

PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS

A REPORT ON FINDINGS DURING SABBATICAL LEAVE IN TERM 2,
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PURPOSE

To investigate the way schools manage personnel.

Schools have become increasingly responsible for management of staff with increasing numbers of ancillary staff and the requirement to have Individual Employment contracts for support staff and for teachers who are not members of NZEI or PPTA. I wanted to explore the way schools manage these requirements and the responsibility of senior staff or principals for appointments, contracts and appraisal of staff.

INTRODUCTION

I appreciated the wisdom of the Ministry of Education in providing the Principal's sabbatical Leave Scheme. The support of the Mount Roskill Grammar School Board of Trustees, the encouragement and support of colleagues and particularly the efforts of those staff who took on extra work during my absence meant that I could enjoy visits to schools throughout New Zealand and a long and restful break from school life.

I decided to visit schools in Auckland and also in the South Island to gain a broader perspective on New Zealand education. The schools visited included large and smaller schools, a private school and single sex and co-educational state schools. The reception from all schools was very positive and I am grateful to the school leaders who gave their time to show me around their schools and to discuss leadership issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Schools take considerable responsibility for the recruitment, appointment and management of staff. The Board of Trustees is nominally the employer and the Ministry of Education provides funds for wages and salaries and negotiates collective contracts. The School Principal takes responsibility for appointments and most principals consider the appointment of staff their most important role. Quality teachers have a strong influence on the teaching and learning in a school. The quality of support staff is essential to provide support for teachers and to administer the increasing demands placed on schools since 1989.

In general, principals appoint all teachers and Executive Officers or Business Managers appoint support staff. Boards of Trustees are involved in the appointment of senior managers for teaching and support roles. A large school, like Mount Roskill Grammar School, employs over 300 staff for the School, Early Childhood Centre and for Community Education classes. This level of employment is equivalent to a medium-sized business but schools have typically not employed qualified Human Resources Managers and Boards and Principals rely on their own experience or advice from the School Trustees Association to manage staff.

Most teachers and support staff are covered for their employment through collective contracts. Staff can be employed on Individual Employment Contracts and it is the responsibility of the school to negotiate Individual Contracts.

The management, appraisal and appointment of staff have become an essential part of a principal's role and occupy a significant part of the available time. When disputes or contract changes occur principals can require extra advice or support.

As Principal of Mount Roskill Grammar School, a large school in Auckland with over 2300 students and more than 300 employees, I have been aware of the increasing demands for careful employment practises and knowledge about contracts, employment law and staff appraisal and management. Mount Roskill Grammar School employs more staff than most schools because it is a large school in a low decile area (Decile 4). The school also has an attached unit for Physically Disabled Students with increased staffing levels for therapy and teacher-aide support. There is an Early Childhood Centre managed by the Board and an extensive Community Education programme. These additional aspects of the school lead to increased staffing levels and more complexity because of the varying demands of contracts and of full and part-time positions.

Principals visited all stated that the appointment of staff is one of their most important roles. They all believed that it is essential to be involved in the appointment process, particularly for teachers, but principals are increasingly involving senior staff and Heads of Departments or Faculties in the appointment process.

FINDINGS

APPRAISAL

Responsibility for appraisal is usually passed to Deputy Principals for Heads of Departments or Department Heads for teaching and ancillary staff. The requirement for appraisal was introduced to schools in the last ten years. Schools now have robust systems of appraisal but the requirement for Attestation for salary increases has added a new dimension to the appraisal process. Appraisal of ancillary and support staff is not as consistent as teacher appraisal in some schools. Appraisal of teachers works well and is usually related to Professional Development. Unfortunately, when matters of dispute or competency are raised an appraisal couched in positive or supportive terms can be unhelpful. There is a considerable administrative requirement to ensure all appraisals are completed and documented.

CONTRACTS

Most teachers are covered by the Secondary Teachers Collective Employment Contract. This contract is comprehensive and gives clear guidelines for all aspects of teachers' employment. Teachers who are not members of PPTA and who have Individual Employment Contracts usually have those contracts in the same terms as the Collective Contract. Teachers can discuss their contract with the Board or Principal but any variation needs to be ratified by the State Services Commission.

Similarly, many support staff are covered by the NZEI Collective Contract. A larger proportion of staff have individual contracts and these vary in the way they are written. When the Ministry settled the NZEI Collective contract for 2006, they agreed with NZEI that they would not promulgate an Individual Contract until April. This meant that staff doing the same job in a school had different terms of employment depending on whether they were NZEI members or not. If staff questioned this arrangement the Principal or Executive Officer was involved in the discussion.

If schools want to write Individual Employment Contracts there is considerable demand for knowledge of Employment Law. While experienced principals gain considerable knowledge and there is advice available from NZSTA a trained Human Resources Manager would ensure appropriate documentation.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

All teachers are required to be registered. Schools are responsible for ensuring that teachers maintain their registration status. Every three years renewal advice notices are sent to teachers at the address known to the Teachers' Council. Frequently this address is not accurate and the teacher's registration will lapse. School secretaries or Principal's Personal assistants often have responsibility for checking teacher registration.

Letters offering teaching or support positions must contain information about contracts, advice about union membership and conditions of employment.

Appraisal and Attestation both occur annually and require checking and submission of appropriate details

The SUE report is a detailed document with a great deal of information. Regular checking of the details is important to ensure the accuracy of the salary information.

Allocation of Management Units is an important part of staff management. In addition the allocation of Middle Management Allowances, since 2004, has added an additional administrative burden. Particularly when there is a regular turnover of staff members the allocation of the Units and Allowances requires careful administration.

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER

A Human Resources Manager could take responsibility for many aspects of recruitment, employment and management of staff. Senior managers in schools, with the exception of Executive Officers, usually progress from teaching positions to their leadership role. This progression is essential to ensure the focus in schools remains on teaching and learning. It could be beneficial, however, to have a staff member with qualifications or experience in the field of Human Resource Management.

Burnside High School (Christchurch) has established a position of Administration Services Manager. The position covers three main areas

1 Administration Management

Staffing and facilities, line management of office staff.

2 Finance

Assisting the Finance manager with month end reporting, preparation of budgets, the Annual Report, Payroll analysis

3 Human Resources

Appointment Process, Personnel Records, Payroll, Police Vetting, Teacher Registration, EEO Coordinator, Industrial Relations, Maintaining Staff lists, Attestations, Staff Development Committee. The position includes payroll and Human Resource management for the School's Community Performing Arts Centre.

King's College (Auckland) also has an established Human Resources position with a qualified and experienced manager. The College employs 140 staff for the School and Boarding facilities.

The Human Resources Manager prepares a short list of candidates for interview and checks referee's reports for all positions, has responsibility for the Professional Development Budget, checks payroll details and prepares information for salary reviews. All teaching staff at King's College have Individual Employment Contracts and the Human Resources Manager has a considerable role in the development and review of those contracts.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Schools of all sizes should consider employing a Human Resources Manager. The position will give excellent support to the Board, Principal and Senior Staff in the appointment and Management of staff.

The appointment of a qualified Human Resource Manager would significantly improve the management of staff in schools and release the principal from a time-consuming and specialised aspect of their leadership role.

The Ministry of Education should acknowledge the increasing complexity of the management of staff in schools and provide funds through the Operations Grant for schools to increase the level of administration staffing. The funding should allow the appointment of Human Resource staffing or the purchase of professional help from agencies outside of the school.

SCHOOLS VISITED

Rangitoto College, Auckland
King's College Auckland
Mairehau High School, Christchurch
Burnside High School, Christchurch
Waitaki Boys' High School, Oamaru
King's High School, Dunedin
James Hargest High School, Invercargill

SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS

How many staff does the school employ?
Who is responsible for appointing teaching staff?
Who appraises the teaching staff?
How many ancillary staff does the school employ?
Who is responsible for appointing ancillary staff?
Who appraises ancillary staff?
Does the school have Individual Employment contracts?

- for teaching staff
- for ancillary staff

Who writes the Individual Employment Contracts?
Does the school have staff with specific responsibility for Human Resources?
What role does the Head Teacher play in the management of staff?