

The Importance of Proactively Managing Employees

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Managing employees in a proactive and efficient manner is integral to the success of any school or trust. Senior leaders must demonstrate strong leadership abilities in order to achieve operational efficiency, improve morale and deliver on strategy. Effective and strategic people management is a big part of that and can also help staff with their own professional growth.

What does this look like in a school or academy?

When thinking about how to manage employees proactively within a school or academy, school leaders and line managers should first consider the policies and practices in place.

It is fundamental to effective people management that managers are aware of, and understand, the relevant policies and how these apply in practice. In order to manage employees proactively, leaders need to make sure that they are applying the relevant policies efficiently and –importantly –as soon as concerns are brought to their attention. Don't delay.

A common and often costly mistake is for issues not to be addressed in a timely manner. It can result in the issue getting worse, being prolonged for an unreasonable amount of time, damaging staff morale, usually increases the time and effort required to manage the problem and often increases costs. Schools are not awash with cash and spending it on clearing up poor management is not the best use of the cash you do have.

Deal with the issue promptly. In doing so you show good leadership, and you promote a culture where poor behaviours and practices are addressed quickly and effectively. This in turn embeds a culture of effective management. And don't forget the time and cash it can save too.

This is a good start, but it's only half the battle. It is important that as leaders and line managers you also develop your 'soft skills' (and know how to utilise such skills in practice) to effectively manage employees. These skills can often be harder to define but include being able to communicate clearly, being trustworthy, gaining respect and being able to demonstrate patience and understanding. Having these tools in the box and using them well helps to further motivate the team and helps individuals meet their potential.

How can effective people management help reduce overhead HR and legal costs?

I mentioned costs earlier and as well as thinking about the cost of inefficiency and low staff morale, there is the much more quantifiable cost of spend on legal and HR services. One thing we know of every school and trust we work with is this: the better the people management the lower the cost of legal and HR support. I very much doubt that is a bombshell revelation to you; it stands to reason. However, it does not always follow that schools and trusts will invest in developing the people management skills of their senior team; the approach often can be a baptism of fire and then learning on the job. These methods can serve a purpose, but they need to be built on a framework of solid people management training and development.

That will reduce cost. That will reduce legal and HR spend. That will make those individuals better people managers more quickly. They will also feel supported and empowered by knowing they have the knowledge and ability to manage issues correctly.

By upskilling, encouraging and supporting leaders and managers to be proactive and efficient, the majority of the work can remain in-house. As a result, the requirement to utilise external, and sometimes costly, support is reduced. That money can be spent on better things.

So, what now?

I finish with a plea: invest in training and developing yourselves and your fellow senior leaders to be better people managers. As you'd expect, we can help you with that through our [HR Pathways CPD course](#) which we have designed specially to achieve the aims set out above. If you want to join the course, get in touch, but as we always recommend when it comes to your personal development, take a look at what is available in the market and find the right course for you. There's plenty of great providers out there.

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