



Staffing Reductions in Schools

Our Council Values

Our Values are the things we most care about. In applying every policy and process, we must consider and uphold our PROUD Values. These define what we stand for as an organisation, how we work and how we act.

- Professional – we uphold high standards.
- Respectful – we value people.
- Open and honest – we trust each other.
- Understanding and engaging – we care about people.
- Deliver what we say we will - we provide great services.

Under each Value is a set of guiding behaviours. These apply to every person who works for or represents South Tyneside Council. They are our promise to residents, each other and to all who interact with the Council.

Purpose

This policy provides guidance for Head Teachers and Governing Boards on the procedure to be followed should there be a need to consider reductions in staffing levels.

Due to financial restraints, implications of delegated budgets and the scheme for financing schools, it is important that all Head Teachers and Governing Boards are aware of and follow the recommended procedure set down below when dealing with staffing reductions.

Definition of Redundancy

A person can be regarded as being dismissed by reason of redundancy if the dismissal is attributed wholly or mainly to:

- The fact that employment has ceased or intends to cease, to carry on the business for the purposes of which the employee was employed by them, or has ceased or intends to cease, to carry on that business in the place where the employee was employed; or
- The fact that the requirements of that business for employees to carry out work of a particular kind, or for employees to carry out work of a particular kind in the place where the employee was so employed, have ceased or diminished or are expected to cease or diminish.

Matters to Consider

Test of Reasonableness

The following questions are a test of reasonableness in determining the actions of a Governing Board. Such questions will be asked in an Employment Tribunal to determine how reasonable the actions of the Governing Board were. Careful consideration therefore needs to be given to each question.

- Were the employees and relevant trade unions advised as soon as possible and consulted as to alternative means of achieving budget reductions or as to the best means of reducing staff levels with minimum hardship?
- Were the selection criteria chosen objectively and applied fairly?
- Was the possibility of alternative work investigated thoroughly?

Consultation

It is important to undertake meaningful consultation with staff and trade union representatives over potential reductions in staffing. Failure to do so could result in a claim for unfair dismissal. The Council should be informed at the earliest opportunity of any potential reductions so it can assess the scale of reductions across the Council as a whole.

The written information that needs to be provided to staff and the trade unions should include;

- The reason for considering redundancy
- The potential number and description of staff it is proposed should cease to work at the school

- The total number of staff employed at the school
- The proposed method of selecting employees and the criteria to be used
- The proposed method of carrying out the dismissals and the timescale involved
- How redundancy payment is to be calculated if different from the statutory redundancy payment

Curriculum Assessment

If a reduction of staff for the following academic year needs to be undertaken, the curriculum assessment should inform the Governing Board about the potential scale of the reduction.

Identification of Pool

The Governing Board will need to identify the pool(s) from which the reductions are to be made. Defining the pool is an important step.

The pool could, for example, be;

- All teaching staff
- All support staff
- Teaching staff in particular curriculum areas or Key Stages
- Support staff in particular roles
- Both teaching and support staff
- A particular post

Criteria

A reduction in staffing should be linked to the curriculum assessment. Once the pool has been identified then specific criteria needs to be determined. Identifying criteria used in the selection of staff reductions is important. Consultation must take place with staff and the trade unions on the criteria to be used.

The Full Governing Board would be expected to draw up general criteria. The criteria must be as objective as possible, transparent to the extent that if the same criteria were to be applied by a third party using the same evidence, the same conclusion would be reached.

The criteria should not contain matters relating to competence as there are other methods for dealing with staff where there are concerns about competence.

In most schools criteria will normally be curriculum led, but different constraints may apply depending upon particular situations e.g. in primary as opposed to secondary schools. Consideration may also need to be given to pastoral or operational requirements of schools, taking into account such factors as alterations in the number of pupils on roll, the proportion of pupils in different age groups etc. and records will need to be kept enabling criteria to be applied fairly.

Examples of Criteria

Qualifications

If qualifications are to be used as a criterion, you need to be specific in what is being required eg qualification beyond that required for qualified teaching status. Examples could include an Advanced Diploma, a Master of Arts Degree, a Special Needs qualification. Consideration should be given to the relevance of the qualification to the school's curriculum needs.

Breadth of Teaching Experience

This could refer to the teaching experience beyond one curriculum area or Key Stage.

Curricular Leadership

This could refer to experience in leading a department or Key Stage or cross curricular area. Such experience does not have to be reflected in the holding of a Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR)

Management Responsibilities

This could refer to the holding of key management responsibilities within the school.

Weighting of Criteria

Consideration should be given to the weighting of the criteria that are to be applied eg a higher weighting could be given to a criterion deemed more significant to the school's curricular needs. For instance, if breadth of experience in teaching is deemed to be the most important, then that might be given a weighting of three so that any points allocated in the scoring of the criterion eg two would be multiplied by three to create a score of six.

If no weighting is applied and all criteria are to be regarded as equal, then the scoring system described below would apply.

Scoring of Criteria

A scoring system would need to be devised for each of the criteria. For example;

- Qualifications – 1 point for each relevant qualification above QTS
- Breadth of teaching experience – 1 point for each curriculum area/Key Stage that a member of staff has taught in

The scoring and the parameters of any criteria need to be determined by each individual Governing Board. The above are only examples.

Any weighting and scoring system that is to be adopted must be shared with staff and trade unions from the outset of the procedure as part of the consultation process.

Any evidence that is to be used to determine qualifications, breadth of teaching experience etc, should be collected in a way that is open and transparent. Staff in the pool should be asked to fill in a pro-forma of relevant information which would then be used to determine information linked to each criterion.

Committees

It is advised that the relevant committee/panel completes the staffing reduction process and ensures that the appropriate number of governors are not involved in the original process so they can form an appeal panel where necessary.

Timetable

A proposal to reduce staffing levels should start at the earliest opportunity. Staff and the trade unions should be informed as soon as possible and consulted on the proposal.

Through the process of the formulation and review of development plans, schools will have an understanding of their likely future staffing requirements, even though financial issues may not have been finalised. Monitoring of pupil intake over a projected period of time will give an early indication of fluctuations in pupil numbers which may affect budgets and in turn affect staffing requirements. Emerging trends may be identified as early as the late Autumn term.

Additionally, in the early Spring of each year, schools will be aware of the likely pupil number situation for the forthcoming September and will be able to estimate the impact on their budgets.

By February, schools will have a clear indication of their budget for the coming year and by March their financial position in terms of any deficits or surpluses to be carried forward into the next financial year.

All of these factors may be utilised by Head Teachers and Governing Boards in their preliminary planning before April in any year and should allow schools to make a prompt start in assessing their actual staffing requirements for the next academic year.

Due to the need to issue contractual notice of dismissal, which could be up to a maximum of 12 weeks, should a staffing reduction/redundancy situation arise, the procedure must be well structured and completed to take account of the notice provision. The usual dismissal dates for teaching staff are 31st August, 30th April, and 31st December. Notice needs to be issued in sufficient time to meet these dates. Support staff may also be entitled to have a notice period of up to 12 weeks in a redundancy situation depending upon their continuous service. However, they are not tied to any specific dismissal dates in the same way as teaching staff and can therefore be dismissed at any time during the year.

Example of a Staffing Reductions Procedure

Stage	Possible Date	Proposed Activity
Preparation	February	<p>Head Teacher to identify potential need to reduce staff through receipt of indicative budget.</p> <p>Head Teacher informs relevant committee – usually Finance committee.</p> <p>Head Teacher to hold preliminary consultation with the Council. School Improvement, HR and Finance services should be advised.</p>
Stage 1	Early March	<p>Full Governing Board meets to consider proposals and make a decision on whether to implement the “staffing reduction procedure.”</p> <p>Governing Board minus any staff employed at the school to identify pool from which employees will be selected, the scale of the reduction and agree proposed criteria to be used in the selection process.</p>

		<p>Governing Board to consider and agree timetable for process including consultation with employees and unions and consideration of any potential alternatives.</p>
Stage 2	March	<p>To start the consultation process, the Head Teacher writes to all relevant union representatives at local and regional levels to notify them of a possible redundancy situation, supplying a copy of the draft criteria to be used and timescale for consultation.</p> <p>Head Teacher calls a staff meeting to advise all employees of the situation and timescale for consultation. Employees will be invited to make suggestions/comments on strategies for avoiding implementation of the “staffing reduction procedure.”</p> <p>At the end of the consultation process the Governing Board meets to consider the outcome of the consultation process and assess any alternative suggestions from employees and union representatives.</p> <p>Examples of alternative proposals:</p> <p>Alternatives could include a request to consider early retirement/voluntary redundancy, job share, part-time working arrangements, and a willingness to consider redeployment. If no suitable alternative suggestions are identified, then the final selection criteria must be agreed by Governors</p> <p>Head Teacher writes to all parties consulted, advising of the Governors’ decision and providing details of the final selection criteria to be used.</p> <p>The Head Teacher will ask employees identified as being in the pool to complete a pro forma of relevant information which would then be used to determine information linked to the criteria agreed.</p>
Stage 3	March	<p>The relevant committee/panel meet to prioritise and apply the criteria.</p> <p>Head Teacher meets with the employee(s) to inform them that they have been identified for redundancy. The Head Teacher on behalf of the Chair of the relevant committee/panel writes to the employee(s) identified, with a copy to relevant unions to inform them of the reason for selection, the right to make representation to the relevant committee/panel and the right to have a representative in attendance.</p>
Stage 4	April	<p>The relevant committee/panel meets to hear representations. Employees making representations should have 5 working days’ notice of the meeting.</p> <p>Written representations by employees should be sent to the Governor Support Officer at least 3 working days prior to the meeting so they can prepare copies for the Governors.</p> <p>Appropriate documentation at this stage would be: a copy of the criteria used, the original information sent to staff and union representatives, letter to individual employee following the relevant committee/panel meeting, relevant written reasons for proposal and any written representation submitted by the employee.</p> <p>The case for confirming the proposals is presented by the Head Teacher. The employee or their trade union representative will then have the opportunity to put forward their case. There will be an opportunity for questions and clarification and summing up by both parties before both parties withdraw, leaving the relevant committee/panel to make their final determination.</p> <p>The following day the Chair of the relevant committee/ panel writes to the individual employee(s) and relevant unions indicating the outcome of the representation.</p>

		<p>If it is determined that the employee(s) should cease to work at the school, then each employee must be informed of their right of appeal, which should be exercised within 10 working days of the receipt of the written confirmation of the relevant committee / panel's decision.</p> <p>If the right of appeal is not exercised, in the case of maintained schools, the Chair of Governors writes to the Director of Children's Services notifying them that a decision has been made that the employee should cease to work at the school. The Director will issue notice in accordance with contractual requirements.</p> <p>Where the Governing Board is the employer, the Chair of Governors will write to the member of staff to confirm the decision that their employment is to end, and issue notice.</p>
Stage 5	April May	<p>If the right of appeal is exercised, the Appeals Committee will meet to hear the appeal.</p> <p>The employee or their trade union representative will present their case. The chair of the committee/panel who made the original decision will then present their case. There will be an opportunity for questions and clarification and summing up by both parties before both parties withdraw, leaving the Appeals Committee to make their final determination.</p> <p>The Chair of the Appeals Committee writes to the individual notifying them of the outcome of their appeal.</p> <p>If the appeal is not upheld and the decision is that the employee should cease to work at the school, the Chair of the Appeals Committee writes to the Director of Children's Services advising them of its decision.</p> <p>The Director of Children's Services writes to the individual to confirm the decision to end their employment and issue notice of termination. This is the case in a Maintained School. In the case of a Voluntary Aided, Trust or Academy School, the Governing Board would be responsible for the issue of notice of termination. Notice must be issued in sufficient time to end the employment by the contractual date for teachers. In this example it would be 31st May to leave on 31st August</p>

Equality and Diversity Statement

South Tyneside Council and the Governing Board are committed to promoting equality and valuing diversity. An equality check for this policy was carried out in November 2025. No equality implications were identified in this policy.

Policy approved by Governors: May 2026

Date of next review by Governors: May 2027