

Recruiting headteachers

Succession planning A planning guide for governors

Resource



A joint initiative with the National Governors' Association, Co-ordinators of Governor Services and National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services.

Introduction

The UK is currently facing a major challenge as the baby boomer generation reaches retirement age. Half of headteachers and deputies are aged over 50, and at the same time, there are proportionately fewer teachers in their late 30s to mid-40s. These two factors suggest that a shortage of leaders is likely to occur in the coming years.

Evidence shows that the quality of leadership is the single most important factor under our control in determining the success of a school. Therefore, the decision relating to the appointment of a headteacher is one of the most important that a governing body will make.

This document highlights some key questions for you to consider, whether you need to recruit a new head right now, or need to prepare for the possibility in the future. It lists resources available that will help you think about the challenges facing your school, about your aspirations and hopes for the future and about the changes in your community and in the education system as a whole. Use these to create a realistic job description of the headteacher you are (or will be) looking for and a process against which to assess candidates.

The responsibility for recruiting a headteacher is one that you will feel keenly as a governing body. Your experience of recruitment, either within or outside the school context, will vary considerably. Even if you have been involved in recruiting a headteacher before, the school will have changed since then, and so have the demands placed on schools. Ask your local authority and diocese where appropriate – for support and advice.

Rising to the recruitment challenge

The majority of the 2,600 schools who needed to replace their headteacher in 2005/6 were able to do so at the first attempt. Around a quarter of the secondary schools and a third of the primary schools in this group were not.

It would be wise to start planning early for the replacement of your headteacher, especially if he or she is approaching retirement age. Even if you think your head is not about to move on, it is worth being prepared for the unexpected. A period without a headteacher in post can be unsettling and disruptive to the life of the school, and you may need to act quickly to avoid this.

What do aspiring headteachers want?

It is important to know what aspiring headteachers want in terms of reward, working conditions and career development in order to attract them to your school. The following are quotes taken from an interactive online resource on recruitment on National College's website:

"I want to have a decent work-life balance. I love my job but it's very important that I still have the time and energy to do other things."

"I particularly welcome opportunities for professional development. Getting out of school for a while and interacting with other professionals is a great way of enhancing my knowledge and keeping up my enthusiasm for the job."

"I would like the opportunity to reach headship quickly and not have to wait until I have been in the profession for 15 or 20 years before I can be considered."

"I am an NPQH graduate and am ready to move into headship. However I am a little nervous of the prospect. I would appreciate some initial support such as mentoring or buddying from an experienced head."

Attracting candidates to your school

Defining your requirements is critical – but you also need to ensure you attract good candidates. The quality of the material you assemble, and the way in which you then communicate with candidates by letter, telephone or in person all need to make a good impression. You want to know what they offer your school and they want to know what you offer them. Put yourselves in the candidate's position and consider what they need to know in order to decide whether to apply.

Consider how you want to portray your school. If you are a school with challenges, it pays to be honest about this. Some candidates are looking for a challenge and a school in which they can make a difference. What they want to hear from the governing body is optimism and a commitment to supporting the head. On the other hand, if you are a successful school replacing a high-profile headteacher, avoid creating the impression that this will be a hard act to follow. Even successful schools need to keep moving forward.

Contact your local authority or diocese if appropriate, to establish the most common pitfalls in the recruitment process and recommendations on how to avoid them.

Action checklist: Recruiting headteachers

Use this checklist to identify suggested short and longer-term actions. Then transfer them to your action plan and refer to the resources overleaf for more help.

Questions	Short-term actions	Longer-term actions
Do we know how long our current head will remain in post? Do we know what his or her plans are?	Initiate a conversation with the head, possibly as part of a performance management discussion, or as part of wider strategic discussions such as preparation of the school development plan.	Schedule a discussion with your headteacher on their long term career plans on an annual basis – most likely as part of the performance management process.
If our head resigned would we be in a strong position to mount an immediate recruitment campaign?	<p>Contact your local authority/diocese for advice and guidance.</p> <p>Read the National College recruitment and selection guide – Recruiting headteachers and senior leaders – seven steps to success and review the online version with links to further tools and resources.</p> <p>Review Turning heads – taking a marketing approach to leadership recruitment to identify the expectations of potential applicants.</p> <p>Download the online template, Building a job description, to identify the skills, knowledge, and behaviours you want in a new headteacher.</p>	<p>Explore the range of services for recruitment and selection advice available from your local authority, diocese and other providers.</p> <p>Gain awareness of local issues which could positively or negatively affect your ability to recruit a new head through discussion with your local authority, diocese or governor services. Use the template Questions to ask your LA's HR Team.</p> <p>Develop a candidate application pack which gives an honest appraisal of the challenges involved at your school, and which provides the information that candidates will want in order to make a decision about whether or not to apply.</p>
Have members of the governing body had recruitment training – including Safer Recruitment?	<p>Conduct a skills audit of the governing body on recruitment and selection, using the questionnaire on the National College website, What support do we need?</p> <p>Contact your local authority or diocese if appropriate to establish local arrangements for governor training on recruitment and selection.</p>	<p>Ensure at least two or three members of the governing body have up-to-date recruitment and selection training.</p> <p>Ensure a least one member of the governing body has completed the safer recruitment online training.</p> <p>Ensure ongoing knowledge on the impact of equal opportunity and diversity legislation in the recruitment process.</p>
Do we have a thorough induction programme for new headteachers?	<p>Contact your local authority, diocese or another school to establish what is already available.</p> <p>Work with the existing headteacher to carry out an audit of useful information and identify local induction priorities through their and your experience.</p>	<p>Investigate and make use of the growing number of formal programmes available nationally and locally for induction, especially if it is your new head's first post. Review National College's Early headship provision.</p> <p>Consider encouraging your head to identify and meet regularly with a leadership mentor from outside the school.</p>
Are we familiar with the main factors that attract candidates to apply for headship roles?	<p>Highlight your positive attitude towards offering continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities, and helping maintain a work-life balance, through your recruitment advertising, and job marketing materials.</p> <p>Read Section 3 and 4 of the publication Turning heads – Taking a marketing approach to leadership recruitment.</p>	<p>Contact your local authority, or diocese if appropriate, to establish what mentoring schemes are available in your area. Offer a mentor to your new head.</p> <p>Share experiences of headship recruitment with other governing bodies in your area.</p> <p>Ensure the practical issues in recruitment such as identifying who the contact person will be for potential candidates, are in place for your recruitment strategy.</p>

The National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services is committed to excellence and dedicated to inclusiveness. We exist to develop and inspire great leaders of schools, early years settings and children's services. We share the same ambition – to make a positive difference to the lives of children and young people.

Membership of the National College gives access to unrivalled development and networking opportunities, professional support and leadership resources.

©2010 National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services – All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced without prior permission from the National College. To reuse this material, please contact the Marketing and Communications Team at the National College or email publications@nationalcollege.org.uk.

A joint initiative with



Triumph Road
Nottingham NG8 1DH
T 0845 609 0009
F 0115 872 2001
E enquiries@nationalcollege.org.uk
www.nationalcollege.org.uk