

HIRE Aspirations

RECRUITMENT CAN BE A SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR MANY SCHOOLS – ESPECIALLY WHEN BUDGETS ARE TIGHT. **TONY COOK** GIVES HIS ADVICE ON HOW TO GET THE RIGHT TEACHERS FOR THE JOB (AND HANG ONTO THEM)...

Employing the best staff isn't simply about finding the highest flying graduates and then putting them on accelerated leadership programmes.

Outstanding school leaders will be planning for the future, with a strong emphasis on the development and retention of all staff.

Those leaders will be seeking, through internal development and external recruitment, to create a high-performing workforce – not just looking at the immediate need to fill vacancies. They will think about a teacher's progression through each stage of his or her career,

looking at who is a future middle manager or leader, and who will become the next head of department, deputy headteacher or headteacher.

That's easier said than done, of course. To have a good chance of recruiting, retaining and developing the best teachers today, you need a strong emphasis on talent management – on creating a 'talent management loop'. I've outlined six key steps in that loop below:

1 Attracting the right staff

A school's ability to recruit the highest quality talent will depend on how potential applicants view the school and its ethos. High-quality candidates will ask: "Does this school share my values?", so those with a clear brand and defined values should attract teachers of the right quality. Schools should make effective use of digital and more traditional advertising when recruiting, and produce high-quality promotional materials – the school prospectus, for example – to promote, as effectively as possible, a unified, attractive 'brand'.

It is equally important to establish good relationships with specific universities to identify possible recruits for specialist subjects. You should also look at developing talent internally, through school-based initial teacher training.

The creation of a talent pool within an academy chain or a federation can also be beneficial, aiding recruitment and retention



by easing movement between schools. If your school isn't part of a federation or chain, it's worth looking into forming partnerships with local, like-minded schools. This can improve the chances of recruiting teachers who share your school's values.

2 Selecting the right staff

When recruiting new staff, your approach to selection must be objective, actively seeking to identify the skills and knowledge of the candidates. It should also be robust, to resist any challenge by unsuccessful candidates.

Demonstration lessons and panel interviews are the most common tools to assess candidates. However, you should consider what else could be useful for the school and the particular role. For example, you might think about a management task for a leadership position, such as an in-tray exercise to test a candidate's ability to make decisions and to prioritise, or a written communication assessment to look at his or her judgement.

Schools should carefully consider who is involved in the selection process. This must include governors – while the headteacher is responsible, the governing body is accountable.

3 Retaining staff through professional development

Once a school has employed the right teachers, it must also hold on to them. Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in maintained schools have a statutory induction period to serve, but all staff should have a personal induction, with a mentor, to help them settle in to the school environment.

To help with retention, each new teacher should be given a personal development plan, looking at his or her immediate and longer-term needs and aspirations. The plan should stress that each teacher can make a difference to organisational performance, whether immediately or in the longer term.

Teachers' continuing professional development (CPD) must also be appropriate to their needs. It should include both informal and formal CPD and should not focus solely on traditional CPD programmes for aspiring leaders – all teachers should take part.

Schools will be more likely to retain high-quality staff through frequent coaching, mentoring and networking activities, and by offering opportunities to interact regularly with senior staff and governors.

4 Managing and nurturing teaching talent

If well implemented, talent management can identify and prepare potential future leaders to fill key positions. This requires investment, in terms of both time and money, but implemented correctly it can become a valuable succession



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planning tool – and contribute to the school's retention strategy.

Investment in subject specialisms is equally important to ensure subject knowledge is up-to-date, and this also aids retention. The budget does not need to be huge – but it must be well managed by a senior member of staff.

Where schools have a CPD co-ordinator, they should consider whether the remit of this role might extend to become that of a 'talent and retention manager'.

5 Rewarding the best staff

A crucial stage in the talent management loop is rewarding staff. With the government drive to move all teachers to performance-related pay, it is important for schools to move on from traditional performance management and appraisal so they have a talent management and retention policy that supports all staff, and allows for appropriate rewards.

The approach could include key performance indicators, including exam results and lesson-observation grades. It should also allow for recording CPD undertaken and consider impact on teachers' personal development, as well as on students' learning, and for documenting a teacher's contribution to wider school life and management activities.

6 Evaluating the impact of recruitment and retention

The impact of these measures on recruitment and retention will be seen, ultimately, in reduced staff turnover, but should also be apparent in improved pupil performance as more of the right kind of staff are retained.

Schools will need to use both qualitative and quantitative measures, including pupils' results and feedback from colleagues. Fundamentally, a school must analyse its spending to ensure that investment in recruitment meets its needs. And, over time, schools should be able to show reduced recruitment costs.

Reduced turnover creates continuity and stability, which should have a positive influence on the quality of teaching. Ultimately though, the best evaluation of the effectiveness of the recruitment and retention strategy is the school's academic success.

