

EMPLOYMENT

Policy

The Board of Management (BOM) acknowledges that the staff team is one of the school's most important assets. It recognises that it is crucial to recruit employees with the necessary qualifications, experience, skills and commitment to undertake the work of the school. Furthermore, it believes that all staff should be supported to do their jobs well and realise their potential in the workplace through adequate induction, training, supervision, remuneration and benefits. If things go wrong, the school has procedures in place to solve problems as quickly and smoothly as possible.

Procedures

1 Responsibilities

1.1 BOM

The BOM is the employer of all staff in the school. The BOM commits to meeting all its obligations under employment law and strives for best practice in human resource management, within the constraints of its resources. The BOM has a particular role to play in recruitment, in the sanctioning of resources associated with staffing and in employment disputes.

1.2 Principal and Deputy Principal

Day-to-day responsibility for employment matters rests with the Principal. These duties will be assumed by the Deputy Principal in her absence. All staff report directly to the Principal.

1.3 Other employees

Employees are required to report for work, undertake their duties in a professional manner and adhere to all school policies and procedures. Specifically, teachers are required to adhere to the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers of The Teaching Council [see appendix 1].

1.4 Others

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) has laid out detailed regulations about employment matters relating to staff in schools, which will be followed.

The school is under the patronage of Educate Together and wherever possible and appropriate, will follow employment guidelines issued by this organisation.

The school recognises two trade unions: the Irish Municipal Public And Civil Trade Union (IMPACT) and the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO). The school strives for a positive working relationship with these unions.

This policy does not apply to student teachers, volunteers or external contractors who do work in/for the school.

2 Recruitment and selection

2.1 Job analysis

When a post becomes vacant or if a new post is being considered, the Principal will undertake a job analysis to define what the school now needs. All jobs will be sanctioned either by the BOM, or in the case of teaching staff and Special Needs Assistants (SNAs), by the DES. In the exceptional case of a very temporary and/or very part-time position, the BOM may allow the Principal to appoint an individual already known to the school (for example, a former employee) without the need to follow all of the procedures outlined in the remainder of section 2.

2.2 Selection board

Recruitment will not be left to one person. The Principal will sit on all selection boards, unless there is a conflict of interest (including if the position of Principal is being recruited for). She will be joined in almost all cases by the Chairperson of the BOM. For ancillary posts, one or more suitably qualified and independent individuals will join the Principal on the selection board. For teaching and SNA posts, DES rules will be followed. All members of the selection board will be provided with the relevant extracts from this policy document.

2.3 Job description and person specification

A job description and person specification with fair and assessable criteria will be drawn up for all posts. For teaching staff and SNAs, DES rules on eligibility criteria and responsibilities will be followed.

2.4 Advertising

If the school is seeking to fill a permanent teaching vacancy, the selection board is obliged to offer the post in the first instance to a teacher on the Educate Together redeployment panel, if any such person is presently on the panel. Advertisements for teaching and SNA posts will follow DES rules (including notifying teachers on leave of any vacancies).

Posts will be advertised both internally and externally to the school using mechanisms appropriate to the job. These may include:

- School notice boards
- Staff room/intranet
- Educate Together website
- Specialist school staffing websites
- Press
- FÁS.

All advertisements will ask potential applicants to download a job information pack from the school website www.retns.ie.

2.5 Application process

The job information pack will outline the application process, and will include the job description, the person specification and any other information considered relevant to the post. Applicants will be asked to submit a CV by a stated closing date. Applications received after the closing date will not be considered.

2.6 Shortlisting

The selection board will decide on a manageable number of interviewees. Members of the selection board will look at all applications and, using an agreed scoring system based on the criteria referred to in section 2.3, will individually decide who they wish to shortlist for interview. They will then discuss their lists and agree a final shortlist (with reserves in case any candidates do not accept the offer to attend for interview). Shortlisted candidates will be provided with practical details of the interview (location, time, what to bring, etc).

2.7 Interviewing/testing

Interviews will normally be held in a comfortable and undisturbed setting at the school. The selection board will ask candidates the same range of predetermined questions, focusing on those aspects of the person specification for which evidence has not yet been ascertained in sufficient detail. All interviewees will be asked if they have ever had a child protection issue, even if this was unproven. A standardised score sheet will be used to note interviewees' responses and interviewers' comments. If appropriate,

interviewees may be asked to perform relevant tests (for example, making a presentation). Interviews for teachers and SNAs will follow DES rules.

2.8 Verifying

If candidates have not already provided evidence of relevant qualifications held, they will be asked to bring these along to interview. At least two references will be taken up for preferred candidates before a provisional job offer is made. Telephone references will be taken up seeking answers to specified questions (always including child protection concerns). Garda vetting will always take place, in line with the procedures outlined in the school's child protection policy. The BOM reserves the right to ask candidates to attend for a checkup with the school's nominated GP and will always do so in the case of SNAs. Furthermore, the DES requires all new entrant teachers to complete Medmark4teachers screening.

2.9 Selecting

The selection of teaching and SNA staff will be done using DES guidance. The selection board must come to an agreed decision about who to make the job offer to and whether the job will be offered to any of the other interviewees if the preferred candidate does not accept the position. For teaching and SNA posts, DES rules will be followed about seeking ratification from the BOM and Educate Together for recommended candidates. The job offer will be made as soon as possible after the selection board's decision/written approval by Educate Together. The job offer will usually be made by telephone, and will be followed up immediately in writing, with a short deadline for acceptance or refusal. The offer may be subject to satisfaction with the verification checks outlined in section 2.8. All other candidates will then be informed that they have been unsuccessful and thanked for their interest. This may be done using either email or a system of stamped self-addressed envelopes.

2.10 Records

All documentation relating to the recruitment process will be retained securely in the Principal's office for at least one year. The DES will be notified of all teaching and SNA appointments using the agreed procedures.

3 Starting work

3.1 Contracts

All employees will be issued with a written statement of terms and conditions, normally on commencement and in any case within two months of starting work. The contract will be signed by both parties and copies will be kept by each. In most cases, the contract will allow for a probationary period. Teachers and SNAs will be issued with standard DES contracts.

Fixed term (temporary) contracts will include a clause specifically excluding the application of the Unfair Dismissals Acts 1977 to 2007. Employees shall not be permitted to remain on fixed term contracts indefinitely. DES regulations for employing temporary teachers will be followed. Fixed term and part-time employees shall not be treated any less favourably than permanent and full-time employees, subject to the law.

Employees will also be issued with a copy of this document, induction materials and other school policies and procedures; together with their written terms and conditions, these form the staff handbook.

3.2 Induction

The Principal will organise a tailored induction process for the initial days and weeks of a new member of staff's employment to familiarise her/him with the school and the job. This will include a 'whirlwind' introduction to ethos, health and safety and other key matters. Where appropriate, a mentoring system will be set up.

3.3 Personnel file

A file will be kept on every member of staff containing any records relating to their employment. Access will be restricted to the Principal and, where required, other authorised individuals (for example, the Treasurer processing salary information). Every employee has a right to see what information the school keeps on her/his own personnel file, but not on the files of others. Records will be kept, used and disposed of in accordance with current data protection legislation.

3.4 Seniority

DES rules for seniority of permanent teaching staff and SNAs will be followed and new employees will be made aware of this.

4. Working conditions

4.1 Working time

The provisions of working time legislation will be adhered to. All time worked and breaks/leave taken will be recorded.

4.2 Flexible working arrangements

The BOM will consider requests for flexible working arrangements (part-time, job share, working from home, etc) on a case-by-case basis, using current DES guidelines where available and prioritising the welfare and educational needs of pupils over other considerations when making decisions.

It should be noted that the job sharing option is open to all and that pre-existing arrangements do not necessarily take precedence over new applications. Job shares must be applied for on an annual basis. In order to plan for potential job shares, those interested in pursuing this option are asked to have informal and private discussions with the Principal in January of the year preceding the start of any such arrangement. Formal written applications have to be submitted to the BOM by 1 March of that year. The BOM will consider all requests for job shares at its March meeting and inform applicants of its decision as soon as possible after this meeting.

4.3 Leave

4.3.1 General leave matters

Class teachers are required to have available at all times a minimum of three days' worth of work packs for pupils to complete in their absence. Substitute teachers can only be granted in limited circumstances defined by the DES. In order to meet DES requirements for the effective operation of the On Line Claims System (OLCS) that records staff absences and submits claims for the payment of replacement staff arising from those absences, the BOM will do the following:

- Appoint a Data Entry person, First Approver, Second Approver and Local Administrator for the OLCS
- Ensure each Principal's report to the BOM lists the names of all substitutes and part-time teachers for whom claims have been made on the OLCS system since the last meeting
- Ensure a report on all absences recorded on the OLCS is supplied to each staff member once in each school term, to be signed by the staff member and a copy retained by the Principal.

4.3.2 Annual leave/public holidays

All employees are entitled to annual paid leave and public holidays. Leave entitlement is calculated on a *pro rata* basis for part-time staff. Requests for annual leave must be made with due notice, can only be granted by the Principal and must not interfere unduly with the operations of the school. Employees who take ill during annual leave and are certified as such are entitled to retake their annual leave.

4.3.3 Sick leave

Employees must only present for work if they are fit to do so. If an employee is sick and unavailable for work, s/he must inform the Principal on her mobile phone at the earliest opportunity (the message must never reach the school later than 8.45 and 'texts' are unacceptable). Sick leave entitlements for qualified teachers and for SNAs are laid down by the DES. Sick leave entitlements and certification requirements for other staff are laid out in their contracts. Teachers and SNAs are strongly encouraged to obtain a medical

certificate for each and every day of sickness in order that the school may engage substitute staff during their absence. The school reserves the right to ask employees to attend the GP nominated by the school for a medical examination to assess fitness for work. If staff have to attend medical appointments, it is required that they do so outside of school hours whenever feasible.

4.3.4 Extra Personal Vacation (EPV)

In line with DES regulations, teachers are entitled to between three and five EPV days during the school year for any approved courses they undertake for five or more days the previous summer. Requests for EPV days must be accompanied by certification of attendance and completion, must be granted by the Principal and must not interfere unduly with the operations of the school. A first come first served policy will be applied. EPV days will not ordinarily be sanctioned for September, June, staff meeting days, swimming days and special event days. Generally only one member of staff may take EPV on any given day. EPV days must be spread over the school terms. Any teacher wishing to take concurrent EPV days must apply before 30 September.

4.3.5 Other legally defined forms of leave

The school will grant any leave in accordance with legal requirements, which includes, but is not limited to, adoptive, carer's, force majeure, jury service, maternity and parental leave.

4.3.6 Discretionary leave

Requests for paid or unpaid discretionary leave (for example, brief absences in the form of study leave or compassionate leave) will be considered by the BOM on a case-by-case basis.

4.3.7 Career breaks, secondments and teacher exchanges

Requests for these will be considered by the BOM on a case-by-case basis, using current DES guidelines. It should be noted that pre-existing arrangements do not necessarily take precedence over new applications. Career breaks, secondments and teacher exchanges must be applied for on an annual basis. In order to plan effectively, those interested in pursuing these options are asked to have informal and private discussions with the Principal in January of the year preceding the start of any such arrangement. Formal written applications have to be submitted to the BOM by 1 March of that year. The BOM will consider all requests for career breaks, secondments and teacher exchanges at its March meeting and inform applicants of its decision as soon as possible after this meeting. The BOM may decide to grant none, one or two of these arrangements (in total) at any one time.

4.4 Pay

Rates of pay for teaching staff and SNAs are set by the DES. Teachers (including substitutes) and SNAs are paid directly by the DES. Remuneration rates for other staff are set by the BOM in accordance with available resources and norms in other schools. Reviews for these will take place annually. The payroll for non-teaching staff is managed in-house. Employees will never be paid cash in hand. All employees will receive payslips. The school is not ordinarily in a position to grant sick pay or maternity pay, except in exceptional circumstances. If it does do so, it reserves the right to ask the employee to reimburse any social protection payments due to them during the period of pay.

4.5 Pensions

Pensions for teachers are organised by the DES. The school will make available the option for all staff to pay into a Personal Retirement Savings Account through the payroll after they have worked in the school for more than six months. The school will be under no obligation to make an employer's contribution into such an account.

4.6 Facilities

The school provides for its staff an attractive indoor and outdoor working environment, including parking and a well-equipped staff room.

4.7 Learning

The BOM recognises the importance of having a skilled work force. It also notes that the provision of training is likely to aid staff retention. It therefore encourages staff to avail of learning opportunities that arise. The BOM will make a small budget available for professional development each year. The Principal (in discussion with the rest of the BOM where she considers this necessary) may sanction time off for training, a financial contribution towards training, both, or neither. The Principal will identify unmet training needs within the staff team on an ongoing basis and will aim to ensure that these are met in the first instance. She may therefore, from time to time, require staff to undergo specific training (either individuals or the entire staff team). Employees are also welcome to request access to training; priority will be given to permanent full-time staff who have not recently undertaken training. If employees are granted time off and/or money towards training, course materials will belong to the school and staff members will be required to provide a report at staff meetings about the training completed.

4.8 Development

Posts of responsibility (Deputy Principal and special duties teachers) are vital to the effective running of, and shared leadership within, the school. They are also an excellent mechanism for the professional development of staff. DES guidelines for posts of responsibility will be followed. The school will perceive

favourably any other personal and/or professional development initiatives undertaken by staff members outside of the post of responsibility facility.

4.9 Supervision and support

The Principal will provide supervision to staff in line with their needs (which will differ for different individuals) and her available time. She will guide staff on a day-to-day basis and let them know if they are meeting expectations, both in terms of what is done and how it is done. Furthermore, any member of staff can raise any professional issues through open dialogue at mutually appropriate times. It is recognised fully that personal lives can and will occasionally affect staff lives. The Principal will sensitively handle any issues she comes across and help staff identify sources for assistance (including the Employee Assistance Service where necessary), but it is not her role to solve the personal problems of staff.

4.10 Positive employee relations

Positive employee relations are underpinned by professional courtesy, tolerance, goodwill, compromise and good communication and decision making processes. They are enhanced by a sense of community, team work and fair play.

The importance of ongoing, timely, transparent and direct communication amongst staff, and between staff and other members of the school community, is stressed. All members of staff have a responsibility both to communicate and to take notice of all communications, regardless of how they are relayed (verbal, written, electronic, etc). It is crucial to distinguish between that communication which has to be acted upon and that which is merely for information.

Wherever appropriate, staff will be consulted on matters that affect them before decisions are made. In addition to various day-to-day meetings, there will also be monthly staff team meetings, chaired on a rotating basis. An agenda will be circulated in advance of the staff meeting and staff may request input into this agenda. At meetings, everyone must be open to hearing and addressing counter viewpoints and responding to colleagues in a constructive and respectful manner. There will be clarity about decisions made and any agreed actions will be followed up.

Informal social activities (potluck lunches, staff outings, etc) will be used on an ongoing basis to promote team building and friendships. These will include both teaching and non-teaching staff.

5 Dealing with difficulties

5.1 General approach

The BOM recognises that potentially difficult situations relating to the employment of staff will arise from time to time. These will not be ignored. Problems will be dealt as efficiently and effectively as possible to prevent them from turning into major conflicts. Informal ways of dealing with difficulties will be used in the first instance, and support and mediation techniques will be applied in preference to more adversarial approaches. Where they apply, standard DES procedures for dealing with employment disputes will be complied with. Natural justice principles will prevail, due process will be followed and proper paper trails will be kept. Where necessary, external advice will be sought and adhered to.

5.2 Absence

Staff absence, both short and long term, is highly disruptive for the running of the school and must be minimised. Sick leave procedures (section 4.2.2) must be adhered to at all times. Failure to abide by these procedures or any absences not previously sanctioned by the Principal/BOM will be treated as disciplinary matters. Every effort will be made to limit periods of absence and support employees' return to work (for example, by making changes to the job or work environment, the provision of external supports, the use of back to work interviews, etc).

5.3 Disciplinary situations, suspensions and dismissals

All staff members will be issued with a copy of the disciplinary procedure when they commence employment and in any case within 28 days of starting work. For teachers, the revised procedures for suspension and dismissal of teachers and principal teachers (2009) [see appendices 2 and 3] will be used. This does not apply to teachers on probation. For SNAs, Circular 0072/2011 will be used [see appendix 4]. For other staff, the standard procedure outlined in the Labour Relations Commission Code of Practice on Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures (2006) [see appendix 5] will be used.

5.4 Grievances

All staff members will be issued with a copy of the grievance procedure when they commence employment and in any case within 28 days of starting work. The grievance procedure used will be the standard revised INTO procedure (2000) [see appendix 6]. For staff other than SNAs, the same procedure will be used, with the exception of any INTO involvement. For SNAs, Circular 0072/2011 will be used [see appendix 4].

5.5 Dignity at work

The BOM accepts its legal and moral responsibility to create and uphold a working environment that is respectful of the dignity of its staff. It is committed to recognising and dealing with any alleged instances of bullying, harassment (including sexual harassment) and victimisation - confirmed behaviour of this sort will not be tolerated in the school and will be dealt with appropriately. The procedure used to address any allegations of bullying and harassment is the standard INTO procedure (2000) [see appendix 6], although for non-teaching staff this will by necessity not involve the INTO.

5.6 Other staff relations difficulties

Any other staff relations difficulties that are not disciplinary matters, grievances or dignity at work concerns should be resolved using the standard INTO procedure (2000) [see appendix 6], although for non-teaching staff this will by necessity not involve the INTO.

5.7 Industrial action

The BOM accepts that most employees are members of recognised trade unions (see section 1.4) and that on occasion, they may engage in (legal) industrial action. Those who are not trade union members and/or those who choose not to engage in industrial action will be treated no more or less favourably by the school as a result. On strike days, the school will provide access to the premises for any staff that choose to report for work, as well as a list of tasks to be completed on those days, if any.

5.8 Redundancy

From time to time, posts may become redundant. DES redundancy rules for SNAs will be followed. For other staff, all alternatives to redundancy will be explored in the first instance. If redundancies are deemed to be inevitable, objective and justifiable criteria will be established for selecting those who will face redundancy. There will be ongoing communication with staff throughout the process.

5.9 Retirement

Retirement will be planned for. Teachers' retirement ages and schemes for early retirement are regulated by the DES. A normal retirement age is indicated in other contracts of employment, although the school can allow for flexibility on a case-by-case basis. The process of retirement will be handled with tact and understanding.

5.10 Saying farewell

The Principal will hold a brief exit interview with all staff members that leave (in the last days of their employment) in order to ascertain their experience of having worked for the school and their reasons for leaving, as well as to affirm

the contribution they have made to the school. A joint decision will be made about how much of the information gathered during the exit interview can be fed back to others in the school community. All administration relating to the employee finishing work will be managed properly (final pay/tax, return of property, passwords, personnel file, etc). The departure will be marked in a manner that is appropriate to the culture of the school.

5.11 References

The Principal will normally agree to act as a referee for ex-employees and/or provide them with a reference, but will be under no obligation to do so.

6 Review

This policy and these procedures will be amended as a result of changed circumstances, and shall in any case undergo full review in 2015.

[Appendix 1](#)

Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers

[Appendix 2](#)

Revised Procedures for Suspension and Dismissal of Teachers

[Appendix 3](#)

Revised Procedures for Suspension and Dismissal of Principals

[Appendix 4](#)

Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures for Special Needs Assistants in recognised Primary and Post-Primary

[Appendix 5](#)

Labour Relations Commission Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures

[Appendix 6](#)

Working Together Procedures and Policies for Positive Staff Relations

Approved by the BOM on 28 May 2013