

UMGI June 2016 Meeting

Headteacher recruitment discussion item

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Context

The ill health of longstanding Headteacher from January 2016 led to their early retirement (confirmed in April 2016). The Deputy Head acted up over this period. An Ofsted inspection is also imminent as the School is currently graded as Requires Improvement.

The Governing Body agreed that whilst the timing was not ideal, and we'd missed the cut off date for existing Heads to provide notice for a September 2016 start, it was still important to undertake recruitment. The Governing Body was hopeful that there would be a decent pool of applicants. Should recruitment have not been successful then the Deputy would have continued in the Acting Head role.

Governor time allocation

- One evening meeting to discuss that we wanted to recruit and confirm next steps e.g. dates for interview.
- One evening meeting to discuss the content of the advert.
- A day meeting to shortlist and plan the content of the interview.
- Two days for interviews and making a decision whether to recruit.
- Outside of meetings: researching, preparing material, speaking/corresponding with candidates/the School community.

The advert

- Placed in local and national press and a number of websites. Given the short timeframe, it was important that a large audience could see the advert.
- Professionally designed.
- Included statements from pupils at the School (what they wanted in a Headteacher).
- Encouraged visits to the School.
- The Governing Body needed to be mindful of easy slip-ups; make sure application deadline and interview dates were stated, pay scales, provide a contact etc.

The interview

We designed a 3 hour interview for each applicant, with a mix of tasks and Q&A:

- Brief introduction.
- Task 1: engage the School Council in a discussion around the values they want in a Headteacher (10 minutes preparation, 15 minutes discussion).
- Q&A 1: question from staff on an issue they considered to be of importance.
- Task 2: presentation to the interview panel about three key issues that could be identified in an anonymised dataset (not from the School), and the actions that could be taken to address one of those (30 minutes preparation, 10 minutes presentation).

- Task 3: applicant to write their first letter to parents (30 minutes).
- Task 4: prepared presentation on vision for the School (10 minutes).
- Q&A: questions from the interview panel (approx. 1 hour).

All candidates commented how thorough they felt the process was and allowed for an opportunity to demonstrate a range of skills. There are a large range of activities and questions that could make up the interview process and the LA and University colleagues were helpful in providing examples. The take home message is that it is important that Governing Bodies think about what they're trying to test from the each section of the process and try to ensure it represents interests from a cross-section of the School community.

Outcome

- Five applications; included a current Headteacher, Deputies and Acting Heads.
- Interviewed three: appointed an external applicant (unanimous decision).

Reflections

1. Given the Headteacher role is crucial to an effective School, this is mirrored in the time commitment needed to recruit properly.
2. The Governing Body really pulled together and saw this as a joint task. The eventual interview panel included five governors (supported by a colleague from the LA). Whilst a potentially intimidating number, the commitment and professionalism of the panel was evident and the panel size was actually helpful when reaching a final decision.
3. There is sometimes a need for compromise. For example, the successful applicant could only start in January 2017, but we negotiated with their current Governing Body to have them released one day per week to help them get to know the School and to assist in mentoring the Deputy Head. A further compromise was to increase the School's usual pay scales when deciding to recruit.
4. Particularly where there are internal candidates, the Governing Body need to be able to provide them with support and guidance, so as to help them with their future career, and to avoid negative feelings.