

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: MANAGING TALENT AND PROMOTING LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOLS
Meeting: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date: 1 DECEMBER 2014
Author: JOINT ACTING DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report is the response to a request from the Scrutiny Committee to update elected members on issues relating to the appointment of senior managers in schools and Education Services' strategy for ensuring that schools are led and managed effectively.

2. STRATEGIC APPROACH

- 2.1 Recruiting the very best staff is key to ensuring that pupils in Falkirk Council schools have the best possible educational experience. There is a direct link between the quality of our teachers and school leaders and the attainment levels of our young people. The incremental rise in levels of attainment and achievement is evidence of the success of our recruitment and selection processes at all levels.
- 2.2 In order to maintain this progress, it is vital that we use a consistent approach to recruiting staff at all levels, who:
- demonstrate a commitment to delivering the best for our children and young people.
 - have a range of skills, knowledge and qualities that will support them to deliver effectively.
- 2.3 Our work in developing and implementing an effective process for recruiting senior staff has been recognised nationally in Audit Scotland's report *School Education (June, 2014)*. The extract below links the importance of quality leadership to improving pupils' attainment:

'Improving teacher quality:

Teaching Scotland's Future highlighted that improving the quality of teaching and leadership is central to improving attainment. Similarly, a 2007 review ... found that those pupils placed with the highest-performing teachers progressed three times as fast as those with the lowest-performing teachers. Improving teacher quality depends on:

- being able to attract the best candidates
- providing high-quality teacher training
- offering adequate salaries to retain staff
- having effective career development and support.

Examples of improvement in this area include:

Falkirk Council has developed its recruitment process to test the specific competencies of each post and then find candidates who demonstrate the right skills and knowledge. For example, applicants for senior school leaders now take part in an assessment centre and applicants for classroom teachers have their teaching style formally observed and assessed in the classroom.'

3. MANAGING TALENT AND PROMOTING LEADERSHIP SKILLS

3.1 Across Scotland, local authorities have, in varying degrees, been experiencing difficulties in recruiting headteachers in the Primary sector, and especially in denominational primary schools.

3.2 In response to this concern, the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) published a paper on the recruitment of Headteachers in Scotland in October, 2013. It makes a number of relevant points:

'More innovative and planned recruitment strategies should be deployed and there is a need to recognise that top jobs in a Council, which Headteacher vacancies are, require a profile that befits their importance for a community.'

'We must ensure that there are clear leadership pathways through the profession, locally and nationally, which are understood and recognised by those with aspirations for leadership roles in schools and communities.'

3.3 In Falkirk, we recognise the importance of growing and nurturing our own talent as well as attracting high quality applicants from outwith the council. We have a nationally recognised talent management structure which starts with newly qualified teachers and develops through promoted posts to Headteachers.

3.4 As an authority, we support the Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH) and the Post Graduate Certificate in Middle Leadership programmes, both of which provide a balance of theory and practice in:

- leading and managing whole school improvement themes and projects in their school
- drawing on the ideas and experience of others through professional dialogue with their peers, coaches, mentors and tutors and through reading and accessing other sources of information and
- reflecting upon, analysing and evaluating their experience and their own leadership and management practice and applying what they have learned.

3.5 These follow an early leadership development programme 'To Lead or Not to Lead?', which offers class teachers the opportunity to explore a number of key issues relating to leadership and to consider the skills and qualities they currently have and need further to develop.

3.6 A key element of developing leadership skills is through undertaking acting roles within our schools and service. The opportunity to experience a senior leadership role is a valuable one, providing a context in which prospective leaders can further develop their knowledge and skills, while experiencing the challenges of a new role. In addition, Education Services will have a realistic view of leaders' skills and qualities, as well as considering their readiness for a more senior post.

- In Session 2013-14 and in the early part of session 2014-15, ten Depute Headteachers had the opportunity to take on an acting Headteacher role. Of those, seven had completed or were in the process of undertaking the SQH programme. The work undertaken during the programme provided knowledge of current educational research, to support the decision making process and increased their confidence level, particularly in making decisions relating to challenging issues.
- Thirteen Principal Teachers had the opportunity to take on the acting Depute Headteacher role. Of those 6 had completed or were in the process of undertaking the Middle Leadership and Management programme.

- 3.7 In addition, we provide a range of opportunities for Headteachers and Depute Headteachers, to further develop their knowledge and skills through programmes and activities within the council, in collaboration with other councils and at national level.

4. RECRUITMENT PROCESS

- 4.1 The robust process used to recruit high quality staff at all levels in Education Services establishes the degree to which candidates can:

- cope with challenges they will meet on the job
- demonstrate evidence of the skills and qualities required to deal with them.

- 4.2 The stages of the process are:

Stage 1: Initial leeting to match candidates against the person specification and select appropriate candidates for the next stage of the appointments process.

Stage 2: Tests the professional skills and qualities required for each post. The skills and qualities link closely to the professional standards published by the General Teaching Council, Scotland (GTCS).

POST	Stage 2
Headteacher	Assessment Centre
Depute Headteacher	Assessment Centre
Principal Teacher	Observation of classroom practice and candidates' self-evaluation related to this
Class Teacher	Observation of classroom practice and candidates' self-evaluation related to this

Stage 3 is the interview which tests the candidates' ability to present themselves, their knowledge and ability to reflect critically. These 'behavioural event interviews' explore people's past behaviours, which research shows is the best indicator of future behaviours.

- 4.3 The recruitment and selection process for schools involves the following people:

- **Elected Members** (for senior school leadership posts) as members of the interview panel that makes the final decision for the appointment.
- **Parents** (for senior school leadership posts) participate at each stage and form half of the interview panel that makes the final decision for the appointment.
- **Professional staff** as appropriate at all levels.
- **Pupils and School Staff** (for senior school leadership posts) who meet the candidates in the school setting and provide feedback to the Assessment Centre.

4.4 Assessment Centres for School Leadership Posts

Assessment Centres are a vital component of ensuring the quality of applicants for senior promoted posts. They focus on activities that are part and parcel of the daily duties of senior managers:

- Engaging with parents
- Engaging with staff
- Analysing data and information and planning strategically to address issues arising
- Presenting arguments and strategies and being challenged on their thinking.

The outcomes of the activities are summarised in a report which informs the final interview. The report is also used to enable effective feedback to all candidates who wish it.

4.5 Evaluation

All elements and stages of the process have been evaluated to inform ongoing improvement. Candidates who participated in Assessment Centres for Headteacher and Depute Headteacher posts were invited to evaluate their experience via an on-line questionnaire. Feedback was consistently positive, with 100% of candidates stating that:

- they were welcomed in a professional and supportive manner
- they were provided with sufficient material to support them in preparing for events
- they were treated fairly and with respect by all members of the assessment team
- the events provided an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

When asked if they were clear about the purpose and structure of the event, 89% candidates responded positively, seeing it as a development opportunity. It is worth noting that this feedback comes from both successful and unsuccessful candidates.

- 4.6 We are keen to continue to improve our processes and ensure that all candidates have a clear understanding of what they involve, to ensure equity and fairness for everyone. We are planning short information meetings for interested Council staff and are currently exploring the best way to include staff from outwith the council area in these meetings. We are also designing a short electronic tutorial that sets out the key steps in the process and the responsibilities of those involved. Candidates will be advised of the way in which this can be accessed via social media. In addition, the training provided for parents will be further enhanced.

5. **CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 The selection and recruitment of high quality teachers and school leaders at all levels is a vital component of delivering high quality learning for Falkirk's young people and in maintaining the steady improvement in attainment and achievement.
- 5.2 Falkirk Council has an effective and robust process for recruiting and selecting staff throughout the service.
- 5.3 Once staff have been appointed, programmes ensure that their professional development is supported in line with national standards and requirements.

6. RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1** That members note the report on recruitment, selection, leadership and talent management in Education Services and endorse the approach taken by the service.

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Joint Acting Director of Education

Date: 19 November 2014

Contact Officer: Nigel Fletcher, ext 6683.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL

ACTING POSTS**School Leadership Acting Posts 2013-14**

Acting Post	Held by
Acting Headteacher, Avonbridge and Drumbowie PS	Headteacher, Carronshore PS
Headteacher, Carronshore PS	Depute Headteacher, Carronshore PS
Acting Headteacher, Slamannan, Limerigg PS and Heathrigg NS	Headteacher, Kinnaird PS
Acting Headteacher, Kinnaird PS	Depute Headteacher, Kinnaird PS
Acting Headteacher, Grange and Blackness	Depute Headteacher, Grange PS
Acting Headteacher, Victoria PS	Headteacher, Carmuir PS
Acting Headteacher, Carmuir PS	Depute Headteacher, Carmuir PS
Acting Headteacher, Larbert Village PS	Depute Headteacher, Larbert Village PS
Acting Headteacher, Wallacestone PS	Depute Headteacher, Wallacestone PS
Acting Headteacher, Maddiston PS	Depute Headteacher, Maddiston PS
Acting Headteacher, St. Francis RCPS	Depute Headteacher, St Andrew's RCPS

School Leadership Acting Posts 2014-15

Acting Post	Held by
Acting Headteacher, Grange and Blackness	Depute Headteacher, Grange PS
Acting Headteacher, Victoria PS	Depute Headteacher, Victoria PS
Acting Headteacher, Oxbang School	Depute Headteacher, Mariner Service

Appointments - School Leadership Posts 2013-14

Post	Internal/External
Headteacher, Avonbridge/Drumbowie	Internal
Headteacher, Larbert Village PS	External
Headteacher, St. Francis RCPS	External
Headteacher, Slamannan, Limerigg, Heathrigg	Internal
Manager, Rannoch Nursery	Internal
Depute Headteacher, Bainsford PS	Internal
Depute Headteacher, Bo'ness Academy	Internal
Depute Headteacher, Kinneil	Internal
Depute Headteacher, St. Mungo's RCHS	External

Number of Applications	Number Progressed to Assessment Centre	Number Progressed to Final Interview	Number of Appointments
45	22	15	10