

Does Leadership Matter for School Performance?

Alex Bryson (with Lucy Stokes and David Wilkinson)

We use panel data for secondary schools in England to explore the relationship between school leadership and school performance. In aggregate, the results do not point to a strong relationship between the size of the leadership group and school performance. However, in schools with lower levels of autonomy, increases in the size of the leadership group, broadly defined, are positively associated with school performance. This finding is driven not by head teachers and their deputies, but by other staff, notably teachers, taking on leadership roles. In contrast, increases in the size of the broad leadership group in schools with greater autonomy were associated with lower school performance. Although school autonomy itself is positively correlated with pupil attainment changes in autonomy are detrimental to pupil performance suggesting that alterations to school governance are disruptive, at least in the short-term.