

SCHOOL REORGANISATION

Briefing Note



APPOINTMENT OF STAFF (OTHER THAN HEAD AND DEPUTY HEAD)

Introduction

School reorganisation can be both stimulating and challenging for school staff. The City Council acknowledges that any school reorganisation process can have an unsettling effect, especially on staff. It is therefore vital that staff are fully aware of the processes and timelines to help them plan their future work and minimise disruption and, in this, good communication is essential.

What would happen to the two schools if the plans were approved?

Amalgamations or mergers of community schools require both schools to be discontinued (closed) by the City Council on a given date and a new school to be established (opened) by the Council the following day. This means that all current staff contracts would terminate on the day the two schools closed and new staffing arrangements would come into effect on the day the new school opened.

An Interim Governing Body (IGB) for the new school would be established as soon as a final decision had been reached on the amalgamation proposal. The IGB would plan and determine all aspects of the new school up to the point where it opens for business and a new governing body takes over. This would include appointing a Headteacher and setting a new and appropriate staffing structure.

Does that mean that my job is secure until the schools close?

No. There could be circumstances in any school where governors would have little choice but to restructure the staffing arrangements, for example, with a significant fall in pupil numbers where the governors' duty to balance the budget could not be fulfilled in any other way than by reducing the staffing establishment.

So does reorganisation threaten my job?

The merger itself would not affect pupil numbers and it is falling pupil numbers that poses the biggest threat to jobs in schools. That said, however, one advantage of merger is that efficiency savings can be achieved and there may be posts, for example, in administration and caretaking, where the IGB would seek such savings to divert resources into improving teaching and learning.

Could the Council increase this School's budget allocation to compensate for falling pupil numbers?

No. Revenue funding allocations to schools throughout the country are governed by a strict formula devised by the local authority and, whilst the City Council strives to maximise the total funding available for distribution to schools via the formula, it cannot by law provide additional revenue funding to particular schools to support staffing establishments.

Who would decide the staffing structure for the new school?

All the major decisions about staffing – appointing a Head and Deputy, agreeing a staffing structure and staff appointment arrangements - would be taken by the IGB, on which staff would be represented.

Would I have to apply for my own job?

No, because 'your job' would cease to exist when the school closed. There might be very similar jobs available within the new structure, but that would depend on the structure determined by the IGB.

Would I have to take my chances alongside staff from other schools when applying for a post?

No, the Council would support the new governing body in 'ring-fencing' posts in the new structure.

What is a 'ring-fence'?

A 'ring-fence' allows governors, once they have determined the staffing structure, to advertise all posts 'internally' in the first instance. This means applications would be accepted only from existing staff – both permanent and temporary - in the two schools. Only if no suitable applicant were to be forthcoming for a particular post could governors advertise 'externally'.

Would I be consulted on the new staffing arrangements?

Yes. The IGB would consult staff in the two schools on the new staffing structure, job descriptions and person specifications, the appointment process, the interview timetable and the application form.

Would my Union or Professional Association be involved?

Yes. Consultation with Unions and Professional Associations would be undertaken on the staffing structure, job descriptions and person specifications, the appointment process, the interview timetable and the application form to be used in the process. A list of staff eligible for consideration under the 'ring-fence' arrangements will be provided to the trade unions and professional associations as part of the consultation process.

How would I apply for a post at the new school?

Staff would normally be given a minimum of two weeks following the publication of the structure to submit an application. Each member of staff would be invited to submit a shortened application form, together with a supporting statement, for up to three posts in order of preference for which they would like to be considered.

To simplify and speed up the process, staff would only be required to complete one application form and attend one interview. However, for each post applied for, a specific and related supporting statement, demonstrating how they would meet the person specification for that post, would be required. To help in the recruitment process, it would be recommended that all applicants be provided with a list of questions that would form the basis of the interview.

Where can I get advice?

An opportunity would be provided for all staff, should they so wish, to discuss the completion of their staff profile form or any other aspects of the recruitment and appointment process with a City Council HR Adviser experienced in school-related and education matters.

How would appointments be made?

Appointments would be made using clear, pre-determined selection criteria on the basis of merit, and staff members would be offered a post to which they were best suited and for which they had applied.

Would there be an interview?

Yes. Each applicant would be invited to attend the appointment panel, normally comprising the Headteacher-designate, up to two governors and a City Council adviser. The length of the interview would depend on the posts applied for. The Council recommends that, for key stage

and curriculum leader posts with a TLR payment, the interview lasts for 30-40 minutes, class teacher posts, 20 minutes; teaching assistants, nursery nurses, administrative, technical and MTA posts, 10-15 minutes. Where an application was unsuccessful, the applicant would be offered feedback.

Would my present salary be protected?

Teachers with a Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR) payment who applied for an appropriate post in the new structure, but were appointed to a post without a TLR, would be given personal salary protection for up to three years from the date of amalgamation and, whilst they remained in that post. However, they would be expected to accept additional responsibilities commensurate with their protected salary, if required to do so. Salary protection arrangements do not exist for support staff.

What would happen if I were not appointed to a post?

Where an appointment was not made, the unsuccessful candidate would be advised of both the selection criteria and where the appointment panel felt that he or she did not fulfil the necessary criteria. If requested, extended written reasons for the decision would be provided.

There might be an adequate number of posts of the right type in the new staffing structure to accommodate all 'ring-fenced' applicants.

Staff unsuccessful in securing an appointment would be subject to the governors' adopted redundancy procedure. The Council would assist staff in securing alternative employment through the support of a nominated HR Adviser who would be able to offer support and guidance.

How would any remaining posts be filled?

Where a post was not filled through the 'ring-fence' arrangements, it would be advertised in the appropriate publications.

What would happen if I chose not apply for a post?

You would be placing at risk any entitlement to a redundancy payment should you be unsuccessful in securing a new post in the structure.

Conclusion

When schools reorganise, the City Council does everything in its power to ensure that staff recruitment and appointment processes are handled sympathetically, fairly and in a way that minimises disruption and uncertainty.