

Anticipating and Managing Candidate's Concerns in the Current Climate | Guidance for Senior Leadership Teams

Just as schools are concerned about recruitment in the current climate, so are candidates considering a move to the region. BSME recruitment partners have offered guidance to help school leaders bolster the confidence of new staff members or those still considering a role at your school for 2020-21. Whilst no promises can be made and no-one really knows what the world will look like come August/September, the following reflections will go some way to addressing, and even easing, candidates' concerns.

1. Openly discuss candidates' concerns around COVID-19 during the interview process without prejudice

- a. Ask candidates to prepare any concerns about COVID-19 for their interview; offer an assurance that this will not affect the outcome of the interview. This might include:
 - i. the opportunity to ask questions about your school, the environment and security; the candidate must be clear that your school and location is the right fit for them, as much as they are for you;
 - ii. the process around applying for travel visas from embassies or work permits where ministries are currently operating limited services;
 - iii. contractual details; candidates may be reassured by seeing a sample contract before ministry approvals have been sought

- b. Brief candidates on the current context of COVID-19 in your host country and its impact on your school, including information about:
 - i. the timeliness of government's response;
 - ii. the Ministry of Education's policy on schools and learning;
 - iii. public protection measures still in place, known timelines and possible developments, e.g. if dates are known when amenities will re-open, when cessation of curfews will take place, etc.;
 - iv. requirements from local authorities regarding testing, self-isolation or quarantine;
 - v. evacuation plans in place in the event expatriates are required to return to their home country;

- vi. success of your school's online learning, including how current staff and students are coping as a community; this reflects a positive school culture.
- c. Outline your school's recommendations or requirements regarding the candidate's health:
- i. self-isolating X weeks prior to departure date to avoid imposed quarantine at the host country's airport;
 - ii. outline precautionary measures expected during travel to the region, e.g. regular hand washing, use of hand sanitiser and/or face masks.
 - iii. self-isolating upon arrival
 - iv. requirement to report symptoms to line managers
- d. Discuss additional safety and security measures implemented by your school to safeguard the health of staff on the school premises, for example,
- i. additional hand sanitisers or thermometers in school;
 - ii. stricter and more detailed protocols in place for parents regarding children's illness;
 - iii. temporarily limiting or screening visitors accessing the school site through questionnaires or temperature reading;
- e. Assure candidates that your school will keep them updated on a weekly or fortnightly basis; you may wish to reference compliance with UK Foreign And Commonwealth Office (FCO) guidance.

2. Protection of staff in employment contracts

- a. Communication:
- i. For senior leadership appointments, provide a process for how candidates can engage with the Head and/or Governors between the time of appointment and starting the role.
 - ii. Establish a timeline of communication between acceptance and arrival as lack of contact from future employers makes new employees anxious, particularly in times of crisis; provide weekly or fortnightly updates on anything from celebrations and achievements, cultural events or new initiatives, inspection reports, etc.
 - iii. Ensure HR responds promptly to candidate queries; your new employee needs to feel valued, candidates pull out of contracts when they anticipate problems, real or imagined.

- b. Medical details:
 - i. Be explicit about the level of medical cover offered by your school.
 - ii. Outline staff absence guidelines for contagious illnesses like COVID-19.
- c. Start date contingency plans:
 - i. Detail contingency plans around start dates, e.g. start dates if flights are not available, quarantine requirements upon arrival, etc.
 - ii. Outline the contingency in place for new staff in the event schools do not reopen in September, i.e. the validity of contracts and expectations around delivery of e-learning?
 - iii. Explain any personal cost implications for staff needing to return home, e.g. if a candidate gets COVID-19 during their probationary period will the school meet the full costs of this?

3. Measures to support staff well-being

- a. Clarify line management and reporting structures to assure staff of various colleagues available for support; if your school counsellor is available to staff during probation, specify the offer.
- b. Detail your school's staff mentoring programme for new staff (an established team member) immediately following acceptance; keeping dialogue open is essential to keep the new starter onboard and engaged. Give them the opportunity to speak to an existing team member before accepting an offer.
- c. If the start to the school year is delayed, plan for the delivery of a distance learning induction programme.
- d. Outline your school's current provision to support staff well-being and describe further developments as a result of the current context.
- e. Provide a list of social (meet and greet), fitness (running or HIIT groups) or well-being (yoga, meditation) activities provided for staff.
- f. If your school has a work-life balance policy, e.g. no emails after 5pm, share this information as a tool for well-being.
- g. Offer information about *Things To See and Do* in your host country and/or city.
- h. Connect new staff to your social media platforms as soon as they accept their offer of employment so they can feel part of the team.
- i. Whilst schools certainly have a duty of care, they also need to be mindful not to purely focus on the issues at hand and still discuss the features and benefits of the school, country, etc., especially if this a teacher new to the international circuit.