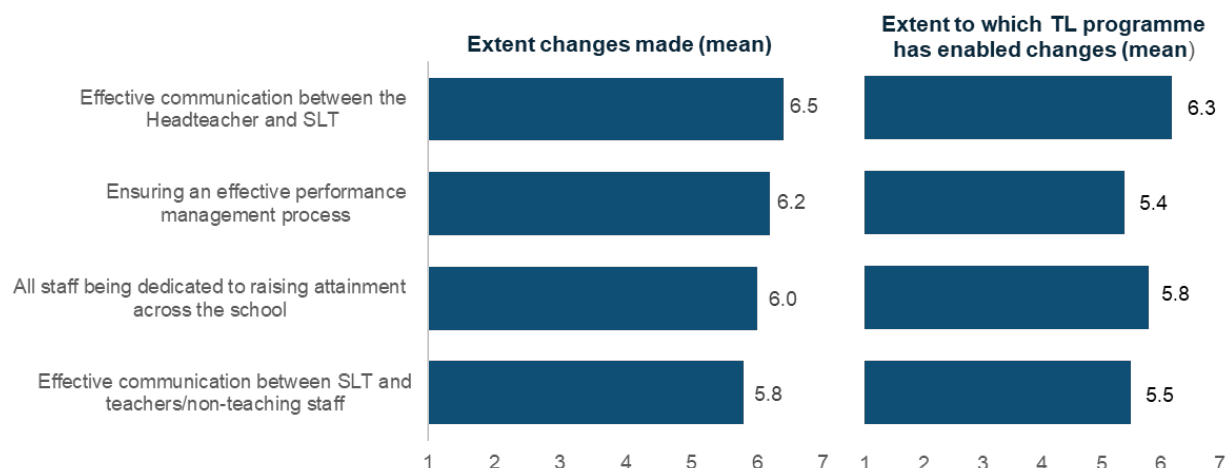
Mean score and same scale of 1 – 7, where 1= strongly disagree and 7= strongly agree for both questions

On average staff and governors responding to the SPC survey reported an increase in mean scores in relation to leading people. Over half (58%) of respondents reported an increase in the presence of effective performance management process and having staff dedicated to raising attainment across the school. As referenced by Talented Leaders there were more mixed views regarding communication between the senior leadership team and staff with an overall mean increase of +0.6. Fifty three per cent reported an increase in their score whilst 32% reported a decrease in their score.

Figure 12: Change in leadership of people by staff and governors
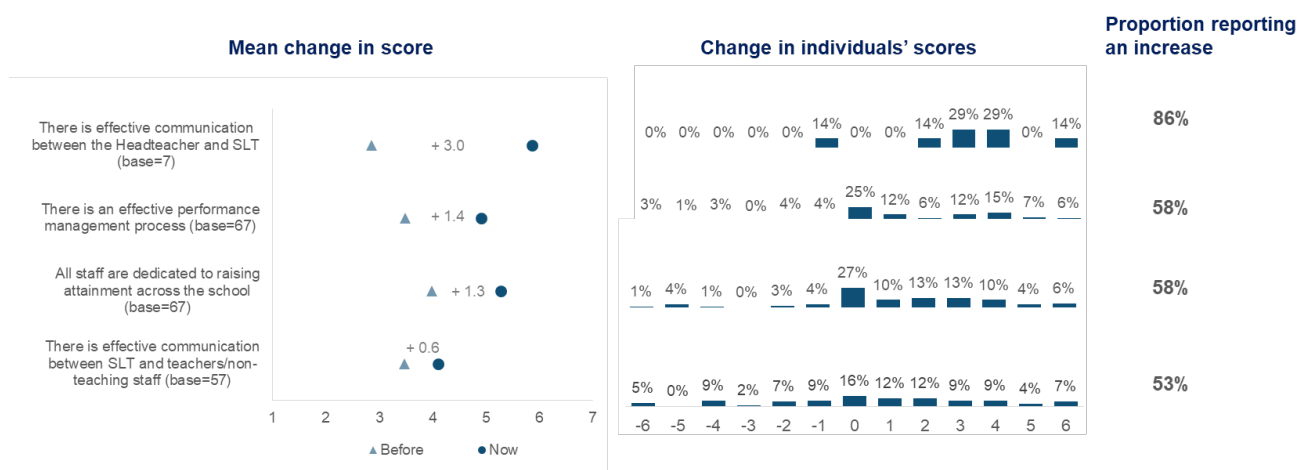
Mean score and actual change in score using scale of 1 – 7, where 1= strongly disagree and 7= strongly agree for both questions at SPC

Effective communication

There was consensus amongst interviews with Talented Leaders and staff that communication across the schools had improved. Senior leaders reported they were consulted effectively and in the majority of cases indicated that the Talented Leader had created an environment within which they were empowered to play a greater role in decision-making.

Interviewees reported how priorities were regularly discussed in an inclusive way, and when new strategies were developed staff had an opportunity to feed into these.

> I think one of the biggest differences since [Talented Leader name] has arrived is that kind of buy in from the staff. She's not doing to them, she's consulting them, asking their opinions about things and it makes them feel part of the team and part of the whole school community… so that to me is one of the biggest difference, is that she really does care about the staff, and I think she does care about what they think. –*Teacher*

Most interviewees described how the Talented Leader was more visible within the school (especially when compared to previous headteachers); this was valued and cited as a factor that improved communication.

Effective performance management

In most instances there was considerable turnover of staff within the Talented Leaders' schools. The challenge of ensuring staff buy-in to the school vision ahead of implementing changes was crucial and challenging:

> At the senior leadership level, her biggest tussle has been trying to align the senior leaders to one agreed vision and approach and getting them to work as a team in the best interests of the school, because in a lot of schools in that situation the leadership and levels of accountability did not exist. –*Mentor*

Interviews with Talented Leaders and senior staff that remained at the school suggest that widespread changes in staffing have occurred for a variety of reasons: some left due to them not sharing the vision of the school or feeling that they cannot meet the expectations required of them, some through restructuring to save money, and others as a result of the Talented Leader addressing underperformance.

While Talented Leaders were able to use the Leadership Sustainability Fund to provide access to training to improve performance, the majority of Talented Leaders viewed the implementation of staff changes as a key method to address underperformance at the outset of their placement. However, implementation of staff changes was hampered initially due to difficulties in recruitment and inability to recruit permanent replacement staff. In one school that was in special measures, the senior leadership team indicated that a recent Ofsted inspection had reported that whilst there were staffing gaps this was viewed positively as the school was trying to turnaround inadequate teaching. In these instances, this may have been a temporary issue as Talented Leaders interviewed at SPC usually had in place a considerably different senior and middle leadership team than the one that was present when they first joined.

In some instances, mentors provided guidance to Talented Leaders on ways in which to approach restructuring or to address underperformance. In a few examples, in addition to providing support and advice, mentors had commented on draft processes before they were signed off.

> I was able to help [Talented Leader] in terms of understanding that you don't just dive into something, seek advice from human resources where you can, and make sure you get it right before you put it out to staff. –*Mentor*

There were mixed opinions across the parents interviewed as to whether they felt that changes implemented in the school were of benefit or detriment to their children. In some instances, parents reported how the degree of staff changes and restructuring implemented by the Talented Leader had led to a period of instability which had unsettled them and their children. However, the timing of data collection is of note; parents were consulted shortly after widespread changes were brought in, with limited time for any adjustment to the change(s) or for stability to be regained.

Leadership of teaching and learning

Overall, across the programme Talented Leaders gave high mean scores (all above 6 out of 7) across all statements regarding teaching and learning in their school. They also scored fairly highly on the extent to which they thought the programme enabled them to make these changes with scores of nearly 6 out of 7 for all.

Figure 13: Extent to which the programme had enabled Talented Leaders to implement positive changes: leadership of teaching and learning
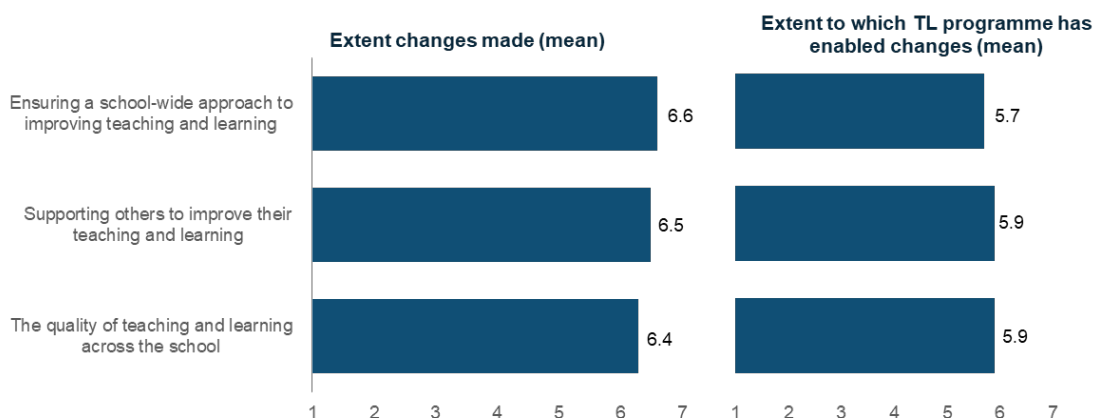
Mean score and same scale of 1 – 7, where 1= strongly disagree and 7= strongly agree for both questions

Over two thirds of staff and governors at the end of the programme reported school wide improvement in the leadership and quality of teaching and learning across the school. Staff also reported feeling supported to improve their own teaching and learning with an increase in mean score of +2.2.

Figure 14: Change in leadership of teaching and learning by staff and governors
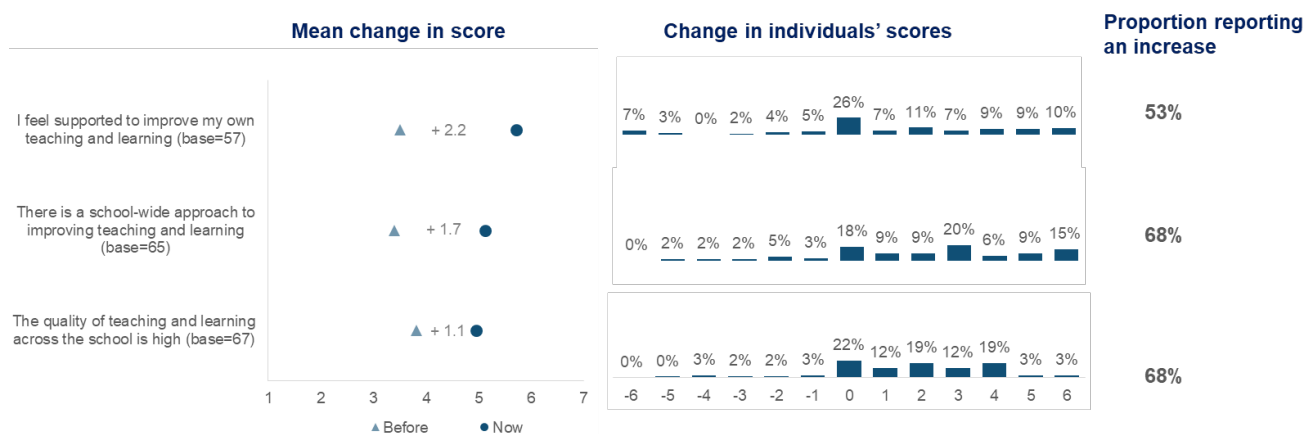
	Mean change in score	Change in individuals' scores	Proportion reporting an increase
I feel supported to improve my own teaching and learning (base=57)	▲ + 2.2 ●	7% 3% 0% 2% 4% 5% 26% 7% 11% 7% 9% 9% 10%	53%
There is a school-wide approach to improving teaching and learning (base=65)	▲ + 1.7 ●	0% 2% 2% 2% 5% 3% 18% 9% 9% 20% 6% 9% 15%	68%
The quality of teaching and learning across the school is high (base=67)	▲ + 1.1 ●	0% 0% 3% 2% 2% 3% 22% 12% 19% 12% 19% 3% 3%	68%

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
▲ Before ● Now

-6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Mean score and actual change in score using scale of 1 – 7, where 1= strongly disagree and 7= strongly agree for both questions at SPC

Interviewees described how whole school development plans had been created for teaching and learning across their school. The priorities within the plan varied across schools tailored to their individual needs. Most reported an improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, which subsequently had an impact on outcomes.

> The work that we have done around literacy has been transformational. 92 per cent of our Year 7s are at chronological reading age; that smashed our target by 20 per cent. We start off with the children and forty per cent of them are around chronological reading age and we've ended up with 92 per cent, that's amazing. – *Talented Leader*

The initial approach taken by most Talented Leaders interviewed was to develop the leadership, management and teaching skills of the senior leadership team and middle leaders and to cascade this down to teachers; and, this approach was considered to be working by those interviewed. Training and support for senior and middle leaders in part was developed to ensure they understood what good teaching was and understood how they could impact those they coach, and line manage.

> So [Talented Leader name] coaches us as to what is a good lesson and somebody came into train with us for that. Then we are able to then disseminate that out. –*Teacher*

Talented Leaders stated they had implemented specific strategies to address attainment in a particular subject; this had included providing subject-specific training for staff using the Leadership Sustainability Fund. A number of Talented Leaders reported having taken steps to improve student outcomes, including undertaking curriculum reviews. Most interviewees (Talented Leaders and teaching staff) highlighted there had been improvement in their school but there was still further work required.

In one school progress was not as strong as expected by the Academy; however, this was within the Talented Leader's first year at the school. It was suggested that the reason for this may have been 'over-delegation' of tasks to staff without appropriate monitoring and accountability systems in place which affected the extent to which the quality of teaching and student outcomes improved.

School morale and job satisfaction

In this sub-section we explore the impact that the Talented Leaders programme has had on the morale and job satisfaction of staff.

In the SPC survey Talented Leaders were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed they had made changes to improve levels of morale in the school[26]. On average Talented Leaders gave a high mean score of 6.2 out of 7. An average score of 6.0 out of 7 was given by Talented Leaders as to the extent they agreed that the Talented Leaders programme had enabled them to make this change. In many instances, schools reported a history of inconsistency of leadership over many years led to poor staff morale. For the most part this was due to high turnover or perceived inadequate leadership.

At the end of the programme on average staff and governors reported an increase across all statements in regard to morale and job satisfaction when compared to before the Talented Leader started. There were however mixed views across respondents with around half of all staff and governors reporting an increase whilst others reported it had stayed the same or had decreased.

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[26] On a scale of 1-7, where 1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree.

Figure 15: Change school morale and job satisfaction by staff and governors
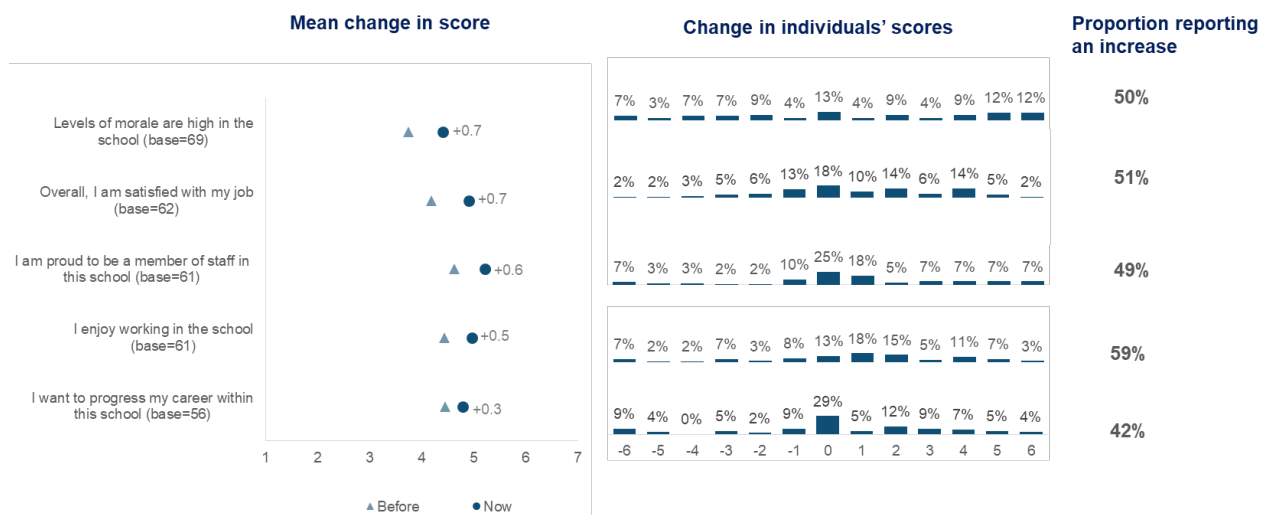
Mean score and actual change in score using scale of 1 – 7, where 1= strongly disagree and 7= strongly agree for both questions at SPC

Improvement in morale across schools was reflected in qualitative interviews. Prior to the Talented Leader joining the schools had been dealing with very challenging circumstances and morale was low.

> [Speaking of the challenge at the School at the time] It was quite turbulent… the school just went downhill really… our headteacher left. We got a stand in headteacher. They then got in trouble. So it was very turbulent. We lost a lot of staff because of that and recruitment was a big problem a lot of good teachers, or long standing teachers left. Staff morale was really low at this point. – *Senior leader*

Most Talented Leaders interviewed described how their staff believe the school is a better place to work and they were more likely to feel supported by the headteacher and senior leadership team. Mentors also agreed with this although acknowledged that the extent of change brought in by participants may initially have left individual teachers feeling uncertain at the beginning. One mentor stated:

> The empathy and moral support they get you will find that the school is a much happier place and a nice place to work. –*Mentor*

Support from the programme and attribution

Talented Leaders have made a considerable number of changes since appointment at their school. The SPC survey asked Talented Leaders to what extent the Talented Leaders programme supported them to lead the school effectively[27].

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[27] On a scale of 1-7, where 1=not supported at all and 7= fully supported.

The average score given by Talented Leaders was high at 6 out of 7. All Talented Leaders gave a score of 5 or above out of 7 highlighting they were supported whilst on the programme.

Talented Leaders were then asked to think about all of the changes they had made in their school and what percentage of the changes they thought were as a direct result of the programme and what they would attribute to other influences and/or existing experience. On average 60% of changes were attributed to the programme by Talented Leaders (with 28% attributed to the training and support delivered through the programme and 32% to funding). The remaining 40% of changes were attributed to other training, support or funding since joining the school (14%) and changes they would have made anyway due to previous training and experience (26%). There was no difference by role on joining the programme or by cohort.
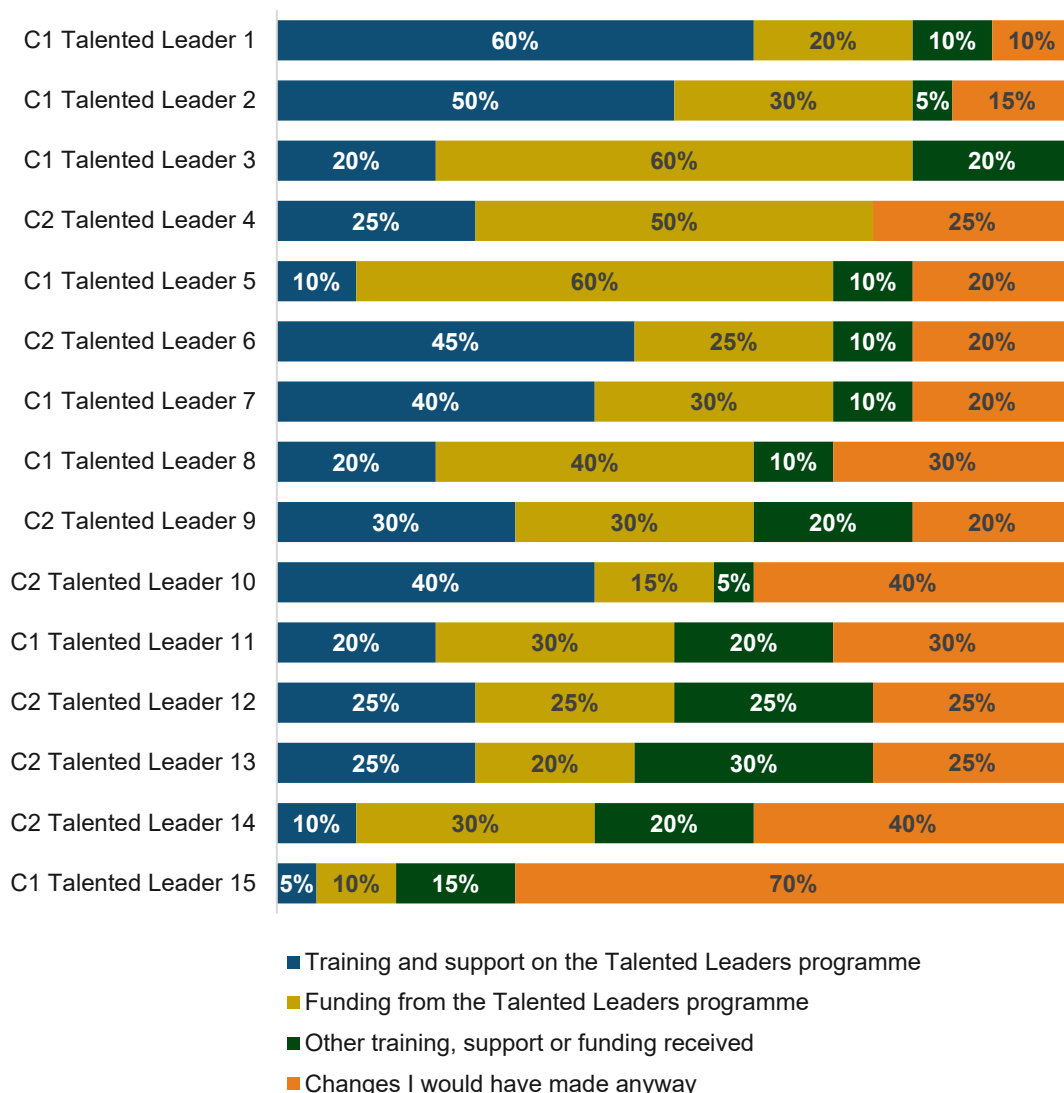
Figure 16: Talented Leaders' perception of the influence of the programme on changes made in school
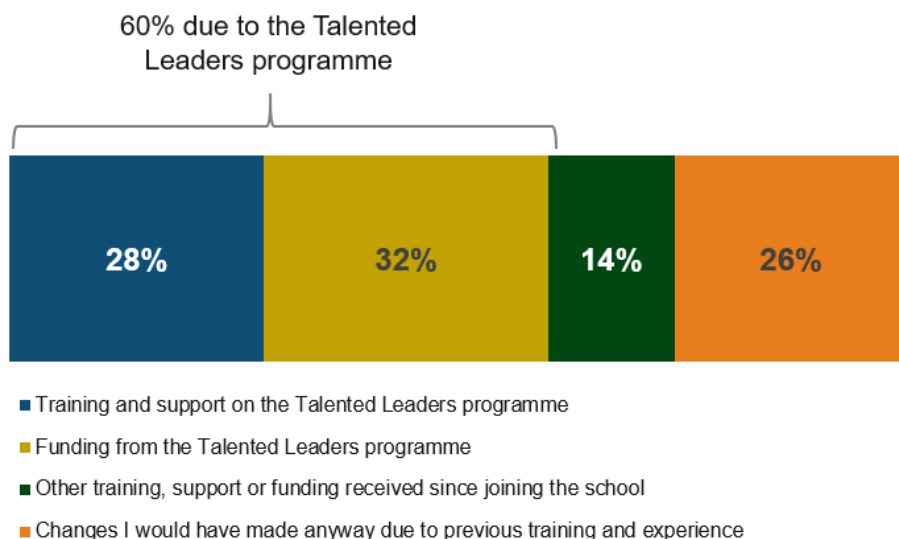
Percentages calculated based on mean score

The attribution to the programme varied greatly by Talented Leaders with no common characteristics that can account for this range. Figure 17 shows the response given for each Talented Leader. Results from the SPC survey found that attribution to the programme ranged from 15% to 80% during the SPC survey. This figure shows that some Talented Leaders were more reserved about the impact of the programme training or funding on their school due to the experience they already held, whilst others reported a larger impact (this was also apparent within the qualitative interviews). The figure also demonstrates the varied experience of Talented Leaders with some stating they would have made a high proportion of changes anyway without the programme.

Figure 17: Talented Leaders' perception of the influence of the programme on changes made in school by Talented Leader

Talented Leader	Training and support	Funding	Other training/support/funding	Changes anyway
C1 Talented Leader 1	60%	20%	10%	10%
C1 Talented Leader 2	50%	30%	5%	15%
C1 Talented Leader 3	20%	60%	20%	
C2 Talented Leader 4	25%	50%		25%
C1 Talented Leader 5	10%	60%	10%	20%
C2 Talented Leader 6	45%	25%	10%	20%
C1 Talented Leader 7	40%	30%	10%	20%
C1 Talented Leader 8	20%	40%	10%	30%
C2 Talented Leader 9	30%	30%	20%	20%
C2 Talented Leader 10	40%	15%	5%	40%
C1 Talented Leader 11	20%	30%	20%	30%
C2 Talented Leader 12	25%	25%	25%	25%
C2 Talented Leader 13	25%	20%	30%	25%
C2 Talented Leader 14	10%	30%	20%	40%
C1 Talented Leader 15	5%	10%	15%	70%

■ Training and support on the Talented Leaders programme
■ Funding from the Talented Leaders programme
■ Other training, support or funding received
■ Changes I would have made anyway

Ordered by cumulative percentage impact of the Talented Leaders programme

Depth interviews suggest that the appointment of the Talented Leader had led to a range of positive impacts. However, often it is not clear if this was due to the programme elements supporting the Talented Leader or them having the 'right' headteacher in post (both of which are elements of the programme design). It is clear in Chapter 3 that Talented Leaders and other interviewees valued many of the elements of the programme with numerous examples of how this has supported them to make changes. Mentors and senior staff clearly value the impact that the Leadership Sustainability Fund had within the school which is positive. Talented Leaders concur, but also felt that a successful mentoring arrangement was the most important aspect of the programme (for them). Opportunities to network with mentors, at cluster meetings and during residential sessions were highly valued by Talented Leaders.

> The biggest strength of the Talented Leaders programme in my opinion was sharing knowledge from experienced heads in terms of strategic thinking and planning and having the ability to quickly set up networks and learn from other colleagues. Having a mentor to guide you and be there when you need advice and support was invaluable to keeping you focussed on the main thing and helping you see the mistakes you made or were about to make and modifying your plans to get the best impact. –*Talented Leader*

It is of note that a high proportion of Talented Leaders were undertaking their first headship role, and in a complex and challenging context. The fact that many indicated they were able to access support when faced with difficult situations (often for the first time) suggests the programme components offered necessary and helpful support for them in making this transition and carrying out their role even though it was initially designed for experienced headteachers.

Future intentions

Talented Leaders were contractually obliged to remain at their school for a minimum term of three years. If the Talented Leader had left before the three years expired, they would be liable to repay part or all of any relocation costs received (if they relocated) and the school could reserve the right to withhold future references.

At the end of the programme (SPC) Talented Leaders were asked whether they planned to stay at their school beyond this three-year commitment:

- 6 stated yes, of which 4 stated it had always been their intention on joining the programme.
- 3 had already found a new position or had left the school.
- 4 had handed in their notice at their school but had not yet left.
- 1 was not sure.

At SPC those who were not intending to stay at the school were asked to state the main reason/s[28] they had decided to leave. The reasons given by Talented Leaders were:

- Personal circumstances (reported by 3).
- Ready for a new challenge (2).
- Finding the commute/relocation difficult (1).
- Transferred by the trust they were working for to transform a new school (1).
- Had been headhunted for a new position in a school (1).

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[28] Respondents were able to provide multiple responses to this question

These Talented Leaders were asked to describe the current status for the recruitment of a new headteacher in their school. Most had already recruited someone to fill the position.

- In three schools they had recruited someone to fill the position internally (for one school this is a temporary measure for a year when they plan to recruit externally).
- In two schools they had recruited someone to the position externally.
- In two schools they were part way through the recruitment process.

Only one Talented Leader interviewed at SPC indicated they would be leaving their post. The remaining interviewees were staying at their school wanting to 'finish the job'. For example, one Talented Leader indicated that that they were motivated to stay at their school to ensure the changes they have implemented are sustained. In this instance the participant indicated that prior to their appointment, the school had eight headteachers over the previous five years.

Most of those Talented Leaders interviewed indicated they would remain at their school so did not have a sustainability plan in place. However, a few Talented Leaders interviewed highlighted there were sustainability strategies in the event of future changes though did not provide further information. However, in one instance the Talented Leader indicated that this included undertaking a mapping exercise of current staff to identify strengths and development areas and how the school will address these so that staff can progress internally.

Conclusions

Recruitment to the programme

As a result of numerous challenges, only 32 Talented Leaders were matched and subsequently deployed to schools across England out of a target of 100. Successful Talented Leaders were primarily motivated to apply to the programme for altruistic reasons, though many also saw this as an opportunity for career development. Contribution to relocation costs was not considered influential in encouraging matched Talented Leaders to join the programme (and many did not relocate). However, the package of support offered by the programme was highly influential in Talented Leaders decision to apply. Access to a mentor, the Leadership Sustainability Fund, and cluster/networking meetings had most influence on the decision to apply. These components of the programme were also credited by Talented Leaders for having helped them to address the challenges they encountered.

Reflections on the programme

Overall Talented Leaders were satisfied with their experience of the programme. Although the programme was initially designed to support those who were already experienced headteachers, a high proportion were undertaking their first headship role. Those new to headship roles reported they were able to access the support needed when faced with difficult situations (often for the first time). This suggests that the programme components offered necessary and helpful support for them in making the transition to headship and carrying out the role.

School level impacts

The impact on schools was judged as positive by mentors, staff and Talented Leaders across the four key areas the programme was designed to address: leadership of school culture, leadership of school, leadership of people, and leadership of teaching and learning. Improvements in staff morale and job satisfaction were also reported. However, even in schools where all required major changes had been made there was an acknowledgement that the school was still on an improvement journey.

Skills development for Talented Leaders and staff

Talented Leaders reported they had developed their leadership knowledge, skills and attributes, with almost all indicating they considered themselves to be better prepared for a headship role in in a complex and challenging context for having participated in the programme. Talented Leaders reported developing skills relating to individual capabilities

(such as confidence), practical skills required to run a school effectively (such as how to create a school vision) and resilience.

Talented Leaders were able to pass on the leadership skills and capabilities they had developed onto senior leaders, middle leaders and others in their school. Senior and middle leaders reported that Talented Leaders had supported them and colleagues to develop new skills. Staff were often inspired by the change in leadership and regularly cited the positive effect it had on their levels of confidence through exposure to new experiences and tasks.

Appendix 1: Implementation of the Talented Leaders programme

About the different elements of the programme

Leadership Sustainability Fund

The Leadership Sustainability Fund (LSF) was a £50,000 (£16,667 available each year excluding VAT) ring-fenced fund to be used to build sustainable leadership capacity in a Talented Leaders school. Each academic year, the school had to specify how it intended to use the funding during that academic year agreed with the mentor.

Examples given to Talented Leaders of acceptable ways to spend the LSF included:

- Executive coaching for staff
- Professional qualifications for staff (such as NPQML, NPQSL, NPQH)
- Specialist support for staff (such as subject-specific specialists to improve practice)
- Mentoring support for staff
- Funding a placement for staff on leadership development programmes such as Teach First, Teaching Leaders, etc.

Additional fund of £15,000 for the continued development and reward of Talented Leaders

There was a £15,000 fund (£5,000 available each year) to be used by the Talented Leader's school to help support the Talented Leaders' continued development and reward achievement of performance management targets.

Mentor

The mentor was classified as a Talented Leader's main support during the programme. The majority of mentor were leading a school/s or were recently retired and had experience of making a transformational change at a school.

They supported and challenged the Talented Leader and were responsible for tracking and monitoring progress. They received regular support sessions from the mentor to help them move forward in their new role. During the first year they received three mentoring visits each term, dropping to two in the second year and one in the third. As part of the '100 Days from Now' support (described overleaf) the mentor assisted Talented Leaders with creating a set of priorities and help to tackle challenges they may face in the critical first hundred days of headship.

Talented Leader schools were grouped in geographical clusters. Mentor worked in the clusters with some working with one Talented Leader and others working with up to three

or four. This was designed to enable schools to work together to secure improvements across the geographical area. Where there was only one Talented Leader in an area, they were joined with another cluster area to ensure they were able to work together and share experiences even if not geographically close. The mentor organised and facilitated termly cluster meetings to support this and enable Talented Leaders to work together to secure better outcomes for their own school through collaboration, challenge and support. They also attended the residential training.

Relocation package

The relocation package applied to Talented Leaders who relocated to take up a headship post at least fifty miles from their current residence or further than a 90-minute commute from their current residence. The total relocation package was capped at £15,000 (incl. VAT). Reimbursement for relocation was limited to the expenses incurred by the Talented Leaders and their immediate family members who currently live with them. The expenses that were covered include:

- Movement of household goods
- Moving to a new residence and temporary housing
- Sale of residence and purchase of new residence
- Rental assistance
- Support for the relocation of immediate family and dependents
- Trip to find accommodation in the new location

Access to the Future Leaders Trust network

Talented Leaders were able to join a network of over 500 senior leaders across England, with access to dedicated online networking and resources as part of the Future Leaders Trust network. The Marketplace (as part of this) was a forum where Talented Leaders could secure the support of an accredited peer to tackle a challenge in her/his school

100 Days from Now

The key principle of the programme was to build lasting and sustainable improvements to participating schools. Although this was the long-term aim there were a number of specific priorities which were important for Talented Leaders to address in the short-term. These priorities focused on areas which could be tackled quickly such as improving pupil behaviour and attendance to give teaching staff confidence in the Talented Leaders abilities. These initial priorities focus on the 100-day planning. This is intended to focus planning on short-term targets which build confidence with measurable and observable improvements, while developing longer-term objectives and strategic priorities which create sustainable change. It was expected that Talented Leaders could start to have an impact from the very first day of their employment:

Training

The main training that was provided prior to the Talented Leader starting the programme[29] was residential training which consisted of two three-day sessions. This training focused on:

- Planning for the first 100 days in post
- Building strategic vision and understanding school values such as understanding school culture and how to transform a school
- Setting up organisational systems such as staffing and working with governors effectively

The planning Talented Leaders undertake for the first 100 days then fed into one-to-one planning sessions they had with their mentor ensuring they had a school improvement plan in place for when they started in their school. Further residential training was undertaken covering a range of topics. In Cohort 1 Ofsted training and media training was available for Talented Leaders. Ofsted provided inspection training to Talented Leaders to make them more effective in evaluating their own and others' schools (including peer visits). Media training for Talented Leaders was also delivered to provide them with experience in managing media opportunities.

How the recruitment and matching process worked

The Talented Leaders programme was promoted through a range of methods, both to schools and potential Talented Leaders:

- High profile events including a launch and celebration event which included ministerial support
- Digital marketing including the Times Education Supplement (TES), LinkedIn, and Google Ads
- Print advertising in the TES and other education articles
- Media attention (both at the national and local level) on the TV, on the radio and in newspapers
- Promotion of the programme through their existing networks such as the Future Leaders network
- Regional Directors and Ambition Institute staff marketing the programme in their local areas through face-to-face contact with local authorities and schools
- Promoting the programme at conferences and events

Ministerial support for the programme was perceived to be one of the most effective ways of promoting the programme initially to ensure it was viewed as credible and prestigious. Then advertising in the TES was reported as the most successful method to gain

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[29] Some Talented Leaders did commence their role in a school before the residential training.

Talented Leader applications. Ambition Institute's Regional Directors when talking to local authorities and individual schools was the most effective way of getting schools on board with the programme. Engaging with local authorities was crucial to not only ensure that there were enough schools meeting the criteria in an area to ensure clusters could be formed and also that they would back the programme operating in that area. It was also important in enabling them to identify specific schools that could engage in the programme.

Recruitment of Talented Leaders

Applications to the programme were initially invited from individuals who were in a substantive headship post or who had at least one year's experience in an interim headship post and met a series of associated criteria pertaining to their qualifications, teaching experience, personal skills and attributes, and commitment to school improvement. There were three key stages of recruitment: a written application, attendance at an assessment centre, and an invitation to join the matching pool.

Written application

Applicants were required to complete a detailed two stage application form which, firstly, identified candidates' required level of experience for the post and eligibility moving forward. Criteria for eligibility includes, for example evidence of:

- Making a substantive, positive impact in an English school.
- Commitment to working collaboratively, working to improve school systems and continuous learning.
- A minimum of five years previous experience of teaching and learning in English schools.
- Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) or Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills status (QTLS).

The second part of the application form required evidencing the experience and competencies required through a series of essay-style responses. The application form also collects information on their regional preferences and other criteria needed for matching.

Assessment centre

Applicants who were shortlisted from their application form were invited to attend an assessment centre. Assessment centres were intended to evidence applicants' motivation and commitment to the programme. At assessment centres, tasks included an assessment of technical skills through a panel interview, a presentation and observations of teaching and lessons. A behavioural interview was then conducted typically lasting between 2 and 3 hours. This form of assessment helped to understand whether the candidate had the right leadership qualities, whether they were "mission driven" and,

interested in having an impact in their matched school rather than simply for personal career development. The scores for the day were then assessed and moderated.

Joining the matching pool

Successful candidates were then invited to join the Talented Leaders matching pool where they received a handbook of information and a contract to sign which committed them to the programme. Joining the matching pool did not necessarily mean that Talented Leaders would be automatically matched to participating schools. A process of negotiating and decision-making between Talented Leaders, participating schools and other stakeholders (such as local authorities, governors or academy trust members) was undertaken before a match could take place.

Recruiting schools

Ambition Institute worked closely with DfE to identify areas of the country which would potentially benefit most from the Talented Leaders programme. Criteria for an area's inclusion in the Talented Leaders programme include those which have:

- a high proportion of schools with an Ofsted rating *Requiring Improvement*
- a higher than average proportion schools with pupils receiving free school meals
- a higher than average proportion of schools with low pupil attainment levels
- schools that traditionally find it difficult to attract headteachers
- schools which have been part of few education interventions such as National Leaders of Education or teaching schools

Schools within these eligible areas were then able to confirm their interest in the Talented Leaders programme by completing a headship vacancy and by signing a school contract with Ambition Institute. The original intention was for eligible schools joining the Talented Leaders programme to be grouped in geographical clusters of at least three schools, working together to secure improvements across the area.

The matching process

Once Talented Leaders were in the matching pool and eligible schools recruited, a process of matching began. Ideally, the administration of the matching process would have taken place as follows:

- Talented Leaders placed in schools as headteachers according to schools' needs, candidates' backgrounds, salary requirements and location preferences.
- Eligible schools provide Ambition Institute with relevant information, such as key contextual information and salary bands and are then presented with up to three suitable Talented Leaders' CVs, work history and other relevant information.

- Eligible schools choose their preferred candidate from this shortlist and invite them for a matching visit. The expectation was that the preferred candidate would be appointed, with schools making a final decision within 48 hours of the matching visit.
- A second Talented Leader candidate invited for a matching visit if the preferred candidate was not chosen. However, eligible schools were not allowed to invite more than two candidates to a matching visit.
- There was an expectation that eligible schools would seek a headteacher exclusively through the Talented Leaders programme matching process.

Recruitment against targets

Specific to the original aims and objectives of the Talented Leaders programme was the requirement to match and deploy at least 100 Talented Leaders to eligible schools across two cohorts: 40 in Cohort 1 (September 2015) and 60 in Cohort 2 (September 2016). In practice, across the two cohorts only 32 Talented Leaders (16 in each Cohort) were matched and deployed to a school. Following deployment, three recruits left their posts relatively quickly and so withdrew from the programme. The total number matched and deployed was significantly lower than the original target.

Looking at the process for Cohort 1 in more detail, Figure 18 demonstrates that a total of 454 applications were started by interested candidates. Many of these were not able to progress their application form as they did not meet essential criteria. According to Ambition Institute this was most frequently because they were not willing to relocate, they did not provide evidence of readiness to be a headteacher in a school in challenging circumstances or could not evidence whole school impact.

From the 454 commenced applications less than one-third (125) went on to complete full applications which were submitted to Ambition Institute. From these, 90 candidates were invited to the assessment centre and 44 were placed within the matching pool. Ambition Institute stated that those candidates unsuccessful at assessment centre often either performed strongly at the behavioural tasks but were not able to prove their experience or had extensive experience but fell down on interpersonal skills. Out of the 44, 29 were directly placed into the matching pool with the other 15 considered suitable for selective placements. This was primarily due to them having technical competencies, but it was felt they would not be suitable to be matched to 'any situation in any context' and could only therefore be matched to a particular school that aligned better with their own experiences.

Finally, from this pool of 44 just over one-third (16) were successfully matched with a school in Cohort one. Seven of these 16 were matched through an *exception process* where schools were not within one of the pre-defined priority areas, but which were in neighbouring areas and exhibited similar eligibility criteria or where the school itself (or a combination of both) did not meet the eligibility criteria. In these instances, a match

through the exception process was approved by the Minister responsible. There was a similar process for Cohort 2 with a slightly higher number of applications completed but less invited to an assessment centre.

Figure 18: Cohorts 1 and 2 application cycle
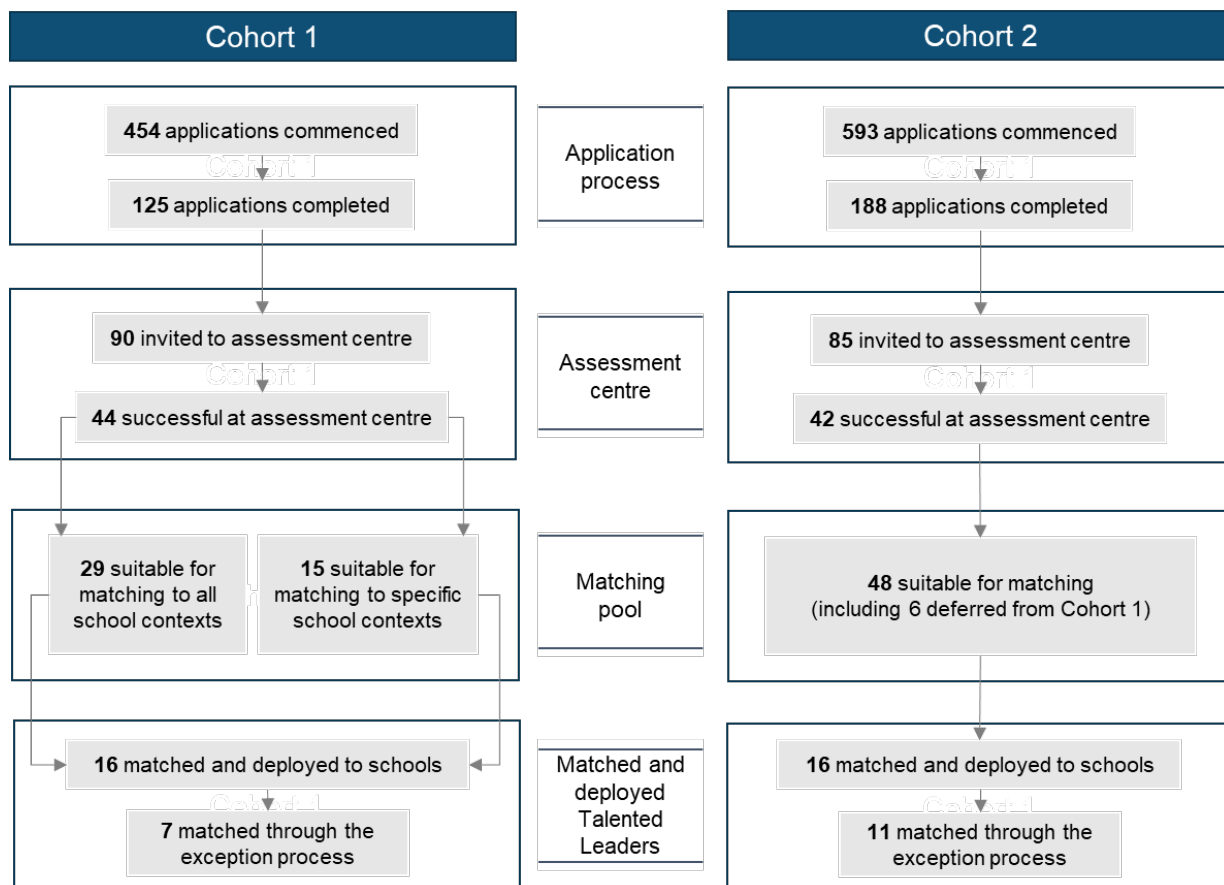
Challenges in matching Talented Leaders to schools

Interviews with Ambition Institute highlighted a range of challenges that emerged throughout the set-up and implementation phase that were more complex and challenging than originally expected. These challenges are outlined below and help to explain why recruitment targets were unmet.

Deputy headteachers

A large number of applications to the Talented Leaders programme were from deputy headteachers rather than experienced headteachers. A number of these applicants were rejected prior to the assessment centre phase and thereby reduced the opportunity for a larger matching pool to be achieved. Ambition Institute suggested that the programme may have been more attractive to current deputy headteachers who wanted to explore headteacher roles rather than headteachers looking to build a long-lasting legacy of impact and change. This made recruiting Talented Leaders more challenging as deputies in general have less evidenced experience. Due to the low number of headteachers applying deputy headteachers who had 'potential' were recruited on to the Talented

Leaders programme. These Talented Leaders were given additional training and coaching to assist them in the Talented Leader role. There were however challenges in encouraging schools to recruit these Talented Leaders in some instances as they did not have the experience they were looking for.

Exclusive process of interviews and matching

Ambition Institute highlighted that a major issue for the Talented Leaders programme was convincing schools that the application and matching process would result in the placement of an appropriate and high-quality candidate. Primarily, this was because schools were used to traditional methods of recruitment which were controlled in the main by themselves rather than accepting an already chosen candidate using an alternative approach. This resulted in schools who were interested in the programme not being willing to recruit a new headteacher through an exclusive process as planned. As a result, in those cases where a school was concerned with this recruitment process, but still wanted to take part in the Talented Leaders programme, often the Talented Leader had to progress through the school's typical recruitment activity and undertake additional interviews against other non-Talented Leaders programme candidates. The different ways that matches were made were explained to Talented Leaders to ensure they were aware of the length and complexity of the process to avoid frustration with the process. In a number of cases schools decided to appoint an interim headteacher or promote someone internally as they believed it would be more sustainable for the school.

To try and overcome some of these concerns Ambition Institute amended their recruitment process for Cohort 2 by emphasising further in the application process how candidates should detail their work experience and provide an explicit breakdown of their previous roles and impact. Alongside this, interviews conducted with Talented Leaders at the assessment centre contained a more 'traditional' element that incorporated skills and experience as well as behavioural attributes and motivations to provide schools with that evidence.

Alongside this was a concern from schools that the Talented Leaders programme recruitment process did not meet their required recruitment guidelines as set out by their local authority or academy trust. Despite the programme being government funded HR managers within selected schools were often, according to Ambition Institute, concerned that it would contravene recruitment guidelines, for example by not publishing any headship vacancy. DfE did issue a letter which Ambition Institute were able to share with schools, but it was felt to have been administered too late in Cohort 1 for it to have had real impact. While it was hoped that this intervention would have had an impact in Cohort 2, the numbers matched suggest otherwise.

Identifying eligible schools in priority areas

There were three distinct areas related to the difficulty in recruiting eligible schools within the specified priority areas defined by DfE and NCTL.

Firstly, it was not necessarily the case that an eligible school within a selected priority area would be interested in applying for a Talented Leader. Ambition Institute stated that on a number of occasions the local authority area had little control or sway over whether a school would apply to be part of the programme. During Cohort 1, one of the potential reasons for this was because discussions about the Talented Leaders programme took place with various stakeholders, such as local authorities, but not always with the schools themselves therefore resulting in a priority area selected without the engagement of the schools themselves. In Cohort 2, there was a greater focus on MAT CEOs, MATs and governors rather than local authority representatives.

Secondly, because one of the aims of the Talented Leaders programme was to build geographic clusters of Talented Leader schools (in order to support each other in their new roles) a relatively short list of local authority areas was initially identified. Ambition Institute highlighted this became problematic because if an eligible school was not interested in joining the programme this reduced the number of schools left in the sample, and they were not able to easily choose another area. Because initially strict local authority area boundaries were chosen any potential school that might have been eligible, but sat outside of the required priority geographic area, it could not be chosen. Where this happened Ambition Institute was required to apply for an *exception* and gain sign off for additional local authority areas to be added to the Talented Leaders programme's priority list. This took time, and some schools withdrew from the programme as a result. This changed for Cohort 2, where a longer list of priority areas with less focus on strict local authority boundaries was used

Finally, there were a number of schools which, although in the right local authority area, did not meet the eligibility criteria in order to appoint a Talented Leader. This was primarily where the most recent Ofsted report was Outstanding, Good or Satisfactory, but where an inspection had not taken place for a number of years and in the meantime standards at the school had declined. In these examples an exception process was again used.

Matching the right Talented Leader with the right school

The final issue relates specifically to the matching process. In Cohort 1, only 16 of the 44 Talented Leaders in the matching pool were matched with eligible schools. Ambition Institute highlighted that matching Talented Leaders with schools was particularly difficult for the following reasons:

- There were more eligible primary phase schools than secondary phase schools, whereas the majority of Talented Leader candidates who were successful had experience of secondary.
- The timescales for the matching process in the first year were challenging. Ambition Institute state this was because of contract delivery delays, difficulties in recruiting eligible schools, exception processes and Talented Leader additional selection requirements.

- Despite relocation being a pivotal aspect of the Talented Leaders programme, Ambition Institute highlighted that applicants' willingness to move was mixed. As a result, Ambition Institute was required to be more flexible in recruiting some candidates. An example where flexibility was required was when a candidate exhibited specific skills and experience valuable for the programme but were less willing or able to relocate significant distances. In these instances, priority was given to candidates where a potential matched school was within a local area or where relocation requirements were not significant.

Appendix 2: Further detail on how elements of the support package was used by Talented Leaders

Use of a mentor

Each Talented Leader had access to support from a mentor. Mentors were headteachers with a proven track record of turning around schools in challenging circumstances and supporting and coaching other headteachers. They oversaw the spending of the Leadership Sustainability Fund in order to maximise its impact and conducted a termly review of progress against school improvement plans and submitted termly reports to Ambition Institute.

Mentors were found to be extremely helpful as a source of independent and impartial advice across a range of issues that Talented Leaders had limited or no prior experience of. In some instances, mentors also were helpful in facilitating access to additional support for the Talented Leader:

Source of independent and impartial advice: Talented Leaders that were undertaking their first headship role regularly spoke of headship as a 'very lonely' role, one that does not offer many opportunities to discuss issues with colleagues. Being able to discuss sensitive issues with an impartial and experienced mentor and provide reassurance was highly valued.

> He [mentor] could offer me advice and, it was entirely candid and confidential, he knew none of the personalities, none of the politics…
> I never got that with the local authority and if I had it may have been someone who was coming with a bit of an agenda. –*Talented Leader*

However, one mentor reported how governors had asked them to assess the Talented Leader's progress. This was described as inappropriate by the mentor as it could damage the relationship they held.

The most common sources of advice focused on two areas:

Advice on HR and Legal issues: Talented Leaders undertaking their first headship role often cited areas of a headteachers' role they had not had practical experience of before therefore the mentor was able to give them advice and reassurance. These included issues relating to HR processes and implementing safeguarding procedures.

> Yes I think the day to day pragmatics of things is well within [Talented Leader name] capability as [Talented Leader name] was a deputy for a long time in an outstanding school, but it's that move to headship. Nobody can explain to you what the difference is. –*Mentor*

Engagement with governing body/MAT: Some Talented Leaders highlighted the support they received in working effectively with governors. This was particularly important for one Talented Leader in their first headship, as they had not had opportunities to engage with Governors in the past and consequently the support helped them to develop an effective governance strategy.

Others reported that their school had become part of a MAT during their tenure and had valued the support from their mentor through a process that they had not had any experience of.

> I think that's really critical in bringing them [Talented Leader name] on, because you're talking about engaging with very experienced people in-house (CEO) and our role, is to make sure that we agree that progress is being made and that if there's areas for development. –*Mentor*

Mentor as facilitator: Several Talented Leaders benefitted from their mentor being able to facilitate access to additional support. In another instance the mentor was able to identify a consultant to support the Talented Leader on a consultancy basis whilst the school was going through a staff redundancy process and there was a freeze on staff recruitment. In another example the mentor's current school was considered a sector leader in curriculum, teaching and learning (recognised by Ofsted) and the Talented Leader benefitted from visiting the school as part of their own development.

Components of a successful mentoring relationship

A number of facilitators emerged that make up a successful relationship:

A strong match between mentor and mentee: where strong matches existed, relationships developed between a mentor and a Talented Leader that are expected to last beyond the lifetime of the programme. Interviewees found it hard to quantify or articulate why they 'fit', sometimes it appears that this may be simply down to 'clicking' and having the same vision and values. However, developing trust was critical to the relationship. Linked to this was the need for a 'non-judgemental' relationship.

> I wanted to be somebody who they [Talented Leader] trusted. I didn't want to be judging her as such. More advising, and helping using my experience, but not dictating to her… because the person has got to do it themselves and realise what the problem is. –*Mentor*

Support from knowledgeable and experienced individuals: One of the key benefits for Talented Leaders was the ability to draw upon learning from a mentor that had been through similar experiences. Being an experienced headteacher that had been through difficult situations in their school and had a wealth of knowledge to draw upon was

considered key. Almost all the participants interviewed were able to do so, as represented the quotation below

> Because of the length of time as head I'd encountered I would say, most of the problems. You know, I'd gone through very bad financial situations. I'd gone through dismissal things, capability, all sorts of things. So, as long as you've got that expertise and all that experience, then I think you're well equipped going into mentoring on a programme like this. –*Mentor*

Barriers limiting effective mentoring relationships

There were a few instances where the Talented Leader reported that they were not well-matched with their mentor. In one instance the participant felt that the mentor only had limited experience of school turnaround which affected their confidence in the mentors' advice. In another, the participant explained that their working style clashed with the mentor. In these instances, the mentoring relationship was discontinued, and the participant sourced a new mentor on their own (outside of the programme). Another Talented Leader highlighted that when a mentor was offered to them (who they already knew) they had asked to be changed due to believing they did not have the relative experience needed. They were matched successfully with a new mentor and this relationship worked well.

Most relationships worked, despite logistical challenges including location, with individuals able to work round these challenges using other forms of communication. However, some described how they would have benefitted from more opportunities to communicate face-to-face. Mentors did indicate that travelling distance often limited the extent to which cluster meetings with the Talented Leaders they were mentoring could take place. During interviews with Talented Leaders and their mentors we found that both highlighted the value of 'walking the school', particularly during the initial stages of the relationship. Mentors reported that being able to see the challenges first hand was valuable. While opportunities to do this differed across the programme, we also found instances where mentors were able to go 'above and beyond' and made themselves available to offer additional support:

> I remember they called [Talented leader] and said they got the Ofsted call, and I just got in the car and drove up and so was there for that Ofsted inspection, spoke to the inspectors as well, so that level of support as well. –*Mentor*

Use of the Leadership Sustainability Fund

The Leadership Sustainability Fund was highly valued by Talented Leaders. It allowed them to offer a package of support and training for school staff that would not otherwise

have been possible. It allowed Talented Leaders to focus on improving professional development of middle and senior leaders within the school.

All Talented Leaders interviewed placed a strong emphasis on continuing professional development for senior and middle leaders. This led to increased opportunities for training which were welcomed by staff. However, the extent to which staff members interviewed were able to clearly identify that the training provided was funded through the Leadership Sustainability Fund varied across the five case study areas and further interviews. Through the end of programme (SPC) staff and governor survey this was reiterated with only 12 (out of 78 teaching staff responding) staff reporting they had received training funded through the Leadership Sustainability Fund with 24 (nearly one-third) stating they were unsure.

Talented Leaders typically have funded a wide range of activities and no interviewees indicated that it had been spent on a single qualification or type of activity. The majority of training focused on leadership development for Senior and middle leaders. A number also used part of the fund to improve the delivery of core curriculum subjects (such as English and maths) and in one instance created a new curriculum lead role to drive improvement in this subject.

This Fund was most commonly used in offering additional qualifications and training and in funding external support (described in more detail below).

Qualifications and training

In all case study schools Talented Leaders had used the funding to enrol staff onto qualifications. In most cases this was training for members of the senior leadership team, particularly for middle leaders. The most common provision types cited were the National Professional Qualifications for Senior Leadership (NPQSL) or Middle Leadership (NPQML). These are programmes that run for up to 18 months and provide delegates with the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills across a range of competency areas to enable them to develop a range of key leadership behaviours. The opportunity to undertake this training was viewed positively by staff.

> Very interesting the NPQSL helped us with quite a lot of aspects of leadership. It's nice because it picks out the main things, so we've done a session on teaching and learning, we've done a session on assessment, team work, leading teams, managing staff, all sorts of things. It's a real good spectrum of leadership. –*Senior leader*

> The NPQSL. This supported my step up from faculty leader to senior management. –*Assistant headteacher*

In one school the opportunity to enrol on a professional development programme became part of a wider training programme. In this school, the Talented Leader

established a 'shadow senior leadership team'. This consisted of middle leaders that were interested in future progression. They were offered opportunities to attend senior leadership team meetings and the Talented Leader ran a weekly session to mentor the group. They were then given the opportunity to undertake the NPQSL qualification.

> I had a shadow leadership programme all year, these are up and coming rising stars basically, and I fully expect them to go onto senior leadership once we get on an even keel. *–Talented Leader*

In a small number of instances, the Talented Leader used the fund to provide training for specific staff to meet operational priorities. For example, one Talented Leader sourced additional training for the school data managers during the adoption of a new school-wide data system. In another school the funding was used to provide training to the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO).

External support

The second most common use of the Fund was to bring in external consultants to their school to provide leadership support. Talented Leaders often described how they engaged consultants that they had prior working relationships or knew through Ambition Institute. For example, one Talented Leader hired their ex-mentor from the Future Leaders programme (an experienced headteacher) to deliver leadership training to members of the senior leadership team. In a few instances the Talented Leader was able to benefit from contacts provided by their current mentor which was also found to be helpful.

Talented Leaders highly valued working with consultants to design and shape a bespoke support offer tailored to their school's specific needs.

> The bespoke packages that we've brought into school have been based around what I know that they need and it's helped to strengthen the senior leadership team because we have done it together, so therefore we've been exploring leadership styles and traits. It's been very open and honest and then them going on the NPQSL has reconfirmed those ideas and pedagogies. *–Talented Leader*

In another example, the Talented Leader and the senior leadership team worked with Ambition Institute to design and deliver an 18-month training programme for middle leaders. This was designed to address underperformance relating to strategy and accountability.

The type of consultancy support Talented Leaders have brought in was tailored to the local difficulties that the school faced. Consequently, the evaluation found no clear

patterns of types of support across the interviewees. Improving teaching and learning in schools was identified as a focus amongst a number of interviewees.

> I had one contact that was paid out of the sustainability fund that been working with people who are involved in teaching and learning, mainly as middle leaders. This has been around developing feedback and developing teaching and learning. –*Talented Leader*

Other examples included training to improve lesson observations through paired observations and feedback sessions. In another area, the Talented Leader brought in an ex-Ofsted Inspector to provide coaching to the senior leadership team on working with Ofsted.

Other uses of the Leadership Sustainability Fund

Some Talented Leaders used the fund to establish relationships with other schools. By doing this, the Talented Leader was able to offer learning and development opportunities to members of the senior leadership team through visits to high performing schools. In one instance the Talented Leader focused this offer on key departments who underperformed the previous year. This allowed six senior members of staff to visit a nearby Ofsted rated 'outstanding' school.

Limitations of the Leadership Sustainability Fund

Despite the Fund being used to pay for the actual training, some Talented Leaders were concerned about their ability to fund the cost of releasing staff to attend the training in the future (for unfinished courses). One Talented Leader argued for the need for greater flexibility in the timing of funding for formal courses such as NPQSL allowing them to retain part of the Fund for release time after the programme had ended. While this was beyond the remit of the Talented Leaders programme, it highlighted a reason why a Leader had been unable to sanction staff attendance due to school pressures.

One Talented Leader stated that the administrative burden that went along with the Fund was substantial and questioned whether processes could be streamlined by Ambition Institute.

> I sometimes think, 'is it worth it?' I mean, I've got a budget of £4m, we are having a new school built, and I'm making people redundant, and I'm being asked for receipts for £600 to claim against the Fund. That's bonkers, that is… I think the word I would use is 'trust'. I'm happy to send a letter to say at the end of the year, 'I solemnly swear that this what the money's gone on etc. –Talented Leader