Leverhulme

Professional Development and Career Pathways

Supporting every colleague to grow, develop and achieve their ambitions.

Discovering dreams • Achieving ambitions •Transforming lives

Discovering dreams, achieving ambitions and transforming lives.

Learn more about our mission, vision and values at www.leverhulmeacademytrust.org

Our Commitment to Professional Development

At the heart of our Trust is a simple but powerful belief: great teachers change lives. If we are to realise our vision of creating well-rounded individuals who can flourish in the world, we must ensure that every student experiences consistently excellent teaching, every day, in every classroom.

Research from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is clear that high-quality teaching is the single most important in-school factor influencing pupil outcomes. Effective professional development (CPD) is therefore one of the most powerful ways we can improve outcomes for young people and ensure every student can succeed, regardless of background.

Our Trust believes that professional development is not a one-off event or isolated training session. It is a sustained commitment to professional growth, collaboration, reflection, and evidence-informed practice. When staff continue to develop their expertise, students benefit directly through stronger teaching, richer learning experiences, and higher aspirations.

This commitment to CPD reflects our Trust values and our shared mission: **Discovering Dreams, Achieving Ambitions and Transforming Lives.** Through meaningful professional development conversations, we seek to understand the aspirations, strengths, and ambitions of our staff, ensuring that every colleague feels valued, supported and empowered to grow.

Students First
Investing in professional development is an investment in our students. By developing expert teachers, leaders and support staff, we create classrooms where students are challenged, supported, and inspired to flourish both academically and personally.

High Expectations
We believe in ambitious outcomes for every student and every member of staff. Our CPD offer is built on the belief that expertise can continually be developed through collaboration, deliberate practice, and ongoing learning. We are committed to supporting colleagues at every stage of their career to fulfil their potential.

Integrity
Our approach to professional development is rooted in evidence, reflection and continual improvement. Guided by research-informed practice, we are committed to developing teaching and leadership approaches that have the greatest impact on student outcomes.

Through our Trust-wide CPD offer, we aim to create a culture where both staff and students can flourish; together discovering dreams, achieving ambitions and transforming lives.

Core Professional Development Entitlement

The Trust is committed to providing a rich, coherent and research-informed professional development offer for all staff. This entitlement ensures consistent access to high-quality training, collaboration and development opportunities across all schools.

Area	What This Looks Like in Practice
Trust-wide Professional Learning	A biannual Trust INSET day each September brings all staff together to revisit vision and values, celebrate successes, and share future priorities. These events are supported by high-quality external speakers, including Mary Myatt, Sir John Jones, Jordan Wylie, Professor David Hopkins and Diana Osagie. Additional Trust INSET days are aligned to key strategic priorities.
School-based CPD	Weekly, timetabled CPD sessions in each school focus on School Development Plan priorities. Training is sometimes coordinated across schools to enable collaboration between departments and colleagues. School INSET days further support school-specific improvement priorities.
Induction	A comprehensive induction programme supports all new staff.
Statutory Training	All colleagues complete statutory and mandatory training, including safeguarding (e.g. KCSIE updates), GDPR and health and safety.
Instructional Development	Ongoing internal CPD supports teaching and learning, curriculum development, assessment and moderation. Each school also produces a Teaching & Learning Bulletin to regularly share best practice.
Coaching & Expert Support	Trust Lead Practitioners provide coaching, contribute to CPD and lead on research-informed practice across schools.
Collaborative Practice	The 'Love & Wonder' open-door programme enables staff to visit one another's classrooms and share practice in a supportive, low-stakes way.
Professional Learning Resources	All staff have access to The National College, providing a wide range of subject-specific and whole-school training materials.
Professional Growth & Reflection	Professional Development Conversations (PDCs) support staff in reflecting on their practice, identifying development priorities, and planning next steps.
External Opportunities	Staff can access external training and courses linked to their role and aligned with school and Trust priorities.

National College

As part of our commitment to high-quality professional development, every member of staff across our Trust has access to The National College: a comprehensive online learning platform designed to support both statutory compliance and professional growth.

The National College provides all staff with access to mandatory statutory and safeguarding training, ensuring that everyone remains informed, compliant, and confident in fulfilling their professional responsibilities. This enables us to maintain the highest standards of safeguarding, health and safety, and professional practice across our schools.

Alongside statutory training, the platform also offers a wide-ranging professional development area, giving staff access to an extensive library of high-quality training videos, webinars, and courses. These resources cover a broad range of themes, including teaching and learning, curriculum development, behaviour, SEND, wellbeing, leadership, safeguarding, coaching and personal effectiveness.

To further support continuous professional learning, staff also receive weekly briefing emails from The National College. These updates help to signpost colleagues to new and upcoming resources, training opportunities, webinars, and relevant professional learning linked to current educational priorities and areas of interest.

The flexibility of the platform allows colleagues to engage in professional learning at a time and pace that works for them, supporting continuous development throughout the year. Whether staff are developing classroom practice, exploring leadership pathways, strengthening subject knowledge, or pursuing personal interests, The National College provides valuable opportunities for ongoing growth.

By providing access to high-quality, evidence-informed training for all colleagues, we continue to support our Trust vision of creating well-rounded individuals who can flourish in the world, investing not only in our students, but also in the professional growth and success of our staff.

Teaching and Learning

Flourishing Teacher Programme

Outstanding teaching is sustained through continual reflection, purposeful professional learning and a strong sense of professional identity. Our Flourishing Teacher Programme has been designed for teachers in their third year of teaching and beyond, providing dedicated time to step back from the demands of the classroom and invest in their own development.

The programme supports teachers to deepen their understanding of effective teaching and learning while reconnecting with the values, purpose and professional habits that enable them to flourish throughout their careers. Through collaborative dialogue, evidence-informed practice and structured reflection, colleagues will strengthen both their classroom practice and their long-term professional wellbeing.

Participants will explore:

- Understanding the curriculum and designing meaningful learning
- Creating supportive and inclusive classroom environments
- Revealing and developing pupil thinking
- Maximising learning through effective behaviour and routines
- Sustaining wellbeing, resilience and professional purpose

The programme combines collaborative workshops, reflective activities, professional dialogue and practical classroom application to ensure learning has an immediate impact on practice.

How to apply

Expressions of interest will be taken in the autumn term. Places are limited to ensure a high-quality learning experience.

Neuroscience in Education with Professor Zachary Walker

October 2026

We are delighted to welcome Professor Zachary Walker back to the Trust to deliver an engaging one-day conference exploring the fascinating relationship between neuroscience and classroom practice.

This highly interactive session translates the latest research on how the brain learns into practical strategies that teachers can use immediately. Combining evidence-informed practice with thought-provoking discussion, movement, practical activities and plenty of fun along the way, the day challenges delegates to think differently about learning, memory, motivation and behaviour.

Designed for teaching staff across the Trust, the conference will equip colleagues with a deeper understanding of the science of learning and the confidence to apply neuroscience-informed approaches that enhance teaching and improve outcomes for pupils.

The day will explore:

- Learning, memory and cognitive science
- Motivation, attention and emotion
- Practical neuroscience-informed classroom strategies
- Challenging common myths about the brain
- Applying evidence-informed practice to everyday teaching

How to apply

Places are limited. Each school will be allocated a number of places and will nominate colleagues to attend. Further information will be shared with schools ahead of the event.

> **“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”**
>
> **African Proverb**

Collaboration: Going Further, Together

Collaboration sits at the heart of the Trust’s approach to school improvement. Evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation highlights that high-quality professional collaboration, particularly around teaching and learning, can have a meaningful impact on pupil outcomes when it is structured, sustained and focused on practice.

Across the Trust, collaboration is not an add-on; it is a deliberate strategy to strengthen expertise, reduce workload and ensure consistency for pupils. By working across schools, phases and with external partners, staff benefit from shared knowledge, collective problem-solving and a strong sense of professional community.

Cross-Phase Collaboration

As a Trust spanning both primary and secondary phases, there is a unique opportunity to align curriculum, pedagogy and expectations from EYFS through to Key Stage 4 and beyond.

This work has been shaped by research such as The Wasted Years, which emphasises the importance of strengthening the transition between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. In response, the Trust has prioritised cross-phase collaboration to develop a more coherent and ambitious “middle years” experience.

Key Cross-Phase Projects (2026-27)

Focus Area (Facilitated by Vicki Guest)	**Purpose and Impact**
Writing Moderation	Ensuring consistency in expectations and assessment
Oracy	Developing pupils’ spoken language, confidence and academic talk across all phases
Sustainability – ‘Climate Champions’	Engaging pupils in meaningful, real-world projects linked to environmental responsibility

This work is already having a tangible impact. Leaders report stronger professional dialogue, improved curriculum alignment and a deeper shared understanding of expectations across phases. Just as importantly, pupils benefit from smoother transitions and more coherent learning experiences.

Network Groups

A wide range of Trust network groups bring colleagues together regularly to focus on shared priorities. These groups provide space for joint planning, moderation, quality assurance and the sharing of effective practice in a supportive, non-judgemental environment.

Trust Networks (2026-27)

Network	Lead	Focus
Quality of Education	Sarah Mitchell	Curriculum development, teaching and learning assessment.
Inclusion	Sally Heppenstall	Inclusive practice, provision mapping, meeting diverse needs.
Wellbeing Ambassadors	Charlotte McCool	Staff and pupil wellbeing, workload and culture.
School Business Managers	Carol Davies	Operational leadership, finance and strategic support.
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Paul Roach	Strategic and responsible use of AI to enhance teaching, learning, assessment and operational efficiency.

These networks drive real, practical outcomes, from shared resources and Trust-wide initiatives to improved systems and reduced workload. They also foster strong professional relationships, ensuring that no school or leader works in isolation.

New for 2026-27

To further strengthen collaboration across the Trust, a new initiative is being introduced:

CPD Roadshows
Once per term, schools will host a carousel of CPD workshops during the weekly CPD slot. Each school in the Trust will deliver sessions on areas of teaching, learning, assessment and leadership, relevant to all phases. Secondary schools will offer approximately 3 sessions each and primary schools will offer 1-2 sessions each.

Staff will be provided with a list of all sessions available, ahead of each CPD Roadshow, so that sessions can be selected most relevant to their role or development needs. These sessions will be delivered virtually and will draw on expertise from across the Trust. Recordings and supporting materials will be made available on National College following the live sessions, enabling all colleagues to access the content.

Collaboration Beyond the Trust

The Trust actively engages with a wide range of external partners to enhance its school improvement work and bring fresh perspectives into its practice.

This includes collaboration with:

- National and regional networks, including those linked to the Confederation of School Trusts
- External experts and consultants
- Local authority and regional hubs, including attendance, behaviour and subject networks
- Local cluster groups for moderation and leadership collaboration
- Other high-performing schools and trusts, including Trinity Academy, Northern Education Trust, The Oak Learning Partnership and Emmaus Catholic Academy Trust
- School visits to leading institutions such as Michaela Community School, Seven Kings School and Wellington College

Staff also benefit from opportunities to take part in joint projects, cluster meetings and wider professional networks beyond the Trust.

A Culture of Collaboration

Through these structures, the Trust has built a culture where collaboration is purposeful, inclusive and impactful. Staff have access to a wide network of peers, experts and “critical friends”, enabling them to refine their practice, share ideas and work collectively to improve outcomes for all pupils.

This approach not only strengthens professional development but ensures that schools can focus more time and energy on what matters most: high-quality teaching and learning.

Leadership

Leadership Development

Strong leadership is essential in creating schools where both students and staff can thrive. Effective leaders shape culture, inspire ambition, support high standards, and create the conditions for excellent teaching and learning. As a Trust, we recognise that investing in leadership development is key to sustaining improvement and ensuring long-term success for our schools and communities.

We believe leadership exists at every level. Whether leading a classroom, a team, a department, or a whole school, we are committed to developing colleagues who lead with integrity, vision, and a relentless focus on students first.

Through coaching, collaboration, professional dialogue, and leadership training, we aim to nurture current and future leaders who can positively influence the lives of young people and contribute to

Annual Leadership Residential

A key part of our leadership development offer is our annual weekend residential for middle and senior leaders. This event provides colleagues with the opportunity to step away from the day-to-day demands of school life to engage in high-quality professional learning, collaboration, reflection, and strategic thinking alongside leaders from across the Trust.

This October, we are excited to welcome back **Professor Zachary Walker** as our keynote speaker. Professor Walker is an internationally recognised educational leader, researcher, and speaker whose work focuses on evidence-informed leadership, school improvement, motivation, and effective teaching and learning. With extensive experience working with schools and organisations across the world, he is widely respected for his engaging and practical approach to leadership development and his passion for improving outcomes for young people.

The residential continues to provide an invaluable opportunity to share best practice, strengthen leadership capacity, and build the relationships that support collaboration across our Trust community.

Leadership Coaching

A real insight into strategic leadership in action, typically involving spending structured time alongside senior or executive leaders, attending key meetings, briefings, and decision-making forums, to understand how priorities are set, how challenges are navigated and how trust-wide thinking differs from school-level leadership. This is complemented by regular coaching conversations, where the senior/executive leader explains the rationale behind decisions, invites reflection and challenges the participant to think at a more strategic level.

- Shadow participation in senior or executive meetings (e.g. strategy, finance, school improvement)
- Exposure to real-time decision-making and handling of complex issues
- Pre- and post-session coaching discussions to unpick thinking and leadership behaviours
- Opportunities to lead or contribute to a small trust-wide project
- Focus on developing strategic thinking, systems leadership, and influencing skills
- Personalised feedback and agreed next steps for development

The overall aim is to move beyond “watching” leadership to actively developing the mindset, confidence and judgement required for senior/executive-level roles.

Stepping into Leadership

We are proud to offer a dedicated **Stepping into Leadership Course** aimed at new and aspiring middle leaders, including second in department colleagues who are looking to develop their leadership skills and confidence.

Led by Executive Leaders from across the Trust, this programme is designed to equip participants with the knowledge, tools, and confidence needed to effectively lead a department, manage a team, and drive improvement within their area of responsibility.

The course will consist of five face-to-face sessions covering key aspects of middle leadership, including leading teams, curriculum and standards, communication, accountability, and developing effective practice.

This programme is ideal for colleagues who are beginning their leadership journey or are aspiring to take on greater leadership responsibility in the future. Applications of interest will be emailed to staff during the Autumn term.

CPD Offer	Overview	Who it is for	Pathway
Leverhulme Leadership Residential	An annual weekend residential focused on leadership development, collaboration and strategic thinking. This October, we are excited to welcome back Professor Zachary Walker, an internationally recognised educational leader and speaker specialising in evidence-informed leadership and school improvement.	All middle, senior and executive leaders within the Trust.	Invitation via email.
Leadership Coaching	A personalised leadership development opportunity providing insight into strategic leadership through senior or executive shadowing, coaching conversations and involvement in Trust-wide work. Designed to develop strategic thinking, leadership confidence and systems leadership skills.	Aspiring senior and executive leaders.	In the first instance, places will be offered to members of the 2025/26 ‘Reframing Leadership’ cohort. Any further availability will be offered through expressions of interest identified via Professional Development Conversations (PDCs) and leadership discussions.
Stepping into Leadership Course	A Trust-led programme delivered by Executive Leaders across five face-to-face sessions, designed to develop the tools and confidence needed to effectively lead a department and manage a team.	New and aspiring middle leaders, including second in department colleagues.	Application to apply via email in the autumn term.

Professional Qualifications

Alongside its core CPD offer, the Trust actively supports staff to engage in nationally recognised professional qualifications. These programmes provide structured, in-depth development and are designed to support career progression, strengthen leadership capacity and deepen professional expertise across the organisation.

Opportunities are aligned to both individual aspirations and Trust priorities, ensuring that investment in qualifications has a meaningful impact at both personal and whole-school level.

CPD Offer	Overview	Who it is for	Pathway
NPQs (National Professional Qualifications)	A suite of nationally recognised leadership qualifications covering areas such as senior leadership, headship, behaviour, teaching and teacher development.	Teachers and leaders at all stages, from aspiring middle leaders to experienced senior leaders, depending on the NPQ pathway.	Discuss interest through Professional Development Conversations (PDCs), liaise with line manager, submit expression of interest, formal application with SLT endorsement.
SENCO Qualification (NPQSENCO)	The mandatory National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination, developing expertise in leading SEND provision and inclusive practice.	Newly appointed or aspiring SENCOs, or those leading SEND provision.	Identified through role or PDC, discussion with line manager and SLT, supported enrolment and completion alongside role.
Master's Level Study	Opportunities to undertake postgraduate study (e.g. MA in Education), often focused on pedagogy, leadership or specialist areas of interest.	Staff seeking to deepen academic understanding, engage in research, or progress into leadership or specialist roles.	Express interest via PDC, explore alignment with school/Trust priorities, application supported by SLT (may include partnership with universities).
Apprenticeships	A range of professional apprenticeships across teaching, leadership and support roles, combining on-the-job learning with formal study.	Teaching and support staff at different career stages, including early career and leadership pathways.	Discussion with line manager/ PDC lead, identification of appropriate pathway, enrolment through Trust processes with SLT approval.
ILM Qualifications	Institute of Leadership & Management qualifications focused on developing leadership and management skills in practical contexts.	Aspiring or current middle leaders and operational leaders (including support staff).	Identified through PDC or leadership development, expression of interest.

Access to professional qualifications is carefully planned to ensure equity, impact and sustainability. Staff are supported throughout the process, from initial interest through to completion, by line managers, SLT and, where appropriate, Trust-wide leadership.

By investing in these qualifications, the Trust is developing a strong pipeline of skilled, knowledgeable and confident professionals who are well-equipped to lead improvement and contribute to the long-term success of the organisation.

ECTs

Early Career Teacher (ECT) Programme

Supporting Early Career Teachers is one of the most important investments we can make as a Trust. The first years of teaching are crucial in shaping confidence, developing strong classroom practice, and building the foundations for a successful and rewarding career in education. We are committed to ensuring that every ECT feels supported, valued, and empowered to thrive from the very start of their professional journey.

Our ECT programme is delivered in partnership with STAR Teaching School Hub, providing a high-quality, evidence-informed framework which combines professional studies, instructional coaching, mentoring, and regular opportunities for reflection and development. The programme supports ECTs in developing strong pedagogical knowledge, effective classroom routines, behaviour management strategies, curriculum understanding and assessment practice.

At the heart of our provision are our exceptional mentors, who play a vital role in supporting and guiding our ECTs. Our mentors are experienced, highly skilled practitioners who provide regular coaching, encouragement, feedback, and personalised support. Through strong mentoring relationships, ECTs are given the confidence to reflect, develop, and continually improve their practice within a supportive and nurturing environment.

Alongside the formal programme, ECTs also benefit from the wider support and collaboration available across the Trust, including access to Trust-wide CPD, subject networks, coaching, and opportunities to observe excellent practice. Together, this ensures that our Early Career Teachers are equipped not only to succeed in the classroom, but to flourish as confident and reflective professionals.

“We are committed to providing meaningful professional development opportunities that support growth, expertise and career development.”

Leverhulme Trust

Support / Associate Staff

Support and associate staff play a vital role across our schools and central Trust services. We are committed to providing meaningful professional development opportunities that support growth, expertise and career development.

Support staff take part in Professional Development Conversations (PDCs), in the same way as teaching staff, with a CPD offer and development menu tailored specifically to support roles and career pathways.

The professional development needs of support staff are diverse and role specific. Some roles have well-established professional frameworks, accreditation routes or formal qualification pathways, while others are developed through experience, specialist training and professional networks. Certain roles are also regulated and may require professional membership or role-specific training. As a result, support staff professional development will often involve a more individualised approach, with staff and line managers working together to identify relevant development opportunities, qualifications, networks and training appropriate to the role and career aspirations of the individual.

We recognise that support and associate staff bring a wide range of professional backgrounds, experiences and expertise into education. We greatly value the knowledge, skills and perspectives colleagues bring from their own professions and the important contribution this makes to the success of the Trust and the experiences of our students and staff.

Given the breadth and diversity of support and associate roles within education, there is no single professional framework that fully reflects every role across the Trust. However, the Institute of School Business Leadership (ISBL) Professional Standards provides the closest overarching framework to support reflection, development and career conversations, and is referenced as part of our PDC offer.

The standards outline different areas of practice, such as finance, HR, estates and operations, alongside different levels of responsibility, and can be used as a general reference point where helpful. They are intended to support professional reflection and development conversations, recognising that they will not map exactly to every role and that some posts naturally span multiple disciplines.

ISBL also signposts a range of professional qualifications, development pathways and sector-specific professional associations across different areas of practice. Some qualifications are accessible through apprenticeship routes, which the Trust may be able to support through the apprenticeship levy.

In addition, ISBL identifies a range of professional behaviours which support effective practice across all support and associate roles, including being agile, resourceful, collaborative, decisive, emotionally intelligent and able to lead at an appropriate level. These behaviours may provide a useful starting point for professional reflection and development conversations where relevant to the role.

Further information can be found here:

- **ISBL Professional Standards:** https://www.isbl.org.uk/isbl-professional-standards
- **ISBL Career Pathways:** https://www.isbl.org.uk/career-pathways

Governance

CPD Offer	Overview	Who it is for	Pathway
Induction	A comprehensive induction programme to support new Governors and Trustees in understanding their strategic role, safeguarding responsibilities and effective governance practice. Includes Trust induction, statutory online training and role-specific guidance.	New Local Governors and Trustees.	New Local Governors are invited to attend the Trust face-to-face Promoting Effective Governance induction course. New Trustees are invited to attend the CST Trustee Induction programme (4 online sessions). RBHS Foundation Governors are also invited to attend the Diocese Induction.
Statutory Training (1st term of appointment)	Essential statutory Safeguarding, Prevent and Online Safety training to ensure Governors and Trustees understand their legal responsibilities and maintain compliance. SG and Prevent certificate refreshed every two years. Regular Online Safety updates provided.	All Local Governors and Trustees.	Completion of the Certificate in Safeguarding, Certificate in Prevent and Certificate in Online Safety via The National College within the first term of appointment.
Good Practice Training (1st year of appointment)	Training designed to strengthen understanding of wider governance responsibilities, including data protection and statutory processes.	All Local Governors and Trustees, with exclusions training for Local Governors only.	Governors and Trustees are encouraged to complete GDPR & Data Protection training via The National College. Local Governors are additionally encouraged to complete the Suspensions & Exclusions Guidance course.
Link Governor Training	Specialist development opportunities to support Governors and Trustees in designated link roles, developing deeper understanding of safeguarding and SEND responsibilities.	Local Governors and Trustees with safeguarding or SEND link responsibilities.	Governors and Trustees with Safeguarding and SEND Link roles are encouraged to complete the relevant role-specific certification via The National College.
External Development	Access to external governance networks, professional learning and sector updates through Trust-funded memberships and partnership opportunities.	All Local Governors and Trustees, with some role-specific opportunities.	Through Trust membership of the NGA and CST, Governors and Trustees can access webinars, conferences, podcasts and networking opportunities. RBHS Chairs of Local Governing Committees are also invited to attend Diocese Head Teacher and Chairs' Briefings.
Trust-wide Networking and Development	Opportunities to collaborate across the Trust, contribute to strategic development and engage in Trust-wide governance and leadership events.	The Leverhulme Governance Conference (November 2026) – Governors, Trustees and Members The Annual Chairs' Forum - Chair of Trustees and Local Governing Committee Chairs only Trust Strategy Days - Trustees and Local Governing Committee Chairs only Biannual Trust Staff Inset Day - Trustees and Local Governing Committee Chairs only Sustainability Link Governors attend Trust wide events such as the Leverhulme Litter Pick and visit other schools in the Trust.	Governors, Trustees and Members are invited by the Trust or School.
Compliance	Ongoing governance updates and guidance to ensure Governors and Trustees remain informed of statutory and regulatory changes.	All Local Governors and Trustees.	Key updates relating to DfE guidance and legislation are shared through meeting agenda notes, including updates to KCSIE, the Academy Trust Handbook and the Academy Trust Governance Guide.
School Visits & Governor Days	Opportunities to engage directly with schools through monitoring visits, themed Governor Days and pupil voice activities to support strategic oversight and accountability.	All Local Governors.	All Local Governors are allocated Link Governor roles and undertake regular monitoring visits. Governors are also invited to themed Governor Days and pupil voice opportunities, including meetings and activities with pupils.

Leverhulme Trust Case Studies - Career Pathways

Case Studies - Career Pathways

Charlotte McCool
HR Manager, Leverhulme Trust

Charlotte's Career Timeline

2006-2009
BA (Hons) English Literature, Lancaster University

2009-2010
MA in Literary Research, Lancaster University

2010-2013
Joined St Marylebone High School in London and worked as PA to the Headteacher. After a year, I was given the opportunity to move into HR and train as the school's HR Officer alongside completing CIPD qualifications.

2013-2019
HR Manager, St Marylebone High School

2013-2019
Provided HR support to St Marylebone Bridge School, a specialist school for pupils with speech, language and communication needs. This included supporting the establishment and development of the school from its inception.

2018-2019
Support Staff Governor, Marylebone High School

2019-2021
Worked as a self-employed HR Consultant

2021-Present
HR Manager, Leverhulme Trust

Key Turning Points

Moving to London
After completing my MA, I originally planned to take a gap year in London before returning to Lancaster University to undertake a PhD. However, during that year I began working in HR within education and quickly realised I had found a role I genuinely enjoyed and had never previously considered. Instead of returning, I decided to continue developing my HR career and remained in London for the next ten years.

Supporting the Opening of a New School
A key development opportunity came through supporting the opening of St Marylebone Bridge School. Establishing a new special school from the ground up, including recruiting and onboarding the entire workforce provided valuable experience.

Consultancy
Moving into HR consultancy was another important turning point. I wanted to broaden my experience beyond education. While the experience developed my commercial awareness, it also reinforced how much I value the purpose of working in education.

Joining Leverhulme
Joining Leverhulme marked my first experience of working within a multi-academy trust.

Reflections and Realities

You do not need to have your entire career planned out from the beginning. When I left university, I had no idea that HR even existed as a profession, let alone that it was a specialist function within education. I moved to London intending to take a gap year before pursuing a PhD, but instead I found a role and sector I wanted to build a long-term career in.

I think it's important to be open to opportunities, even when a role or experience does not seem directly connected to your long-term or original plans. Some of my most valuable experiences have come from roles and opportunities that I had not anticipated. At school, I would never have predicted that part of my role would involve payroll. It is a reminder that careers do not always follow the path you expect! My degree is in English Literature rather than HR, but many of the skills it developed have been surprisingly helpful in the work I do.

Case Studies - Career Pathways

Carol Davies
Chief Finance Officer, Leverhulme Trust

Key Turning Points

Moving into School Leadership – A Defining Decision
One of the most significant decisions in my career was leaving the relative security and strategic influence of local authority leadership to join a single school. At the time, many colleagues viewed the move as a retrograde step. Having led finance across the whole of Children's Services, supporting both education and social care across an entire local authority, moving to a single school appeared, on the surface, to represent a reduction in scale and responsibility. In reality, it proved to be one of the best and most rewarding decisions I have ever made.

For the first time, I was at the heart of education delivery rather than supporting it from a distance. Instead of developing policy and allocating resources across many schools, I became fully immersed in one school community where I could see first-hand how strategic decisions influenced teaching, learning and the experiences of individual students.

I quickly realised that the greatest satisfaction did not come from managing larger budgets or broader portfolios; it came from becoming part of a school community and contributing to the journey of every young person. Watching students grow in confidence, celebrating their achievements and knowing that the work behind the scenes helped create opportunities for them gave me a real sense of purpose and professional fulfilment.

This experience fundamentally changed my perspective on leadership. It reinforced my belief that finance, estates, HR, governance and operational leadership are not ends in themselves; they are enablers that allow schools to provide the very best education and opportunities for children and young people.

Reflecting on my professional journey, what initially appeared to others to be a step backwards became one of the biggest steps forward in my professional development. It strengthened my conviction that effective leadership is measured not by organisational size, but by the positive difference it makes to the lives of others.

Seizing Opportunities
Throughout my career, one of the characteristics that has shaped my professional journey has been a willingness to recognise and embrace opportunities, even when they were outside my comfort zone or appeared unconventional to others.

My career has not been built around following a predetermined path or pursuing promotion for its own sake. Instead, I have sought opportunities that would broaden my experience, challenge my thinking and allow me to make a greater contribution. I have always been drawn to opportunities where there was scope to build, improve or transform an organisation rather than simply maintain what already existed.

One lesson has remained constant throughout my career: the most rewarding opportunities are rarely the easiest ones. They often require courage, curiosity and a willingness to embrace uncertainty. Looking back, the opportunities that initially seemed the most challenging have invariably become those from which I have learned the most.

Learning from Voluntary Experience and other roles outside of education
Some of the most valuable professional development I have experienced has come through roles undertaken outside my career in education.

Chairing the North West LMS Leaders Network enabled me to work with senior colleagues across the region, sharing best practice and influencing education developments. Serving for more than 25 years as a Governor at Bolton Sixth Form College and now as Chair of the Finance and Personnel Committee, has strengthened my understanding of governance, assurance, strategic oversight and constructive challenge.

My role as Chair of Audit and Non-Executive Director at Bolton NHS Foundation Trust, during a period of significant organisational challenge, further strengthened my understanding of board assurance, resilience, public accountability and the importance of constructive challenge in supporting organisational improvement.

Colleagues
With the benefit of hindsight, perhaps the greatest lesson has been recognising that leadership is never a solitary endeavour. Throughout my career I have been fortunate to work alongside talented colleagues, mentors and professionals from different sectors, each bringing different perspectives and experiences. Their willingness to share knowledge, challenge my thinking and offer support has significantly shaped my leadership style and reinforced the importance of humility, collaboration and continuous learning.

Reflections and Realities

Looking back, my career has not followed a straight line, and that has been one of its greatest strengths. Working across local government, the private sector, the NHS and education has provided different perspectives that continue to shape my leadership style.

Some of the decisions that appeared least obvious at the time became the most rewarding. Moving from local authority leadership into a single school, initially seen by some as a step backwards, ultimately allowed me to make a more direct difference to the lives of children and young people. It reinforced an important lesson for me: career progression is not always about climbing higher; sometimes it is about moving closer to where you can make the greatest difference.

My career has taught me that technical expertise creates opportunities, but truly effective leadership depends on relationships, integrity, collaboration and a commitment to lifelong learning. Even now, I arrive at work expecting to learn something new every day. Sometimes that learning comes from strategic decisions, sometimes from colleagues, students or even mistakes. I believe the day we stop learning is the day we stop leading effectively.

My career has never been driven simply by promotion or larger budgets. Instead, it has been driven by the opportunity to make a positive difference, to keep learning, to help others succeed and to leave each organisation stronger than I found it. That continues to inspire and motivate me today.

Carol's Career Timeline

1983–1986
Bolton Council

1986–1988
Head of Payroll and Personnel, Autoglass Ltd (Head Office, Bedford)

1988–1992
Senior Finance Roles, Bolton Council and Trafford Health Authority

1988–1992
Chartered Management Accountant (CIMA)

1992–2008
Schools Finance Manager / Head of Finance, Children's Services

1992–2008
Chair, North West Local Management of Schools (LMS) Leaders Network (Voluntary)

2008–2017
Director of Finance and Resources, Mount St Joseph School

2010–2016
Chair of Audit and Non-Executive Director, Bolton NHS Foundation Trust

2017–Present
Chief Finance Officer, Leverhulme Academy Trust

Wider Leadership Roles

2010–2016
Chair of Audit and Non-Executive Director, Bolton NHS Foundation Trust

2017–Present
Chief Finance Officer, Leverhulme Academy Trust

2017–Present
Chair of Finance and Personnel, Bolton Sixth Form College (Voluntary)

2000–Present
Governor, Bolton Sixth Form College

Specialist Leader of Education

Case Studies - Career Pathways

Sally Heppenstall
Headteacher, Harper Green School

Key Turning Points

Head of Year

Securing a Head of Year position in my second year of teaching, following a competitive national recruitment process, was a significant milestone in my career. Initially, my intention had been to teach in England for one to two years before pursuing opportunities to travel internationally. However, achieving this role reshaped my professional direction and firmly established my commitment to the education sector.

The post provided me with early leadership responsibility and reinforced my belief in placing students first, particularly in supporting the development of the whole child. It strengthened my drive to remove barriers to education and to ensure that all young people are able to succeed, regardless of their starting points. From the outset, I recognised the importance of maintaining high expectations—both in terms of academic outcomes and personal development—and of modelling integrity in all interactions with students, families and colleagues.

Head of School

A significant turning point in my leadership journey came when I was afforded the opportunity to step into the role of Acting Head of School. This provided me with the chance to lead at a whole-school level earlier than anticipated, reflecting the trust placed in me to ensure continuity and stability for the school community.

While I had developed the experience to be considered 'ready', this period reinforced an important professional truth: in education, there is always more to learn. As I had previously been advised, "you don't know what you don't know"—a reflection that proved both accurate and invaluable. It enabled me to approach the role with humility, openness and a strong commitment to continual development.

Within my first week in post, the school community experienced the tragic loss of a member of our community. This deeply sad event reinforced the importance of leading with integrity, compassion and sensitivity. It required me to bring people together, galvanising the strength of the community we are and serve, while ensuring that students remained at the heart of all decision-making.

This experience strengthened my understanding that effective leadership is not only about preparedness, but about responding with clarity, integrity and empathy in the moment. It was a defining period that further developed my resilience, reinforced my values, and deepened my commitment to serving the school community.

Reflections and Realities

In my second year of teaching, I was appointed Head of Year and given the opportunity to collaborate closely with two highly skilled colleagues—the Head of Teaching and Learning and the Head of Geography—through a team-teaching model. Due to limited teaching space, and as a high-performing department, we combined classes and taught collaboratively.

Teaching alongside colleagues in this way significantly shaped both my practice and my leadership development. It provided continual opportunities for reflection, challenge, and professional dialogue, reinforcing my commitment to high expectations—both of myself and of the students I serve. Learning from colleagues with different strengths and approaches, while engaging in ongoing professional critique, remains the most impactful development experience in my career.

Throughout my career, I have worked in schools serving more socio-economically disadvantaged communities. My practice has been consistently driven by the principle of putting students first, ensuring that every decision I make is rooted in improving outcomes, life chances, and personal development. Two aspects of my work that I am particularly proud of are:

- When students have expressed that I am a role model, particularly in inspiring them to become confident, independent and successful individuals in their chosen fields. This reflects my commitment to maintaining high expectations for all, regardless of starting point.
- When students recognise that, irrespective of their final outcomes or whether they complete their secondary education, they have been supported to grow as individuals, learners, and members of society. This reflects my belief in acting with integrity, ensuring that every child feels valued, supported, and known.

I did not enter education with the intention of becoming a Headteacher; I was driven by a passion for my subject and a desire to share that enthusiasm with young people. Over time, I have been afforded a range of opportunities to develop professionally, and I have progressed when it has felt both appropriate and responsible to do so. My approach has always been grounded in integrity—making decisions for the right reasons, at the right time, and in the best interests of the students and communities I serve.

My advice to others would be to embrace new challenges and not to shy away from seeking support. Regardless of experience or position, we remain learners. In doing so, we ensure that our work has a sustained and meaningful impact on the young people we serve.

> **"My advice to others would be to embrace new challenges and not to shy away from seeking support."**
>
> Sally Heppenstall

Sally's Career Timeline

1995-1998 - BSc (Hons) in Geography, University of Leicester

1998-1999 - MSc (Hons) in Applied Meteorology and Climatology

1999 - 2000 - Commercial Graduate, Corus Steel

2000-2001 - Project Manager, Corus Steel

2001-2002 - PGCE BiLD, Geography through the Medium of French, University of Nottingham

2002-2003 - Teacher of Geography, Stanchester Community School (Yeovil)

2003-2004 - Assistant Head of Year and Teacher of Geography, Stanchester Community School (Yeovil)

2004-2006 - Diploma in Innovative Education – through the SSAT Developing Leaders Course.

2004-2008 - Head of Year and Teacher of Geography, Stanchester Community School (Yeovil)

2005-2006 - University of Warwick Post Graduate Certificate in Innovative Education

2008–2010 - Head of House and Teacher of Geography, Stanchester Community School (Yeovil)

2010–2011 - Secondment to SLT as Assistant Headteacher (Behaviour and Inclusion), Stanchester Community School (Yeovil)

2012–2014 - Assistant Headteacher for Inclusion (SEND and EAL), Wright Robinson College (East Manchester)

2015–2021 - Deputy Headteacher for Behaviour, Attendance and Safeguarding, Harper Green School (Bolton)

2021-2021 - Acting Head of School, Harper Green School (Bolton)

2020-2021 - NPQH

2021-2023 - Head of School, Harper Green School (Bolton)

2023–Present - Headteacher, Harper Green School (Bolton)

2026-Present - Chair of Bolton Safeguarding Education Collaborative

Case Studies - Career Pathways

Every career is different. Discover how our colleagues have developed their expertise, embraced new opportunities and progressed throughout their careers.

Sarah Mitchell
Director of School Improvement

Key Turning Points

Moving from Head of Department to Senior Leadership
One of the most significant transitions in my career was moving from Head of Department into Senior Leadership. As a Head of Department, I had a high degree of control over my area and could see the direct impact of decisions. Moving into SLT required a different approach; influencing, collaborating and leading across a much broader remit. It challenged me to think beyond my own subject area and develop a wider understanding of school improvement and leadership.

Taking Opportunities Before Feeling Ready
Looking back, many of the most important steps in my career came from saying yes to opportunities before I felt completely prepared. Early in my career, I volunteered to become an Assistant Head of Year in only my second year of teaching and regularly supported extracurricular clubs and wider school activities. These experiences helped me develop leadership skills, build relationships and gain a deeper understanding of school life beyond the classroom.

Learning from Exceptional Colleagues and Leaders
I have been fortunate to work alongside talented colleagues, mentors and leaders throughout my career. Watching how others led teams, managed challenges and developed people taught me lessons that no qualification could provide. These experiences shaped my own leadership style and reinforced the importance of collaboration, trust and investing in people.

Broadening My Perspective Through External Roles
Becoming an examiner and later working with Ofsted gave me valuable opportunities to see practice in a wide range of schools. These experiences deepened my understanding of curriculum, assessment and school improvement, while helping me bring new ideas and perspectives back into my own setting

> **“Take opportunities when they arise, even if you don’t feel completely ready. Some of the most valuable experiences in my career came from saying yes before I felt fully prepared.”**
>
> Sarah Mitchell

Reflections and Realities
A consistent theme throughout my career has been the importance of continuous learning. The most effective leaders are those who remain curious, seek feedback and are always willing to develop their practice. Some of the most valuable professional learning I have experienced has come from observing others, visiting different schools and working alongside colleagues with different strengths and perspectives.

If I could offer advice to colleagues considering leadership, it would be:

- Take opportunities when they arise, even if you do not feel completely ready.
- Volunteer for experiences beyond your core role and get involved in the wider life of the school.
- Become an expert in your craft by continually developing your subject and pedagogical knowledge.
- Learn from others by visiting schools, networking and seeking out different perspectives.
- Consider becoming an examiner or taking on external roles that broaden your understanding of education.
- Never stop learning, regardless of your position or experience.

Looking back, I have learned that career progression is rarely a carefully planned journey. Many of the opportunities that shaped my career came from being willing to step forward, embrace challenges and learn from the people around me. Leadership is ultimately about people, relationships and continual growth, rather than simply moving from one role to the next.

Sarah’s Career Timeline

1998–2001
Psychology Degree, University of Manchester

2001–2002
PGCE, Manchester Metropolitan University (entry route into education)

2002–2003
Class Teacher, Smithills School

2002-2010
Examiner, OCR

2003–2005
Head of Department, Smithills School

2005–2006
Head of Department, Westhoughton High School

2006–2008
Head of Faculty, Smithills School

2008 –2010
Assistant Headteacher – T&L, Smithills School

2010-2016
Assistant Headteacher – T&L, St James’s High School

2016- 2018
Deputy Headteacher T&L, Rivington & Blackrod High School

2018- 2020
Head of School, Rivington & Blackrod High School

2019- 2024
Chair of Governors, Euxton Primrose Hill Primary School

2020- Present
Director of School Improvement, Leverhulme Academy Trust

2020- 2025
Ofsted Inspector

2022- 2024
NPQEL (National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership)

Case Studies - Career Pathways

Vicki Guest
Director of Primary Education

Key Turning Points

Transition from Deputy Headteacher to Headteacher
Moving from Deputy Head at Pikes Lane to Headteacher at Lostock was a significant step. A key influence was working closely with an experienced Headteacher who modelled a highly collaborative leadership style. This mentorship built both confidence and readiness to take on headship.

Expanding Beyond One School
As experience and success grew at Lostock, opportunities arose to work beyond a single setting. Roles such as School Improvement Partner, Headteacher mentor, and Executive Headteacher provided a chance to support other schools and contribute more widely to the system.

Stepping into Trust-wide Leadership
Joining Leverhulme Trust marked a major shift, moving from single school leadership into a broader, collaborative trust context. This included working closely with secondary colleagues and gaining new perspectives, making it both a challenge and a valuable professional growth opportunity.

Reflections and Realities

A consistent theme throughout my career has been the importance of people. I've been fortunate to work with strong mentors, previous Headteachers and trust leaders, who have supported me through each stage of progression. Their guidance has been invaluable, particularly at key transition points.

Equally important has been the strength of the teams I've worked with. At Lostock especially, the collective commitment and professionalism of the staff made a significant difference. Effective leadership is not about working in isolation - don't underestimate the value of a strong team and make sure you communicate your appreciation regularly.

In terms of development, the most impactful approach has been to actively learn from others:

- Surround yourself with skilled and experienced colleagues
- Observe how they lead and make decisions
- Be open to feedback and act on it
- Take opportunities when they arise, even if they feel challenging

Looking back, one of the most important lessons is that leadership progression is not just about formal roles or qualifications… It's about relationships, continuous learning and being willing to step outside your comfort zone.

> **"Looking back, one of the most important lessons is that leadership progression is not just about formal roles or qualifications… It's about relationships, continuous learning and being willing to step outside your comfort zone."**
>
> Vicki Guest

Vicki's Career Timeline

1999-2002
Philosophy Degree, University of Reading

2004–2005
PGCE, University of Manchester (Entry route into education)

2005–2009
Class Teacher, Devonshire Road Primary School (Bolton)

2009–2012
TLR holder then Assistant Headteacher, Medlock Primary School (Manchester)

2012–2014
Deputy Headteacher, Pikes Lane Primary School (Bolton)

2014–2025
Headteacher, Lostock Primary School (Bolton)

2022–2026
ECM School Improvement Partner

Autumn 2023
Executive Headteacher, The Gates Primary School (Bolton)

2024–2026
NPQEL (National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership)

2025–Present
Director of Primary Education, Leverhulme Academy Trust

Case Studies - Career Pathways

Hannah Barnes-Gray
Head of School, Lostock Primary School

Hannah's Career Timeline

2004-2007
Sports Studies and Psychology Degree, York St John's University

2007–2008
PGCE, York St John's University (entry route into education)

2008–2016
Part Time Class Teacher, Clayton Brook Primary School (Lancashire)

2016– 2018
Full Time Year 6 Class Teacher, Lostock Primary School (Bolton)

2018- 2019
Deputy Head teacher (Fixed term to cover mat leave)

2019-2020
Assistant Headteacher

2020–2023
Deputy Headteacher

2023-2024
Acting Headteacher for one term

2023–2024
NPQH (National Professional Qualification for Headship)

2023-2025
Local Authority KS2 Writing Moderator

2025-Present
Head of School

Key Turning Points

Transition from Deputy Headteacher to Head of School
Taking on the role of Head of School at Lostock marked an important progression in my leadership journey. The opportunity to work alongside a skilled and supportive Headteacher and also the completion of the NPQH provided valuable insight into effective, collaborative leadership and gave me the experience and assurance needed to step confidently into headship.

Transition from Class Teacher to SLT
As opportunities arose at Lostock and my career success progressed, I applied for leadership positions. These were a natural progression within the school and enabled me to continue my personal challenge of taking on greater leadership responsibility. Each role provided new opportunities to develop my skills, contribute more strategically to school improvement, and have a wider impact on pupils, staff, and the school community.

Reflections and Realities

Throughout my career, I've come to recognise that successful leadership is built on the support, guidance and relationships developed over time. I've been incredibly fortunate to work alongside Vicki Guest, the previous Headteacher at Lostock Primary who challenged me, encouraged me and helped shape my approach to leadership. Her influence has been particularly important during periods of change and increased responsibility.

Outside of work, the encouragement and understanding of my family has also played a significant role. Leadership can be demanding and having a strong support network at home has provided balance, perspective and resilience during both the rewarding and more challenging moments of the role.

I have also learned that no leader succeeds alone. The schools I have worked in have been strengthened by committed staff teams who share a collective drive to improve outcomes for children and young people. At Lostock in particular, collaboration, professionalism and mutual support created an environment where people were able to grow and succeed together. One of the key lessons I have learned is the importance of recognising the contribution of others and creating a culture where staff feel valued.

> **"One of the key lessons I have learned is the importance of recognising the contribution of others and creating a culture where staff feel valued."**
>
> Hannah Barnes-Gray

Case Studies - Career Pathways

Sam Walsh
Head of School, Rivington & Blackrod High School

Key Turning Points

Moving from Law to Education

My life and education had been tailored towards becoming a solicitor (I had achieved a conditional training contract from my A Level results). Having had the opportunity to work at Keoghs Solicitors for 12 weeks each Summer, I found that this work wasn't as fulfilling as I thought it had been and decided, at the end of one summer, to go to China travelling and teach English as an additional language. Once returning to England, I applied to the charity to Teach First to be trained by them as a secondary school teacher and placed at an all-girls school in East London to begin this process.

Moving 'Back-Up-North'

I had been placed in London without any choice from me. I was keen to move back north and after five years in London, I did so and made the move to senior leadership at the same time. This brought me back to where I had grown up and closer to other support networks. Moving from an outstanding school to a school in special measures was a significant culture change and a challenge to values and leadership.

Transition to Leverhulme Trust

I needed to lead in a setting with clear values that drove decision making. On my interview of DHT, it was made clear to me that I was being appointed as Deputy now but with an eye for Headship in the future.

Reflections and Realities

I surrounded myself with more experienced colleagues and modelled my practice and leadership on them. I'm very self-reflective and would consider how I could improve my practice, welcoming observations and feedback. I had a fantastic NQT mentor who, before any additional leadership responsibilities, made it clear to me that the bedrock of any great teacher in school was exceptional teaching and learning and drove me to embed this before moving on to other aspects.

Without additional pay or time, I would take on additional opportunities to widen my experience and understanding of 'education' (such included leading a year group school council, developing a series of English-themed lessons to aid relationships with feeder primary schools and running a range of extra-curricular opportunities). These showed my willingness and eagerness to progress and widened my understanding of leadership outside of the classroom and commitment to the organisation and our students.

My best piece of advice is to surround yourself with people who you aspire to lead like. Their experience will help to shape your own practice and development, and provide daily CPD for you. Ask questions, learn from your mistakes and take a risk when an opportunity arises. You shouldn't think you are 'ready' for the next role when you apply for it – learning in the role and developing your experience are essential tenants of humble leadership, and building relationships with others.

> **"My best piece of advice is to surround yourself with people who you aspire to lead like. Their experience will help to shape your own practice and development, and provide daily CPD for you."**
>
> Sam Walsh

Sam's Career Timeline

2010-2014
International Law Degree, University of Lancaster (including year abroad at Charles University, Prague)

2011-2014
Worked at Keoghs Solicitors with 'time-to-count' for Trainee Solicitors qualification alongside university degree

2014
Teach First Placement (Sarah Bonnell School, East London)

2014–2019
Various roles from NQT to Key Stage Three Progress Leader

2016-2018
Completion of Masters (Educational Leadership) Part Time at Institute of Education and part funded by Teach First

2019–2022
Assistant Headteacher at Dean Trust Rose Bridge (Wigan) Various areas of oversight at this point moving between pastoral and outcomes.

2022-2026
Deputy Headteacher, Harper Green School Director of Behaviour, Attitudes and Personal Development (DSL)

2025
Completion of NPQSL

2024-2026
Inclusion Executive Board Lead for Bolton Local Authority

2026–Present
Appointed as Head of School of RBHS

Case Studies - Career Pathways

Heather Bodily
Facilities Manager, Harper Green School

Key Turning Points

Joining The Army
Although I was not a particularly engaged student during my school years, joining the Army proved to be a defining turning point in my life. Looking back, I recognise that I craved structure and discipline but found the traditional classroom environment challenging. I was most motivated by subjects that tested and challenged me, particularly Mathematics and Physical Education, where I was able to apply myself more effectively.

Iraq War
Deploying to Iraq with inadequate kit and equipment had a profound impact on me, both professionally and personally. The experience left me feeling that those making the decisions did not fully appreciate the realities faced by soldiers on the ground or provide the support and resources we needed. It was a difficult realisation and one that ultimately led me to make the decision to leave the Army upon returning home.

However, after returning to civilian life, I quickly realised how much I missed the camaraderie, discipline and sense of purpose that military service had given me. Unable to replicate that feeling elsewhere, I made the decision to re-enlist, recognising that the values and ethos of the Army remained a fundamental part of who I was.

Herrick 19
Operation Herrick 19 was probably by far the most rewarding, but also the hardest, operational tour I ever completed. The workload was relentless, with an average of 16–17 hour days, seven days a week. However, it was immensely rewarding to oversee the drawdown of kit and equipment into Camp Bastion, ready for its return to the UK. During this tour, I received a Task Force Helmand Commander's Commendation in recognition of my diligence in accounting for missing equipment.

Promotion to Warrant Officer
Receiving promotion to Warrant Officer was a true career highlight. Being issued with the Royal Warrant is when you look back and know that you have done right by the soldiers who served under you as part of your team, led by example and stood out from the crowd whilst doing so.

Reflections and Realities

During my service, I crossed paths with many different leadership styles, some outstanding and others that stood out for the wrong reasons.

Leading men and women in wartime situations has made me the leader I am today. I learnt very early in my career that, to lead effectively, you must listen, care and guide those around you. Just because you sit at the top of the tree does not mean you have the best ideas. Encourage group discussions when introducing changes or deciding the best way to achieve goals, and value every person's input. They are your team members and need to feel valued and heard. Their idea might not be exactly what you are looking for, but elements of it could be adapted to strengthen the final decision.

Promote individual strengths. Not everyone works in the same way or has the same abilities, so nurture your team and play to those strengths. Individual paths may be different, but when they come together, they form a motorway towards the shared goal.

Always explain the end goal first. This helps your team understand your thinking as you delegate individual tasks. Don't dictate; as I said before, just because you are at the top of the tree doesn't mean you have the clearest view.

Be flexible. To be a good leader, you need a strong team around you. Your team is what makes you a good leader; without them, you are nothing. If you want your team to show selfless commitment to you, you must show the same commitment to them.

Never ask a member of your team to do something you wouldn't be willing to do yourself. Lead by example, set the standard and your team will always have your back, just as you should always have theirs. A triangle is strongest at its widest point.

> **"Lead by example, set the standard and your team will always have your back, just as you should always have theirs. A triangle is strongest at its widest point."**
>
> Heather Bodily

Heather's Career Timeline

1994
Joined the British Army as a Junior Soldier, completing Phase 1 and Phase 2 training as a Supply Specialist.

1994–2000
Served in Germany and the UK, including operational deployments to Bosnia and Canada. Promoted to Lance Corporal (1998).

2000–2004
Workshop Stores Section JNCO in Woolwich and Maidstone, with deployments to Oman, Kenya and Iraq. Promoted to Corporal (2000).

2005
Re-enlisted into the British Army, retaining previous rank.

2005–2012
Served in Hampshire and Germany, including Operation Herrick 6, Afghanistan. Promoted to Sergeant (2008) and Staff Sergeant (2011).

2012–2015
Logistic Support Detachment Commander, including Operation Herrick 19. Promoted to Warrant Officer (2014).

2015–2020
Warrant Officer in Charge, Equipment Support, 1st (UK) Armoured Division Headquarters, York.

2020
Completed military resettlement and gained qualifications in plumbing, plastering, tiling and electrical installation.

2020–2022
Shopfloor Manager, Selco Builders Warehouse.

2022–Present
Facilities Manager, Harper Green School.

Case Studies - Career Pathways

Emma Stoddard
Clerk to the Trust/PA to the Executive Team, Leverhulme Trust

Emma's Career Timeline

1995-1998
BA Hons Media Studies with Professional Writing – Sheffield Hallam University

April 2008
Level 4 NVQ in Business Administration & Management

1995-1998
Administration Officer for Pupil & Student Services – Bolton Council

1998-2001
Advertising Executive – Media Force, Manchester

2004-2005
Advertising Executive – Lancashire Evening Post

2005-2008
PA to MD, Office Manager & Company Secretary - Citrus Training Solutions Ltd

2008-2009
Mayor's Secretary – Chorley Council

2009-2010
Schools Workforce Administrator – Bolton Council

2010
Interim PA to Executive Team – Kearsley Academy (Secondment)

2010-2023
Governance Services Officer – Bolton Council

February 2017
National Clerks Development Programme - National College for Teaching & Leadership

2023-Present
Clerk to the Trust / PA to Executive Leadership Team – Leverhulme Trust

Key Turning Points

Arranging Large Scale Events
Working as Mayor's Secretary for the Mayor of Chorley provided an opportunity to organise and co-ordinate large scale major events including the mayor's inauguration, annual Civic Ball and the Remembrance Sunday service. This built confidence and professional growth for future roles.

Moving into Governance
Making the decision to move into governance in my role as Governance Services Officer at Bolton Council provided an in-depth insight into school governance, working with primary, secondary and alternative provision settings over a 13-year period. This then enabled me to combine my PA and administration experience, with a sound knowledge of governance, putting me in a strong position to apply for the Clerk to the Trust / PA to the Executive Leadership Team role here at Leverhulme.

Reflections and Realities

Working with lots of different schools means that I have worked with hundreds of governors over the years and developing and establishing these relationships has been key. To be an effective Governance Professional, governors need to see you as integral part of the board, which in turn then means you can provide effective support.

Check and double check all arrangements when organising events. The devil is in the detail!

Don't be afraid to change course and learn something new, you never know where it will lead.

Recommended Reading

We encourage all colleagues to engage with professional reading as part of their ongoing development and reflective practice. Reading widely supports professional curiosity, strengthens expertise and contributes to a culture of continuous improvement across our Trust.

Theme	Book & Author	What This Looks Like
Teaching & Learning	Teach Like a Champion – Doug Lemov	Practical strategies for highly effective classroom teaching.
Teaching & Learning	Rosenshine's Principles in Action – Tom Sherrington	Applying evidence-informed teaching principles in the classroom.
Teaching & Learning	Making Every Lesson Count – Shaun Allison & Andy Tharby	Evidence-informed approaches to great teaching.
Curriculum	The Curriculum: Gallimaufry to Coherence – Mary Myatt	Curriculum design, coherence and school improvement.
Curriculum	Powerful Teaching – Pooja Agarwal & Patrice Bain	Cognitive science and effective learning strategies.
Leadership	Leverage Leadership – Paul Bambrick-Santoyo	Instructional leadership and improving teaching quality.
Leadership	The Culture Code – Daniel Coyle	Building strong, high-performing teams and cultures.
Leadership	Turn the Ship Around! – L. David Marquet	Empowering leadership and developing ownership within teams.
Leadership	Visible Learning for Teachers – John Hattie	Understanding the research behind impactful teaching.
Leadership	Start With Why - Simon Sinek	Explores how to lead with a sense of purpose.
Leadership	Leaders Eat Last – Simon Sinek	Understanding that true leadership is about responsibility not rank.
Leadership	Legacy – James Kerr	Explores the culture of the All Blacks to build successful teams.
Leadership	Kim Scott – Radical Candor	Practical guide to giving honest feedback and building strong relationships.
Leadership	Sir David Carter – Leading Academy Trusts (Why some fail but most don't)	Includes a blue print of why academy trusts in England succeed or struggle.
Inclusion & SEND	Inclusive Quality First Teaching – Nancy Gedge	Practical strategies for inclusive classroom practice.
Behaviour & Culture	Running the Room – Tom Bennett	Effective classroom management and behaviour routines.
Behaviour & Culture	When the Adults Change - Paul Dix	Fostering a positive school culture.
Wellbeing	The Happiness Advantage – Shawn Achor	Positive psychology, resilience and wellbeing.
Professional Growth	Atomic Habits – James Clear	Building sustainable habits and continuous improvement.
Professional Reflection	The Art and Science of Teaching – Robert Marzano	Reflective teaching and instructional improvement.

Leverhulme

www.leverhulmeacademytrust.org

Leverhulme Trust
Rivington Lane
Bolton
BL6 7RU

Telephone: 01204 333266
Email: contact@rbhs.co.uk

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