

## STAFFING ISSUES/WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### Case studies

- **Middle to Secondary teacher**

#### Workforce Development

Helen is a middle school design and technology teacher who wants to teach in a high school. She has made two visits to observe classes in Years 9, 10 and 11 and discuss syllabuses with high school colleagues. She realises she needs to gain further subject knowledge and is engaging with the Inclusive School Improvement Service to extend her expertise. Training and development will be offered in a variety of ways including face to face, focus groups, support networks, mentoring and co-coaching schemes.

- **Middle to Primary teacher**

#### Workforce Development

John is a middle school teacher who teaches mathematics across the school and a range of subjects to pupils in Years 5 and 6. He feels his strength is in Key Stage 2 but is interested in Key Stage 1 as well. He has visited two primary schools and observed a range of classes. He has strength in mathematics, science and information and communication technology, but feels English and humanities needs developing. He contacts the Inclusive School Improvement Service to engage with training and development that will be offered in a number of ways including face to face, focus groups, support networks, mentoring and co-coaching schemes.

- **Residential caretaker (with house on site) of closing school**

#### Employment Issues

Much will depend on the future use of the middle school site as to whether there is suitable alternative employment on the site, whether it is residential, and what decisions are made about the caretaker's accommodation in each case. Suffolk County Council is not a housing authority, but it already works closely with the District Councils in Suffolk to seek assistance with the housing of retiring caretakers. We will be asking the districts to consider the needs of residential caretakers in the event that we are not able to find suitable alternative posts.

**Q. If a primary school moves onto a middle school site, and both currently have residential caretakers, what happens? Does the primary school caretaker move with the school, or does the middle school one stay with the site?**

A. Where all reasonable alternatives for on-going employment have been exhausted, including within the pyramid or cluster, and it has not been possible to avoid this situation through the careful management of natural turnover, a redundancy situation would apply. In the first instance, this would apply to the Caretaker post within the closing middle school. However, The County Council may accept voluntary redundancy from within the partnership school (in this instance, the primary school) in order to avoid a compulsory redundancy from within the same partnership, where all other reasonable alternatives have failed and a compulsory redundancy would otherwise ensue.

**Q. How will you support recruitment and retention of teaching staff within Middle Schools during the transition period?**

A. The County Council will consider funding requests from schools to offer staff recruitment and retention incentive benefits. It is also hoped that the following principles for the reorganisation (contained in the Staffing Protocol) will support recruitment and retention during the phases of reorganisation, particularly in middle schools:

- “Staff to follow the children” wherever possible
- Schools within a pyramid or cluster to work in partnership with each other, with the desired outcome of ensuring the ongoing employment of staff
- A commitment to provide appropriate training to enable staff to be redeployed to different age ranges and specialisms
- Once a decision has been taken, middle schools will work closely with primary and high schools and seek, as far as possible, to make permanent joint and/or shared appointments to primary and/or high schools

Supported by the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Service, promotional materials about individual middle schools have been developed and will be circulated at recruitment fairs and other public venues. We will also continue to advertise through the newly qualified teacher pool and support headteachers in making appropriate appointments. We will be actively encouraging schools to make joint appointments to two schools – before and after changes. In extreme cases, the County Council will consider funding requests from schools to offer staff recruitment and retention incentive benefits.

**Q. What experiences are there from other councils about Middle Schools recruiting and retaining good staff before closure?**

A. The picture is variable and often depends on career stage and ambitions. For example, some early career teachers have recognised the opportunities brought about by change and stayed at schools because of the accelerated career opportunities. Co-operation between schools and good planning of the changes by the local authority also helps. For example, a secondary school has ‘lent’ staff to a middle school to support the Key Stage 3 curriculum when the middle school could not recruit appropriately qualified staff.

**Q. How will Suffolk support Middle School staff taking early retirement at time of closure (or before)?**

A. Although it is not an intention of the review to facilitate early retirement/voluntary redundancy opportunities, there may be occasions where this is appropriate or necessary as a last resort. The County Council may accept voluntary redundancy from within the partnership school in order to avoid a compulsory redundancy from within the same partnership, where all other reasonable alternatives have failed and a compulsory redundancy would otherwise ensue. Voluntary redundancy may be considered where no commensurate post is available in the reorganised structure.

**Q. How will Suffolk support Continuing Professional Development for Middle School staff to prepare them for applying for jobs in primary / secondary schools?**

A. The County Council is fully committed to supporting the training and development needs of the school workforce during the transition period. Funding has been “earmarked” for this purpose. Schools will be expected to identify training needs for all staff, in consultation with staff and other schools in their cluster and to develop joint training opportunities, including accessing training provided by the County Council for working in the relevant phase. Schools will also seek staff’s commitment to keep up to date with the skills necessary for posts following reorganisation. The County Council will provide training and development in order to assist staff find suitable alternative employment following reorganisation. There will be a wide range of training in a variety of delivery models including on-line and face-to-face. Surgeries for all staff will be available to help plan the training. We will also provide support for staff to help them prepare for interviews and complete application forms.

For details of this support, please contact Sue Thomas, County Adviser, Recruitment and Retention.

**Q. How will Suffolk support continuing professional development for staff at primary / secondary schools to prepare them for being able to teach their new year groups? How about support for Leadership teams to revise staffing structures etc?**

A. Most teachers train for either primary (Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2) or secondary (Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4) schools although those in first or upper schools may not have the full age range for some time. There will be a wide range of formal and informal training available to develop the relevant knowledge and skills. This will be offered in variety of ways, including on-line and face-to-face, focus groups, support networks, mentoring, co-coaching schemes

**Q What extra support will there be for Headteachers and Governors during this period of upheaval and change?”**

The SOR Project Team and other officers will provide a range of support including information and briefing materials, attendance at meetings to provide support or clarification of options and issues arising from them as well as providing opportunities for individuals to talk over issues and concerns. Suffolk recognises that school staff in leadership and management posts will need additional, tailored support to manage this change process. We are working with seniors leaders to identify the professional needs of headteachers in particular, and are using the experience of other authorities

who have undertaken school re-organisation to help us plan our own programmes of support.

**Q. Will other Suffolk schools be forced to accept staff from closing schools?**

A. No. First and upper schools will “ring fence” appropriate vacancies for permanent staff employed in closing schools. Ring fencing means that vacancies will initially be open only to staff from schools which are closing. Two tier schools will give active and supportive consideration to appointing staff from schools which are closing. All schools in the County will be expected to then give positive and supportive consideration to appointing staff who are without a post in their own cluster.

**Q. Will my salary be protected if I change role? What are the implications for my pension?**

A. If a member of staff takes up a post in the new structure on a lower salary, the safeguarding provisions of the School Teachers’ Pay and Conditions Document will apply to teachers and the County Council’s Organisational Change Policy to support staff. (This is currently three years for teachers i.e. the safeguarding will end three years from the date on which the teacher starts work in their new post. Support staff will be protected on their current salary for not longer than three years, while the maximum salary of the new (lower) grade catches up as a result of pay awards unless a lump sum equivalent arrangement is agreed.) Employees should seek independent financial advice regarding their own pension arrangements. For some individuals, it may be possible to continue pension contributions based on the previously higher rate of salary or preserve pensionable service based on a previously higher salary.

**Q. Where can I look at the staffing protocol?**

A. A copy of the protocol was sent to all headteachers in July 2007. It is available online ([www.suffolk.gov.uk/sor](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/sor)).

**Q. What happens with the protocol this term?**

A. All governing bodies have been encouraged to adopt the protocol this term.

**Q. What if they don’t adopt the protocol?**

A. The protocol is voluntary and cannot be enforced on individual schools. However, all of the unions and the two Diocesan Authorities have agreed it and we are commending it to all schools for adoption. We expect schools to see the advantage of adopting the protocol which gives them access to a pool of well-qualified, experienced staff.

**Q. And what happens next?**

A. Further detailed discussion will continue to take place with unions and with the HR Working Group and Training and Development Working Group on the many issues arising from re-organisation, including recruitment and retention issues.

**Q. What is the role of the unions?**

All six teacher unions, plus Unison representing support staff, have been involved in the negotiation of the protocol and have signed up to it. They will continue to be actively involved in any negotiations involving their members.

**Q. Are you going to guarantee jobs for all?**

A. Unfortunately we cannot, as a Local Authority, guarantee jobs for everyone in the new two-tier structure because, under Local Management of Schools, appointment decisions are made by individual governing bodies and not by the Local Authority.

**Q. Can you give any guarantees about jobs?**

A. Under a two-tier structure, we know that we will still be serving broadly the same number of pupils in the County. We also know that approximately 30% of teachers in Suffolk (and indeed in other authorities) are due to retire in the next five years. There will certainly be job opportunities for staff currently working in middle schools in either primary or high schools.

**Q. What if I cannot find a job at the same salary level?**

A. For support staff, the County Council's Organisational Change Policy applies, which provides three years' salary safeguarding from the date of closure. For teachers, the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document applies, which currently provides three years' salary protection from the date of closure.

**Q. Does the salary protection apply if I choose to become a Teaching Assistant, even though I am a qualified teacher?**

A. No.

**Q. How will the Protocol relate to staff that are in middle schools which are being closed?**

A. Technically, if we close middle schools, staff currently working in them are at risk of redundancy and need to be offered suitable alternative employment. The alternative would be a full-scale reorganisation affecting some 200 schools in Suffolk.

**Q. What does suitable alternative employment mean? Do I have to travel across Suffolk to take up a new post?**

A. The term comes from employment legislation and covers taking up another post on broadly similar pay, terms and conditions and within reasonable traveling distance of the existing place of work.

**Q. What if I don't want to be redeployed?**

A. Our obligation as an employer is to seek to find you alternative employment. If you unreasonably refuse such an offer, you may jeopardise any redundancy payment.

**Q. I am over 50 and might be interested in early retirement and redundancy. Will that be available to me?**

A. Teachers aged 55 and over are already eligible to take an actuarially reduced pension in their own right. If they are made redundant, they may receive unreduced pension benefits as well as a redundancy payment based on their age and length of service. Support staff aged 50 and over who are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme may also be entitled to pension benefits as well as a redundancy payment based on their age and length of service.

**Q. If 30% of teachers are due to retire, though, presumably you don't want everyone to leave early?**

A. We certainly want to retain staff in Suffolk schools. We are experienced at handling redundancies in individual schools and are proud of our record of achieving staff reduction through resignations, staff turnover, voluntary redundancy and early retirement, rather than compulsory redundancy.

**Q. How can we find out more?**

A. We will be putting together general information on pensions and redundancy for information. We are also interested in arranging sessions on pensions.

**Q. What if the local primary school moves onto the middle school site? Surely the primary staff are then at risk and the middle school staff are secure in their jobs?**

A. Technically it will still be the middle school, as a 9-13 school, which is closing, even although the building itself will continue to be used.

**Q. What support will there be for support staff – in particular their wellbeing and morale?**

A. We have a well-established Wellbeing Steering Group which considers wellbeing issues across the school workforce and has union representatives on it. Schools are encouraged to buy back the Employee Assistance and Wellbeing programmes.

**Q. How can we extend our pool of supply teachers? We can foresee a greater need in the future.**

A. We are planning to advertise for supply teachers to work in Suffolk. Local solutions are best developed to fit local needs, however and we will work with schools to develop ideas for recruiting supply teachers.

**Q. What about teaching assistants working with vulnerable children?**

A. We are asking schools to work closely together to develop staffing structures for an extended age range which will meet the needs of all pupils.

**Q. What recruitment and retention money will be available for middle schools in the next few years?**

A. Schools are able to use their own budgets already for recruitment and retention payments to teachers, although not for support staff. Schools will be able to apply to the local authority for funding for posts which are especially difficult to fill. Details will be discussed with unions and the HR Working Group and will need to take into account the needs of the County as a whole as well as the particular difficulties

anticipated in some areas. We would wish to agree county-wide criteria if possible rather than allow local arrangements to flourish.

**Q. We need to increase our staffing at least semi-permanently to manage the transition over the next few years.**

A. Schools may determine their own staffing structures within their own budgets, but the Local Authority is unlikely to fund such additional posts.

**Q. Will headteachers of 5-9 schools become Heads of 5-11 primary schools? Is there any protection for middle school Heads?**

A. Normally, first school Heads will become the heads of primary schools. If the first school Headteacher resigns or retires, depending on circumstances, it may be possible for the middle school Headteacher to be appointed without the usual need for national advertisement. Careful consideration will be given to each case.