

Recruiting school staff on a budget – top tips

Regardless of the outcome of ballots on industrial action, unless there is drastic change to funding for schools in relation to pay increases, it will be unusual to find any organisational budget that is not impacted by the current economic situation.

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We know that some large school trusts spend in excess of £500,000 per annum on recruitment advertising and the sector as a whole spends in excess of £75 million. Furthermore, in excess of £0.5 billion is spent on recruitment agencies.

Struggling to recruit? You're not alone

Pay increases - even at the levels put forward - will still have a significant impact on schools' abilities to continue to operate in the same way since increases are not being funded. In addition, the sector has already suffered a recruitment squeeze prior to the pandemic because of people leaving the profession, this has only been exacerbated post-pandemic and many are not only struggling to recruit teachers, but support staff too. As a result, it's more important than ever to find novel ways to achieve the best recruitment with the lowest cost.

To this end, you may consider recruiting via the [Teaching Vacancies service](#), the largest source of primary school jobs directly listed by primary schools in England, and the second largest source of secondary school jobs directly listed by secondary schools in England.

Free recruitment service for schools

The service is free for schools and academy trusts to use and leadership, teaching and educational support roles can all be listed. There is also a free application tracking system to manage and respond to candidates.

Over 50,000 jobseekers are signed up to receive job alerts and last year views of vacancies totalled over 6 million. During peak recruitment months over 350,000 jobseekers visit the service each month.

Yvonne Ridley from the Department for Education advises:

"Put money back into the classroom by making use of the Teaching Vacancies service! It's the free, national search and listing service from the DfE helping state funded primary and secondary schools save money on their recruitment advertising.

With school budgets under even more pressure now is the time to review recruitment practices and move to this totally free service."

By listing your vacancies on the service, you could attract a wider pool of candidates and help create a national platform for jobseekers to find their next role more easily.

Top tips for recruiting staff when budgets are tight

Here are some additional tips from our [HR Services team](#) to help you make the most of recruitment when budgets are tight:

- **Think about your employer brand** – shout about the things that you do well that make your organisation better than another. What is it you do well that sets you apart from others and will attract applicants?
- **Use your existing staff** to get your recruitment news out to their contacts – word of mouth is cheap and leads on from employer branding – if you have a happy workforce, they'll tell others how great it is to work for you.

- **Social media** is often free! Post your vacancies on social media boards and get staff to share your posts. You can include a lot of information without it costing anything by providing a link to your vacancies on your website. Just make sure that what they see looks professional and well put together to give a good impression.
- **Get the basics right** – spend time getting your documentation correct. Job descriptions can be notoriously inaccurate and do not give a true picture of the role required. They're often not up to date and this can lead to recruiting the wrong people for a job for which they think they are right. The outcome of such a mismatch is disappointing for all involved and can end in you needing to restart the recruitment process, potentially doubling your initial costs.
- **Cast your net wide** – think about the bigger picture. Do you need to recruit locally, or can you attract people from elsewhere? Make noise about the location you are in and how attractive it is to those who might be thinking about relocating. A good way of doing this is getting staff involved in creating a picture of where they live and what they love about it. Applicants who see attractive lifestyles of others in the same role are more likely to apply to your organisation in the hope of achieving the same.
- **Don't wait for them to come to you**, go and find them too. A further use of social media boards, particularly LinkedIn, is that you can look for people who appear to fit what you require and make contact asking them to apply. Care needs to be taken that you are not giving an expectation that they would be successful, but encouragement to apply wouldn't hurt to increase your applicants. It would also be sensible that the person making the contact isn't the one deciding on shortlisting or selection, but direct contact can often be beneficial creating a good relationship from the start of the process.
- **Consider internal talent** and what you can do to foster development in-house. Whilst there will always be occasions where external recruitment is needed, consider whether this is always the case. It is good to get fresh ideas and talent into the business, but you might find that for some roles, time and costs can be saved by recruiting from within. Candidates already understand the organisation and take less time to settle into new roles than external hires. They are also likely to have gained a large amount of tacit knowledge in other roles within the organisation – the things that you just cannot teach, but nevertheless serve well in getting the job done. Good talent management will also have a positive impact on organisation performance.

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