

Payment of Recruitment and Retention Supplements for School Support Staff.

The Job Evaluation exercise completed in June 2003 has helped to ensure that schools now pay equitable and defensible rates of pay for support staff and which has helped the Council to fend off possible claims under Equal Pay legislation. Continual review of new/changed posts has helped to keep grades up to date but inevitably some schools will have difficulties with local 'going rates' for jobs which are higher than evaluated grades and difficulties in recruiting and retaining employees may arise.

Headteachers have asked for advice in how to respond to such situations fairly and consistently and as a result, a Recruitment and Retention Supplement was introduced which allowed an extra 5-20% supplement in 1% rises to be paid in addition to the evaluated grade where considered necessary in order to recruit or retain. From 1st April 2011, this has been changed to allow supplements of between 1% and 20% which gives more flexibility and can be used for example if there is an exceptional need to pay a recruitment or retention allowance in times of incremental or pay freezes.

Any supplement paid is for a fixed term of no more than three years and is subject to review. It may be renewed for a further period where circumstances require it. Jobs cannot be graded at a higher rate than the evaluated grade simply for recruitment or retention reasons because that would open up potential Equal Pay claims with schools and the Council having to defend cases at Employment Tribunals.

It is a common practice among employers who operate a Job Evaluation scheme to pay supplements to job-holders where there is clear evidence that the evaluated grade for the job is below the 'going rate' in the local job market, e.g. when it is difficult to recruit or to retain existing employees. The Oxfordshire joint agreement on Job Evaluation allows for this where schools wish to do so.

A Recruitment or Retention supplement is an additional amount paid with salary on top of the evaluated grade which is paid in recognition of recruitment and retention difficulties relating to a particular job or group of related jobs.

Because the supplement relates to the 'going rate' for the job and this is clearly subject to fluctuations in the job market, it cannot be given on a permanent basis but must be reviewed regularly to ensure that it is still justifiable. However, it is clearly inadvisable to create uncertainty for employees so as much stability as possible should be given. For that reason we advise that the following clause is included in offer letters and contract letters where a recruitment supplement has been included in the pay for a job or in a letter of confirmation where an existing employee is awarded a retention allowance:

“The salary for this post includes a temporary Recruitment or Retention Supplement which is payable untiland will be subject to review. If there is clear evidence that this supplement is no longer appropriate you will be consulted and the salary for the job may be revised in line with the evaluated grade for the job.”

When are Recruitment or Retention Supplements applicable?

Supplements can be paid in addition to the evaluated grade where the school has evidence of the following:

- failure to recruit satisfactorily following a recruitment process
- turnover of staff due to inadequate pay relative to other local employers
- local advertisements for similar jobs which repeatedly show a higher rate of pay. Clearly in this case you will need to get as much information about the job content, eg send for the job details, to ensure that you are comparing like with like since job titles can be very misleading.
- a good and identifiable reason to pay a retention allowance to retain an existing member of staff.

It is important to ensure that the decision to pay the supplement is based on evidence to avoid allegations of making unfair payments and to resist pressure from employees who are seeking increased pay for whom this may not be appropriate.

How to apply Recruitment or Retention Supplements.

Compare the salary the school offers to the evidence available for the local ‘going rate’ for the job. Where the school salary grade is lower, calculate a supplement of between 1% and 20% based on the top point of the grade for a full time, full year basic salary in order to arrive at an appropriate salary total. This percentage increase required is the Recruitment or Retention supplement, the percentages must be paid as whole percent only.

E.g. The school pays G5 £15,725 - £16,830 pa for an IT technician. The local ‘going rate’ is £19,000 pa. The supplement payable will be 13% (to the nearest %) or £2187.90 pa (on £16,830).

As a general rule if you find that you need to pay more than 20% or £4,000 pa, which ever is the lower, in supplements you should take further advice as either the evaluated grade for the job may be inappropriate or the job may not be truly comparable with the comparators used.

This will obviously require that you look at supplements when you review your salaries within the school.

Where you decide to pay a retention allowance in times of pay or incremental freezes or for other exceptional reasons, calculate the most appropriate % to be paid between 1% and 20% and document the reasons for the award.

Removing a Recruitment or Retention Supplement.

If you wish to remove a supplement from an employee please seek advice from the Schools HR team at an early stage before doing so.

What about existing employees who are already in post and who do not receive a supplement?

Clearly it may give rise to relativity difficulties if a school pays a new member of staff on a higher rate than those already in post doing the same job. This needs to be handled with care and schools may find that if they pay a supplement in order to recruit they may have to pay this to all similar job-holders already in post in the school.

Funding.

As Recruitment or Retention Supplements will have to be funded from the school's budget in the normal way for salary increases, the school will need to ensure that the proposals are affordable.

Further Advice.

If you have any queries please contact the Schools HR team at Unipart House, Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2PG or by telephone on 01865 797588 or by e-mail on schoolshr@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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