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Thursday 15th December 2022

Dear Colleagues

As you are aware, we have consulted on a number of changes to support staff structures within the Trust. The consultation period has now ended and we have been able to consider the responses submitted. We would like to take the opportunity to thank colleagues who have contributed to the consultation; as a result we have made some significant changes to the initial proposals.

As the consultation process has now concluded, an outline of the changes that we propose to implement together with responses to some of the points and themes raised is provided below. All affected colleagues have received individual communication in relation to this.

Redundancies

There are two proposed redundancies in the Trust; one Higher Level Teaching Assistant/Cover Supervisor and one Teacher. These colleagues have been consulted throughout.

Pupil-facing support staff

We propose to move to a position where all of our pupil-facing support staff are paid for the weeks that they work, plus their holiday entitlement. Whilst we understand that this is extremely difficult and will be disappointing for those colleagues who are affected, we know that this will ensure fairness and equity for all of our staff, in that everyone across the Trust will be paid for their contracted hours and weeks of work. Currently, there is a disparity, with some staff working 39 weeks per year and being paid for 39 weeks (plus their annual leave entitlement), some staff working 52 weeks per year and being paid for 52 weeks (inclusive of annual leave), and a group of staff who are working 39 weeks per year, but being paid for 52 weeks. This decision rectifies this historic issue and brings South Bank Multi Academy Trust (SBMAT) in line with schools nationally (both for academies and maintained schools).



This is not, in any way whatsoever, about devaluing or undervaluing the important work this group of colleagues performs. This is about ensuring equity between all of our staff in terms of contractual arrangements as outlined above, and also about ensuring that SBMAT is in line with the national picture. We have carried out benchmarking on pupil-facing roles across the country, and our decision reflects the national picture. We know that many other local authorities and multi academy trusts began to consult and make changes to their term time only contracts as far back as 2005 to ensure parity across their organisations. Despite what has been presented in the media about our initial proposal, it is typical and usual for colleagues who work term time only to be paid on a term time only basis, plus holiday entitlement. These colleagues' salaries will continue to be paid in twelve equal instalments.

As a result of feedback and contributions to the consultation, there have been a number of changes to some colleagues' working weeks and hours from the initial proposal, where they have given specific details of necessary work required in school during school closure/holiday periods as an integral part of their role, not simply a one-off or 'ad-hoc' work. This detail is outlined in the individual communication which colleagues have received following the consultation process.

Additional government funding

Some colleagues queried the additional funding which was announced by the government during our consultation, and asked whether this would mean that the proposals would change or be withdrawn. We do not yet know the extent or the detail of how the funding will be allocated so there is still a great deal of financial uncertainty. However, the decision to address the working/paid weeks issue is not purely for financial reasons. As outlined above and throughout the consultation, it is necessary to ensure fairness and equity for all colleagues and to reflect how pupil-facing support staff are paid in schools nationally.

Implementation dates

Some colleagues commented during the consultation that they thought the proposed implementation (and therefore the notice period) was too short for those moving from whole time to term time. The proposal was to ensure that all affected colleagues received their statutory minimum notice period, which ranged from four weeks to a maximum of twelve weeks, depending on an individual's length of service.

As a result of this feedback and points made by colleagues around the possible additional funding, it is proposed that the implementation date for all colleagues should be the same. We can therefore confirm we are recommending that the implementation for these contractual changes for all employees is 1 April 2023. We have also proposed that if colleagues' salaries are reduced as part of these proposals, pay protection is provided on



existing pay up to 31 May 2023, which means that no colleague will see a reduction in their pay until June 2023. There are also some colleagues who will see an increase in their pay as a result of this process, and it is proposed that these changes will be effective from 1 April 2023.

Central Services Team

Roles within the central team have been queried by some colleagues as part of the consultation process. The DfE requires that all multi academy trusts must have an Accounting Officer/CEO and a Chief Finance Officer. In addition, there are a number of functions that must be carried out by the Trust to ensure statutory and legal compliance in all of our schools and also to support the smooth running of all Trust schools, including school improvement. The central team within our MAT is not larger than one would expect in a MAT of our size and is very comparable with MATs nationwide. The remuneration of colleagues in the central team is in line with the national picture and the majority of the central support staff work term time only and are paid term time only (plus their annual leave entitlement).

Input from Local Governing Boards

There have been some queries and comments around the involvement of Local Governing Boards in the decision-making process regarding the proposed changes to staffing structures. As a MAT, we are a single employer and as such, we need to ensure that there is consistency across all colleagues and schools in our Trust. Therefore, all decisions relating to staffing, pay, structures and all aspects of HR must be taken centrally to ensure this consistency. This is a very normal, expected and necessary practice in MATs and indeed any multi-site organisation.

Input from parents and the community

We have also received some feedback from colleagues around the involvement of parents and members of the community. Whilst we appreciate the depth of feeling around our proposals and associated decisions, changes to staffing or pay arrangements are never matters for public consultation. This does not mean that we do not value the views of the public and parents, but this consultation was a process for staff and their trade unions to engage in with the Trust. This is also why we did not engage in an unhelpful 'back and forth' commentary with the press or attend a public meeting. We understand that affected staff are already upset and we were keen to ensure that this was not made worse by playing out a difficult situation in public. For the avoidance of doubt, this was not a matter of us not wanting to engage with parents, more a case of ensuring we followed due process.



SEND provision

There are other important matters that have been raised as part of the consultation process, which we feel need addressing. It was suggested that provision for pupils with SEND will be lessened. Linked to this, we understand from some colleagues that the actions and assertions made by third party organisations during the consultation process have led them to feel worried about the future of pupil support roles within the Trust.

We would like to be really clear: the level of support for pupils with SEND will absolutely not be lessened and we are not proposing to decrease the number of teaching assistants in our schools. Our rationale has been clear from the outset: to move to a position where all colleagues are paid for the weeks that they work, **NOT** to decrease the level of provision for children. This was never suggested. Indeed, there is nothing in our initial proposals nor in our final decisions that are detrimental to the support we give our pupils or suggest that we would wish to do this.

We would like to thank all colleagues who contributed to the consultation and hope that this clarifies our way forward and addresses some of the themes raised during the consultation process.

Yours faithfully



Mark Hassack
Chief Executive Officer



Ian Wiggins
Chair of Trust Board

