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**MERTON SUCCESSION  
PLANNING REPORT FOR  
BLACK ASIAN MINORITY  
ETHNIC TEACHERS  
JUNE 2014**

**Interviewing for insight**

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# Merton Succession Planning Report for Black Asian Minority Ethnic Teachers June 2014

Report and Recommendations arising from the School BAME Succession  
Planning Interviews which took place within London Borough of Merton between  
April – June 2014, conducted by Maureen Bailey from  
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June 2014

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EXCELLENCE THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

# Contents

1. Executive Summary .....	3
2. Terms of Reference and Scope of the Report .....	8
3. Opportunities .....	8
i) Lack of experience .....	10
ii) Stuck and frustrated versus proactive and determined .....	10
i) Those who lacked the appropriate support and opportunity .....	10
ii) Family and Work Life Balance.....	11
4. Support.....	12
5. Suggestions for CPD opportunities .....	13
6. Barriers.....	14
7. Protected Characteristics .....	16
8. Headship .....	17
9. Coaching and mentoring .....	18
10. Suggestions for Improvement.....	19
11. Conclusions and Recommendations.....	19
Recommendation 1: Talent Management .....	19
Recommendation 2: A Formal BAME Teachers Network.....	20
Recommendations 3: Refresher Equality and Diversity and Inclusion Training.....	20
Recommendation: 4: Shadowing .....	21
Recommendation 5: Secondment .....	21
Recommendation 6: Secondary Schools Views.....	21
12. APPENDIX.....	22
<b>Appendix 1: Interview Questions</b> .....	22
Appendix 2: Interviewees' Characteristics Table .....	25
Appendix 3: Charts.....	26

# 1. Executive Summary

There were 24 schools who participated and 20 BAME teachers who were interviewed consisting of primary schools and special schools. There were no responses from the secondary schools; this was unfortunate as it would have been useful to explore the differences between the two phases and to compare the distinct challenges faced by BAME teachers within the primary and secondary sectors.

The interview questions were organised under the following headings

1. Opportunities
2. Support
3. Barriers
4. Headship
5. Culture
6. Coaching and mentoring

There were several themes that emerged from the interviews conducted and they were as follows;

## **Opportunities**

In exploring the theme of *Opportunities*, the interviewees fell into five broad categories:

1. Those who took on additional responsibilities without receiving recognition or reward
2. Those who were proactive and were 'go-getters'
3. Those whose gifts were recognised either by OFSTED or external agencies but this recognition did not necessarily result in career progression
4. Those who felt that they were somehow 'stuck' and unable to progress.
5. Those who remained resilient in the face of a range of challenges, identified as 'fighters'; not because they were disruptive but because they remained passionate and hopeful regarding their future careers.

Looking at each group in a more detail, we found the following:

Teachers taking on extra *responsibility but without receiving the recognition* felt they were being used specifically as a result of their ethnic and cultural characteristics translating on behalf of the school, dealing with difficult BAME parents, as well as advising on issues of culture. These duties were carried out in addition to their teaching responsibilities and they felt that this was taken for granted and that they were not given credit for these interventions. It must be noted that this group of teachers were committed to their schools and passionate about their work and did want to appear ungrateful, but felt that they took on additional responsibilities, however, they found it difficult not understand why their contribution to the work of the school in this area was not recognised or rewarded by the school leadership. Teachers in this group also felt 'trapped' in the sense that whenever they expressed an interest

in leadership posts and in some cases actually applying for specific posts they were told that their skills were needed in their current post.

Those teachers, described as '*go getters*' because they were highly motivated and proactive about their continued professional development, were not fazed by their ethnicity but simply strived to succeed in their professional development. Those teachers in this group met with a measure of success. However, whenever they successfully applied for leadership roles they were told that even though they were the best candidate for the post they were told to hold off until another time as their skills were needed in their current role. In these cases the needs of the school mitigated against the progression of talented teachers.

The third group of teachers, described as those who are '*head hunted*' because they were recognised as being very good or outstanding teachers and were encourage by external agencies to apply for various leadership roles due to their expertise in a particular area of work. These teachers described their schools as having a culture of excellence and reported that received great support from their Head teacher and or leadership team and as a result thrived in a great atmosphere contributed to their success as teachers. Ironically those in this group, lacked the confidence to 'take the leadership leap; they all felt that they held themselves back due to a lack of confidence and concerns regarding being able to fulfil the demands of leadership or headship and maintain a healthy work-life balance. This group needed actual encouragement to apply for Headship but also role models of heads who modelled a healthy work-life balance.

The fourth group of respondents were teachers who felt '*stuck*' due to what they perceived as limited opportunities to apply for specific leadership roles because they lacked experience and were not able to access appropriate training for continued professional development (hereafter, CPD) or opportunities to gain the experience needed to successfully apply for leadership roles. Those in this group were typically in their roles for a considerable length of time and at times feel frustrated as there are no openings for them to excel due to a variety of factors including the culture of their particular school, low or unclear expectations regarding what was needed to progress.

The fifth and final group of teachers are called '*fighters*' for the benefit of this report. Those teachers in this group were overwhelmingly positive in their outlook. They remained resilient and determined despite a number of negative experiences received in their careers; these teachers refused to give up hope and welcomed the local authority caring enough to investigate what the issues are. They remained up-beat and optimistic even whilst acknowledging the very real challenges that they faced as BAME teachers. They all had clear aspirations with clear plans of action in order to achieve them.

## **Support**

Interviewees spoke about the clique culture within schools. There was a repeated perception that that if your face did not fit then you would not be called to attend courses or participate in some activity that would be beneficial in terms of CPD. Teachers spoke of an unspoken culture of exclusion. Although the cliques were mentioned there was not much clarity as to

whether these cliques were aware that they were alienating other members of the teaching profession. Head teachers in particular should ensure that they are inclusive when organising events within their school and take into consideration some BAME group's faith.

However some interviewees were clear that they had been discriminated against as White UK colleagues, relatively new to the school were provided with more opportunities to apply for posts. Even if a particular staff was considered suitably qualified and experience to apply for leadership posts, it was found that they were told by their head teachers that their focus should be on another area of development. Twenty per cent of interviewees felt that despite being in the profession for some time and mentoring other White UK counterparts to succeed they were dissuaded from pursuing specific leadership post. The challenge for Merton is to create a culture where the perception of exclusion of BAME teachers is challenged by the presence of visible role models coupled with real transparency and openness about the criteria for progression to leadership within the borough.

We asked interviewees, "Have you ever experienced discrimination related to any of the following protected characteristics?"

38% said yes

62% said no

### **Barriers**

There were 64% of teachers who said they had not even considered applying for a senior role. The main barriers which arose for BAME teachers related to not being given enough opportunities to gain the right kind of experience to develop and broaden their skills and experience in order to have a better chance of success when applying for senior leadership roles. There were some examples of BAME members of staff who were given additional responsibilities, however, these extra responsibilities whether paid or unpaid were not primarily related to the member of staff's specialism, which resulted in confusion and feelings of slight resentment. Staff felt that they were being used as opposed to being provided with opportunities to develop and progress.

We also found that teachers' own confidence played a significant role in the decision to apply. Part of supporting or undermining confidence was that it was important to provide teacher with developmental opportunities that were aligned to teachers' developmental needs and CPD goals. We found that a number of teachers were provided with training that they felt was inappropriate as it related to areas where these teachers felt they had sufficient skill and expertise. As a result of this, teachers felt that they were being judged as being somehow inadequate or simply not good enough.

How schools supported cultural difference and the religious and ethnic backgrounds of teachers presented a specific barrier for BAME teachers. Ten per cent of those interviewed felt that their identity as Muslim teachers and their decision to wear traditional garb impacted on their ability to progress in Merton There were also examples from teachers who advised to apply for leadership roles in another borough where they would be treated more favourably as

they were Asian. Further, there was a suggestion that that Islamophobia may be an issue. Some Muslim teachers who chose to wear traditional attire spoke about the specific challenges they faced from parents, teachers and non-teaching staff. These teachers were committed to their schools and their faith and were keen to dispel myths by explaining cultural differences.

## **Headship**

Most of the teachers spoke about the pressures that being a head teacher would bring and the impact it would have on their family and work-life balance. Some BAME teachers spoke about the importance family and faith and that these factors took priority for them. Others spoke about the fear of failure especially when they considered the perceived lack of support for BAME head teachers and Senior Leaders. The other issue of lack of experience remained a constant theme during these questions relating to Headship.

## **Culture**

Many BAME teachers were uncomfortable with these questions as it directly related to whether they had experienced discrimination. Most of the teachers said they had not experienced direct discrimination but suggested that further training for head teachers needed to be provided in order to help head teachers to have a greater understanding of and sensitivity towards the distinct support needs of staff from various cultural backgrounds.

Promoting inclusion should be considered as a whole school initiative from head teachers to staff and parents. At times BAME staff received abuse from the parents and lack of understanding from teachers. Staff also felt that their White UK colleagues 'tip toeing' around them in order not to offend was considered to be potentially offensive in itself. The experience of being treated equality and the reality of level playing field was essential. These teachers went on to refer how they had been treated differently from their white counterparts especially in terms of training, internal leadership roles and career progression.

## **Coaching and Mentoring**

Nearly all teachers said that coaching and mentoring would build confidence and guide them in their career development. This could be done via action learning sets, group coaching or via one to one sessions for teachers.

## **Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1:** Talent Management for BAME Leaders is valuable tool that should be used within schools. Talent management is about communicating, the mission, vision and values of the school to all staff and establishing clear expectations.<sup>1</sup> The job descriptions and criteria should be clear in order to realistically measure performance, promote training/CPD and succession planning for all staff.

**Recommendation 2:** That a formal BAME Teachers' network be set up to support BAME staff in their career development. This would also acknowledge that various cultures bring their own expertise within school systems and potentially act as an advisory network for the borough.

**Recommendations 3:** To provide refresher equality and diversity training for Head teachers in order to help them to understand how best to support different cultures within their school.

**Recommendation: 4:** to provide shadowing training with Head Teachers and or senior leaders, which would enable other teachers with the potential to become future Head Teachers to experience what is required for Headship roles.

**Recommendation 5:** to provide secondment opportunities. The challenge will be finding the time for Head teachers to do this, however, this challenge is not insurmountable.

**Recommendation 6** If budget permits, to obtain relevant research from secondary schools in order to explore the CPD and career aspirations of BAME teachers in this sector, as well as the barrier to progression that they may face.

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<sup>1</sup> Heathfield Susan M, *Best Talent Management Practices*, <http://humanresources.about.com/od/Strategic-HR-Management/qt/best-talent-management-practices.htm> , accessed May 2014



## 2. Terms of Reference and Scope of the Report

In March 2014 the School Leadership Planning Task Group undertook a review of school leadership succession planning in the borough of Merton and in identifying the diverse communities served by Merton schools, the Group considered how we might recruit head teachers from BAME backgrounds to address under representation of this group in school leadership in the borough.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to this the Group wished to consider how talent in schools might be identified and nurtured and there was an acknowledgment of the need to consult schools about how they could be better supported in succession and leadership development.

Maureen Bailey, from Inner Strength Consulting (hereafter, ISC) was commissioned by the Merton Improvement Team. The task was to conduct a series of interviews with approximately 25 BAME staff in Merton schools in order to identify the key issues impacting BAME staff, what support might be useful and to identify and explore any barriers that might prevent BAME teachers going for senior posts.

### Identifying the Sample

Schools were asked to nominate colleagues within their schools; this information was compiled by Kate Saksena, of the School Improvement Team. Teachers who were willing to be interviewed were contacted by ISC for a confidential interview lasting about 30 minutes face to face or on the phone consisting of 39 questions.<sup>3</sup> One interview was done via email.

This report is a summary of the findings of these interviews and an analysis of the themes emerging from interviews regarding the School BAME Succession Planning interviews and findings between April–June 2014.

## 3. Opportunities

In exploring the theme of *Opportunities*, The interviewees fell into five broad categories

1. Those who took on additional responsibilities without receiving recognition or reward
2. Those who were proactive and were 'go-getters'
3. Those whose gifts were recognised either by OFSTED or external agencies but this recognition did not necessarily result in career progression
4. Those who felt that they were somehow 'stuck' and unable to progress.

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<sup>2</sup> *Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel March 2014 Report and Recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Review of School Leadership Succession Planning*, London Borough Merton, March 2014 accessed, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2014

<sup>3</sup> Please see appendix 1

5. Those who remained resilient in the face of a range of challenges, identified as 'fighters'; not because they were disruptive but because they remained passionate and hopeful about their future careers.

Looking at each group in a more detail, we found the following:

Teachers taking on extra *responsibility but without receiving the recognition* felt they were being used specifically as a result of their ethnic and cultural characteristics translating on behalf of the school, dealing with difficult BAME parents, as well as advising on issues culture issues. These additional duties were carried out in addition to their teaching responsibilities and they felt that this was taken for granted and not given credibility for these interventions.

Those teachers, described as '*go getters*' because they were highly motivated and proactive about their continued professional development, were not fazed by their ethnicity but simply strived to succeed in their professional development. Those teachers in this group met with a measure of success. However, whenever they successfully applied for leadership roles they were told that even though they were the best candidate for the post they were told to hold off until another time as their skills were needed in their current role. In these cases the needs of the school mitigated against the progression of talented teachers.

The third group of teachers, described as those who are '*head hunted*' because they were recognised as being very good or outstanding teachers and were encourage by external agencies to apply for various leadership roles due to their expertise in a particular area of work. This group needed actual encouragement to apply for Headship but also role models of heads who modelled a healthy work-life balance.

The fourth group of respondents were teachers who felt '*stuck*' due to what they perceived as limited opportunities to apply for specific leadership roles because they lacked experience and were not able to access appropriate training for continued professional development (hereafter, CPD) or opportunities to gain the experience needed to successfully apply for leadership roles..

The fifth and final group of teachers are called '*fighters*' for the benefit of this report. Those teachers in this group were overwhelmingly positive in their outlook. They remained resilient and determined despite a number of negative experiences received in their careers; these teachers refused to give up hope and welcomed the local authority caring enough to investigate what the issues are.

As we explored the theme of opportunities we found that the majority of BAME teachers had not considered applying for a more senior position.

We asked interviewees, '*Have you considered applying for a more senior position?*'

There were 64% who said no they had not considered applying. The reasons for this fell into four general categories:

1. teachers who lacked experience (6 NQTs and 4 class teachers)
2. those who felt stuck (1 teacher)

3. those who lacked the appropriate support and opportunity (2 teachers)
4. those who did not apply due to family and work life balance (3)

### **i) Lack of experience**

Those teachers who did not apply because of a lack of opportunity fell into two categories:

- a. Newly Qualified Teachers and
- b. Teachers who felt that they lacked the relevant experience in order to apply

There were 6 Newly Qualified Teachers (hereafter, NQTs) who did not feel that it was appropriate for them to apply for a more senior role at this stage in their career.

In addition to NQTs there were 4 teachers did not consider applying because they felt that they had insufficient experience. The types of experience they felt they needed was around data analysis, specialists training in curriculum areas (e.g. Maths) and experience in people management.

### **ii) Stuck and frustrated versus proactive and determined**

Among those who did not apply, there was 1 teacher who did not apply because she felt was stuck.

*“After 6 years you can go to the next threshold-. I was told I can only get it if I have a management position, so I will not get increment in my salary. It’s all politics and especially in these areas.”*

In sharp contrast to this teacher, were the teachers in the ‘go getters’ group, who would make time to seek out the experiences they need. The GGs refused to be placed in a box and explained that their intentions were to move on if they saw no opportunity in the school even if the school was a very good one.

There was 1 teacher who moved schools in order to advance her career.

*Case study A: I moved schools to progress*

*“I moved schools because I would have more CPD and in my previous school I stopped learning about my profession for a year and it was a waste of a year because I just stopped learning. Now where I am is an amazing school but it’s all about experience.”*

They recognised that to get to senior leadership they need the experience of being phase leader and are planning how to achieve this in their current school or the next. *“I make time to plan my career and will wake up at 6AM to trawl for jobs on sites looking for opportunities”.*

### **i) Those who lacked the appropriate support and opportunity**

In this group were teachers who were keen and motivated to apply but were discouraged from applying by senior leaders within the school on the premise that another more suitable

opportunity would be available soon. It is unfortunate that for these two teachers, who were highly motivated, these promised opportunities never materialised. As result these teachers we deflated and demotivated.

*“If there is no position available the school will not offer a position so I have been in this position for many years waiting”*

It is a painful irony that these teachers who were ready to rise to the challenge of pursuing headship were repeatedly told to wait at various times in their careers only to be overtaken by their white colleagues.

However some interviewees were clear that they had been discriminated against as White UK colleagues, who were relatively new to the school were provided with more opportunities to apply for posts. Twenty per cent of interviewees felt that despite being in the profession for some time and mentoring other White UK counterparts to succeed they were dissuaded from pursuing certain leadership posts.

An excellent example of this is the account a teacher who was asked to support a White colleague at the expense of her progression:

*Case Study B: Lack of opportunity;*

*“I applied for a manager role for year 5 and ran it for 3 years and whilst I was supporting this teacher she was doing courses to become Deputy Head. When she left and her post became available a white teacher who was only there for a short while got the job that I had been doing all this time. I was told to apply to places like East London or Bradford as I would have more of a chance getting a leadership role- so I left. I think there is a clique in schools. I don’t drink and don’t party and because I don’t fit the norm I may be overlooked. When I ask to go on courses I am often told there is nothing out there at the moment. There is clearly a difference in treatment.”*

In this case it is clear that race was a factor as she was encouraged to apply to areas where there were significant numbers of Asian families.

## **ii) Family and Work Life Balance**

Some BAME teachers thought that considering to be Head was so far off the agenda because the task of being a good teacher was stressful enough and were content not to have additional pressures. The also felt that being a Head Teacher would mean that they would need to sacrifice time with their family. For teachers in this category their family is important to them and there was a view that leadership brings a different level of responsibility and challenges that they felt that they not prepared meet. Indeed one teacher stated that their cultural values prohibited them from making the sacrifices that they felt were necessary to pursue headship.

*“I have seen some of these Head Teachers who work around the clock. My family comes first; because home life takes priority in Asian families.”*

## 4. Support

Teachers were asked, 'What has helped you to develop your skills and confidence so far in your career?'

In response to this question many explained that if the school is good, with a positive atmosphere it creates a culture of support. From interviews with BAME teachers the overwhelming majority of interviewees, that is, 8 teachers, cited the fact that having a great mentor, a coach or a very strong and supportive Head Teacher was the biggest factor in building skills and confidence for career progression. One teacher said,

*"I have been blessed with a good mentor. She was a good leader and she invested her time in me, she would not take any nonsense, she gave good feedback, had realistic targets that led to professional development. She also gave credit to when it was due."*

This type of support can come from group leaders and other teachers who are more confident in their own role. A teacher sums it up nicely with the following statement.

*"The performance systems, appraisals, the team and the people that I have worked with and worked for. You cannot coast here. The Head is here so you can develop professionally. They don't want to lose people so you can go forward if you want to."*<sup>4</sup>

When a head teacher is good it makes a big difference. As they lead from the front, talent manage and encourage teachers to go on training courses. However not all schools in Merton encourage this type of development and as one teacher says *"The boundaries have been reset and has inhibited certain people's confidence"*

Four teachers explained that the greatest factor in building skills and confidence to progress was their personal resilience described as "confidence", being "stubborn" and "not giving up" and having a personal faith.

Two teachers explained that their support come from the encouragement of others, either family or friends.

We asked teachers 'What would encourage you to apply for a more senior post?' The incentives which would encourage BAME teachers to apply included

- Coaching and mentoring – 5 interviewees
- Money – 3 interviewees
- Support from Colleagues – 2 interviewees
- CPD – 2 interviewees
- Other factors including location, the right opportunity etc.

It is clear from these responses that the role of Head Teachers and Senior Leaders in talent spotting and talent spotting management is essential. In fact it is the number one factor in supporting the aspirations and progression of BAME teachers.

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<sup>4</sup> See Chart 2 in appendices

One teacher said,

*“If something came up to me and recognised my skills like my line manager or mentor told me to apply then I WOULD.”*

Another teacher said,

*“One month ago the head came to me and said there is a position for head for a school. Before that I did not think about it.”*

Some responsibility must be placed on the leadership team of the school to spot talent and develop their skills. During appraisals there is an emphasis on class statistics, however, there should also be an expectation that head teachers discuss individual teachers' aspirations with CPD plans and training courses/events to help teachers to make progress towards these.

## **5. Suggestions for CPD opportunities**

Suggestions for CPD opportunities were given as follows;

- Specific training for BAME leaders – use to do this as a national training but stopped after
- Course on how the school works
- School based mentoring
- How to deal with difficult children and parents deal with difficult children
- Maths courses
- Courses on how schools work
- National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership
- The National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership
- Running the National Professional Qualification for Headship course twice as opposed to once per year
- Masters Courses
- Shadowing opportunities – “ you see things in a different light”

We also asked BAME teachers, ‘*How could the LA support BAME teachers?*’

Many BAME teachers spoke highly of the LA and all appreciated the fact that research was commissioned in order to explore BAME teachers' real views and experiences. Some took the view that part of the talent management process could be done in partnership with the LA. One example of this is for the LA to identify those teachers as potential future leaders were prompted via email to apply for various roles which and to provide prompts for relevant courses which may be relevant for their own personal development.

Some teachers requested a support group/network consisting of BAME teachers where they could hold monthly, quarterly meetings to develop a greater support to apply and to see role models to aspire to and be encouraged by. This could be a powerful tool for BAME teachers in Merton to develop leaders, to ensure that the views and voices of BAME leaders were heard

and to have a forum to address the support needs of BAME teachers in a culturally relevant way.

Job Shadowing was also recommended as a way of exposing individuals the realities of Headship and give them a feel for Headship. Pupil people premium funding could be used to promote awareness of the needs of BAME pupils and teachers. Secondment opportunities were also raised as a means of developing the skills and experiences necessary for Headship.

Other support related to providing a courses on how to apply or deal with difficult questions during interviews and presentations. There was a suggestion that this is put on twice a year.

## 6. Barriers

We asked interviewees regarding the barriers they face in pursuing their aspirations for career progression. Specifically we asked interviewees, '*Can you identify any barriers which currently prevent you from applying for senior leadership/Headship positions? What are the main ones?*'

The number one barrier was a lack of experience (6 interviewees); followed by a lack of confidence (4 interviewees); then a lack of support or opportunity (3 interviewees). A number of respondents identified other reasons including childcare, prejudice around wearing the Hijab, being unable to access training (6 interviewees).

During the interview process we explored the role of racism, prejudice and discrimination in creating barriers to aspirations for senior leadership of Headship form BAME teachers. This was an area where most interviewees were most uncomfortable as many were loyal to their schools and anxious about confidentiality.

Interviewees spoke about the clique culture within schools. There was a repeated perception that that if your 'face did not fit' then you would not be called to attend courses or participate in some activity that would be beneficial in terms of CPD. Teachers spoke of an unspoken culture of exclusion. Although cliques were mentioned, there was not much clarity as to whether members of these cliques were aware that they were alienating the BAME colleagues or if this was simply a sub-conscious process.

Professor Neil Thompson considers this type of unspoken, informal, cultural exclusion as based on, "...commonalities - values and patterns of thought and behaviour, an assumed consensus about what is right and what is normal... The cultural level is a complex web of taken-for-granted assumptions or 'unwritten rules'<sup>5</sup>

We asked interviewees, "Have you ever experienced discrimination related to any of the following protected characteristics?"

38% said yes

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<sup>5</sup> Thompson, Neil, *Anti-Discriminatory Practice*, pp. 33-34, Practical Social Work, Fifth Edition, Palgrave MacMillan, UK, 2012

62% said no

Thirty eight per cent represents a significant minority of the BAME teachers included in the sample.

Related to this issue were 'cultural' practices, such as having meetings in a pub, which unwittingly excluded Muslim teachers who would not be willing nor able, based on their understanding of Islam. As result BAME teachers who did not go to the pub would be excluded from discussions about training and other opportunities.

How schools supported cultural difference and the religious and ethnic backgrounds of teachers presented a specific barrier for BAME teachers. Ten per cent of those interviewed felt that their identity as Muslim teachers and their decision to wear traditional garb impacted on their ability to progress in Merton. We have already cited the experience of a teacher who was encouraged to apply to schools in areas with a significant Muslim population as she would be more likely to be successful.

### **Lack of confidence**

We also found that teachers' own confidence played a significant role. Part of supporting or undermining confidence was that it was important to provide BAME teachers with developmental opportunities that were aligned to these teachers' developmental needs and CPD goals.

BAME teachers struggle with the "AM I GOOD ENOUGH?" question in a way that is different to their White UK counterparts. We found that some BAME teachers who were clearly ready for senior roles and had been in their position for an extensive period of time, they seemed to be held back by a fear of failure coupled with the loaded identity of being a "black person". They appear to be haunted by the question "Am I good enough". This finding is supported by the work of Bacon and Voss (2003)<sup>6</sup>, identifies the fact that women and minorities struggle with the need to be better than their White counterparts in order to have equal access to advancement. As a result BAME professionals struggle with fear of failure, being risk-averse and a tendency towards perfectionism. One teacher said,

*I have a fear of getting it wrong.*

This is a good teacher who is currently in a position of leadership within his school, who is judged as having the skills to be a successful senior leader. However, he went on to say,

#### *Case Study C "Am I good enough"*

*"Many are saying am I good enough but I am asking are we good enough .Everyone is saying I can do it. I don't know if we are enough... When you come into teaching with white people are thinking things about us. In terms of leading a staff. There is a fear of*

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<sup>6</sup> Bacon, Terry, Spear, Karen *Adaptive Coaching: The Art and Practice of a Client Centred Approach to Performance*, Davies-Black Publishing 2003



*getting it wrong. It's your name is on that OFSTED report and if you go wrong they will say "it's because you're black"*

## **7. Protected Characteristics**

It was unclear whether teachers knew whether the school were acting fairly or not and this begs the question about the schools equal opportunities policy. This begs the questions of has it been updated and are teachers aware of it? The majority of Schools stated that they were committed to equality and diversity, however, the lack of BAME representation vis-à-vis the pupil population brought this commitment into question.

### **Cliques and Lack of Access to Relevant CPD**

Some teachers stated that they knew what they needed in order to progress, however, despite requests for specific training to support their career development they were presented with excuses as to why they could not be put forward for the training at that particular time.

One teacher noted that,

*"I have been asking but it has not been forthcoming. I applied for a senior role and knew I needed qualification to go to the next level but I have been turned down"*

Those teachers who had applied unsuccessfully (5 interviewees) senior leadership posts reported that they felt they were unsuccessful because they lacked CPD and experience that the other candidates had. They went on to express the view that despite being good teachers they are not a part of a clique which would circulate information about CPD opportunities and would ensure that places on such training were taken up by members of the clique. As a result BAME teachers were placed outside of these opportunities. It was noted that these cliques could consist of BAME people also; however, for these teachers it felt very much like it was back to issue of whether or not the individual's 'face fits'.

Related to this is the barrier of BAME teachers not being given enough opportunities to gain the right kind of experience to develop and broaden their skills and experience in order to have a better chance of success when applying for senior leadership roles.

One teacher reported that they were told not to apply even though Ofsted called me an outstanding teacher. As a result teacher said,

*"I am giving loads but feel held back."*

This teacher reported that,

*"I applied for an assistant headship role in Merton but I did not get it but I was the only one shortlisted. The feedback was that I met all the criteria but my fall back was that I just had not done the post before. I was told that I would be put on a management courses but this has not been forthcoming. They all say I am enthusiastic, confident and bring a lot to the team. I was told by Ofsted that I was an outstanding teacher in*

*numeracy. So when the numeracy job came up I applied and was basically told not to apply as I should focus on the job in hand. I am giving loads but I feel like I am being held back- just give me the job to prove myself."*

The old boys' network is in place: It seems that those teachers who wanted to apply for senior positions have the dilemma of places already being filled. There was some suggestion that a type of network had been formed and if you were not a part of it then progression would be difficult.

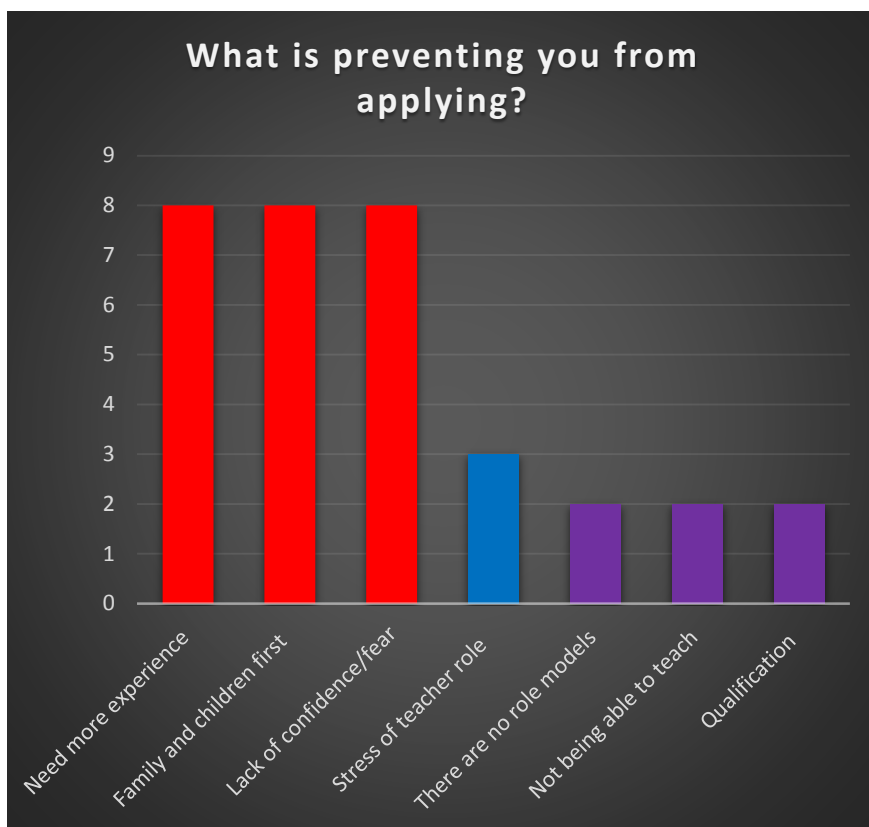
Another teacher reported that,

*"It's hard because it seems like everyone is slotted in and the people they really want are males and we joined with same experience but it seems like they in a clique. From what I have heard they have moved together. Seems to be about who you know. They all hang out after hours and it's hard to break house." Teacher with over 4 years' experience*

## **8. Headship**

We found that many teachers found the role of Head Teacher to be a daunting, almost insurmountable challenge. They expressed the view that this was a big responsibility; some stated that they would possibly consider it if they had the opportunity to shadow a Head Teacher. Merton providing this opportunity would be a great stepping stone if serious about more BAME teachers going forward in their career development.

As indicated in the section on barriers, the three main things which preventing them applying were a lack of experience, confidence, family and. See chart below:



The teachers recognise that they need a thick skin to be head, be risk takers, management skills and how to deal with parents. They all thought they had good management style but did not always feel that their own Head Teacher's management style was good.

There was clear evidence that coaching and mentoring within the school has proved to be effective for teachers

### **Work-Life Balance**

Most of the teachers spoke about the pressures that being a head teacher would bring and the impact it would have on their family and work-life balance. Some BAME teachers spoke the importance family and faith and how these factors took priority for them. Others spoke about the fear of failure especially when they considered the perceived lack of support for BAME Head Teachers and Senior Leaders. The other issue of lack of experience remained a constant theme during these questions relating to Headship.

## **9. Coaching and mentoring**

An overriding theme that runs throughout this research is the value of coaching and mentoring. Nearly all teachers said that coaching and mentoring would build confidence and guide them in their career development. Merton should explore strategies to extend this to targeted staff groups across the Borough. For example, this could be delivered via group coaching or one to one sessions for BAME teachers.

## 10. Suggestions for Improvement

The following suggestions were made by those interviewed.

- **A BAME network of support:** It should be acknowledged that BAME teachers bring a lot to the team especially with working with BAME parents within schools. It should also be acknowledged that BAME teachers face particular challenges that are not usually address through current coaching or training. This support group could also act as an advisory group to the Borough on matters relating to BAME communities.
- **Head Teachers need to Be Supported to Promote Equality and Diversity:** This should include the needs to of all teachers not just a few. In particular, Head Teachers should audit their formal and informal practices to ensure that all members of the school community are valued and included. There to be a reflection on their approach. For example, one teacher said,

*“If I am a Muslim I don’t drink then I am not going to go out and drink. They need to look at me as whole.”*

- **Ensuring every teacher should have a CPD plan at each stage that helps them to progress into management:** every effort should be made to ensure that BAME teachers have access to the same developmental opportunities as their White counterparts.

*“I have no idea how to progress. I have to stick it out. I can say well mentoring other teachers/shadowing. There is no opportunity for me to shadow anyone. In my old school she shadowed a literacy coordinator role and promotion happened in 2 years for her”*

*“It’s important to understand the way of life for different cultures. English people are afraid to call a person black. We say it and sometimes we get into trouble but we say it as it is.”*

## 11. Conclusions and Recommendations

Although this report reflects the views of BAME 20 teachers in Merton, it does provide clear evidence that BAME teachers face particular challenges when it relates to progress.

In addition the challenges of confidence, gaining skills and experience are the challenges of exclusion, the sense of being held back and limited access to appropriate opportunities to gain the kinds of experience that would put BAME teachers in a stronger position to apply for senior and Headship roles.

### Recommendation 1: Talent Management

Talent Management for BAME Leaders is valuable tool that should be used within schools. All the evidence from our interviews points to the need for more talent management support from Heads and senior leaders via mentoring, coaching and possibly shadowing. Encouragement mixed with effective appraisal management would highlight key leaders. This

would then need to be tracked by Heads and an effective scale of progress would need to be developed. A clear leadership development plan should be incorporated in the appraisal system and referred to during each appraisal with clear SMART actions. There should also be a specific action in all Heads appraisal which relates to how they develop their staff. An article from Susan M. Heathfield suggests that talent management is about communicating, the mission, vision and values of the school to all staff and establishing clear expectations.<sup>7</sup> The job descriptions and criteria should be clear in order to realistically measure performance, promoting training/CPD and succession planning for all staff.



### Recommendation 2: A Formal BAME Teachers Network

That a formal BAME Teachers' network be set up to support BAME staff in their career development: An article by Tony Bush and Kholeka Moloi suggests that the BAME Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) need support experienced and/or senior teachers from BAME backgrounds.<sup>8</sup> There was a clear need to see role models in their field. In fact a number of interviewees were shocked that there were senior BAME teachers in other schools. It is unfortunate that the findings reveal cliques similar to "old boys" networks that BAME teachers were clearly not a part of. Many spoke about their observations relating to the same group of teachers going on development courses, the same teachers being chosen for promotion and the same teachers to be placed into leadership. Providing an avenue of support for BAME teachers would go some way in supporting those teachers with the aim of erasing the thought that they were not good enough to even attempt to apply for a senior role. This would also acknowledge that various cultures bring their own expertise within school systems and potentially act as an advisory network for the borough.

### Recommendations 3: Refresher Equality and Diversity and Inclusion Training

To provide refresher equality and diversity training for Head teachers in order to help them to understand how best to support different cultures within their school. This should be

<sup>7</sup> Heathfield Susan M, *Best Talent Management Practices*, <http://humanresources.about.com/od/Strategic-HR-Management/qt/best-talent-management-practices.htm> , accessed May 2014

<sup>8</sup> Bush and Moloi in, *International Handbook on the Preparation and Development of School Leaders*, Eds. Jacky Lumby, Gary M. Crow, Petros Pashiardis, , Routledge New York, 2008

compulsory as there is often an attempt not to comply with equality requests; this report being a prime example. Some BAME teachers also took the view that specific training for them would be supportive from the Local Authority.

#### **Recommendation: 4: Shadowing**

to provide shadowing training with Head Teachers and or senior leaders, which would enable other teachers with the potential to become future Head Teacher to experience what is required for Headship roles and will give a realistic view of the pressures and challenges that come with the job.

#### **Recommendation 5: Secondment**

To provide secondment opportunities. The challenge will be finding the time for Head teachers to do this, however, this challenge is not insurmountable. This would widen the experience of teachers and allow them to gain further experience of how various schools operate.

#### **Recommendation 6: Secondary Schools Views**

If budget permits, to obtain relevant research from secondary schools in order to explore the CPD and career aspirations of BAME teachers in this sector, as well as the barrier to progression that they may face.

## **12. APPENDIX**

### **Appendix 1: Interview Questions**

#### **About you and your school**

What type of school do you currently teach at e.g. Secondary/Primary/Special?

What type of roles do you currently hold?

How long have you been working in your current roles?

Do you work part time or full time?

#### **Opportunities to apply for more senior positions**

If you are currently a leader/manager, what made you apply? What allowed you to be successful?

Have you considered applying for a more senior position?

Have you applied and been unsuccessful? If so, what do you think contributed to this?

If you have not yet applied for a more senior position, what are the reasons?

#### **Barriers**

Can you identify any barriers which currently prevent you from applying for senior leadership/Headship positions? What are the main ones?

- a. Lack of support
- b. Not enough experience
- c. Lack of specific skills or experience
- d. Lack of confidence
- e. No time to think about own development
- f. Frustration
- g. Not sure if my voice will be heard
- h. Other

#### **Support**

What has helped you to develop your skills and confidence so far in your career?

What opportunities have you had for professional development and leadership training?

What would encourage you to apply for a more senior post?

What CPD opportunities would help you to prepare for a more senior position?

How could the LA support you?

Have you ever been approached to apply for a senior role within your own or another school?

Have you been encouraged by your own Head teacher to apply for a more senior role?

Do you have time to think about your own personal development?

Does leadership challenge you to go forward in your career development?

### **Support**

Are you given regular appraisal about your performance?

Are you given support on how to prepare for/ improve your performance in applying for senior positions?

Do you have regular appraisals where you are able to communicate your development needs?

### **Headship**

Would you like to apply for Headship in the future?

What 3 things are preventing you from applying right now?

What support do you need to prepare you?

What 3 key things do you think you need to develop in order to apply for Head roles?

### **Management Style**

Are you confident with your own leadership style?

Are you confident with your Head's management style?

### **Culture**

Are you comfortable expressing your views on your own development?

Do you feel comfortable asking for help?

Are you currently receiving support in your own career development? If so what sort of support?

Do you believe your school is committed to equality and diversity?

Do you feel the school acts fairly regardless of protected characteristics (see list below) with regard to recruitment?

Do you feel the school acts fairly regardless of protected characteristics with regard to career progression/promotion?

Do you feel the school respects equally people of different nationalities/ethnicities?



Have you felt discriminated against at work in the last 12 months?

Have you ever experienced discrimination related to any of the following protected characteristics

- a. Age
- b. Disability
- c. Ethnicity
- d. LGBT
- e. Religion
- f. Gender
- g. Caring Responsibility

### **Group Development**

Would you be willing to participate in an action learning group for your own development among other BAME teachers? (Confidential sessions)

Do think one to one coaching would benefit your own personal development?

Do you think group coaching would benefit from your own personal development?

### **Improvement**

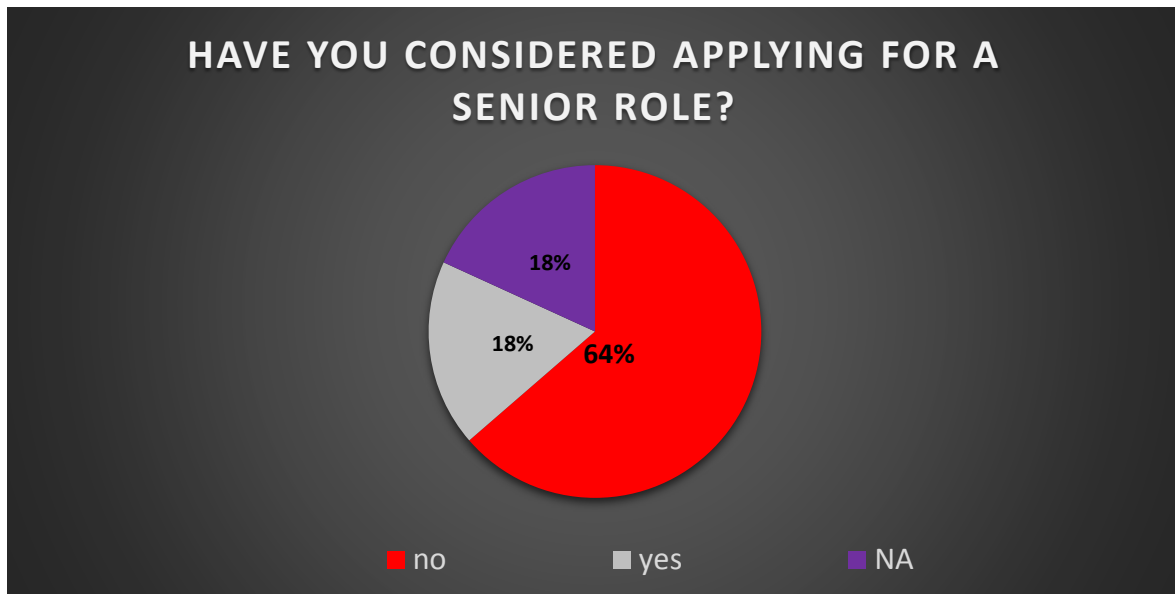
Can you make any suggestions on improving the experiences of BAME employees within the school environment?

## Appendix 2: Interviewees' Characteristics Table

<b>The Go getters (GG)</b>	These teachers are in control of their own development and were willing to go the extra mile to achieve it.
<b>The Head Hunted ( HH)</b>	These teachers gave it a go and were willing to go the extra mile to achieve it.)-encouraged to apply because they saw the potential in that individual for that job
<b>The Fighters</b>	These teachers did not give up despite a bad experience within a school.
<b>The Time Waiters ( TW)</b>	These teachers are convinced that due to school culture they need to wait to mature before becoming HT and accepted this culture.
<b>Stuck</b>	Those who want to apply but there is nothing out there so they are stuck.
<b>Serving without recognition</b>	Teacher who were doing the work without being given a formal position and not receiving any remuneration. "My position is that I am just a class teacher and an x coordinator- but I have been given the role but not the position because the person who has it will not let go of it-although I was told to do the role. When I asked for payment for the role I was told that it's been used elsewhere. It is difficult to respond to things like that so stay quiet. I am too scared..."

### Appendix 3: Charts

#### Chart 1: Numbers BAME Teachers Applying for a Senior Role



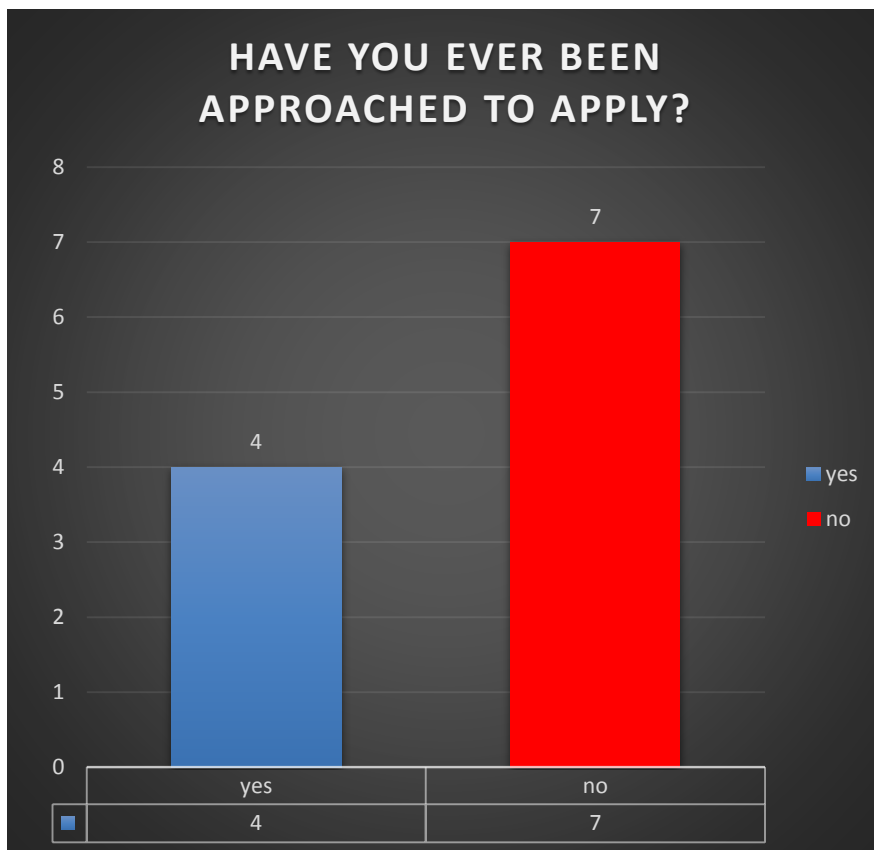
62% of BAME teachers interview stated that they have never considered applying for a senior leadership role within a school.

#### Chart 2: Mentoring and Professional Development



The majority of respondents felt that coaching and mentoring was most effective in building skills and confidence.

**Chart 3: Numbers of Teachers Approached To Apply for Senior or Leadership Roles**



The majority of teachers interviewed have never been asked to apply for a senior or leadership role with a school.

Chart 4: Barriers To Applying For Senior or Leadership Roles

