

AGREED DRAFT

EMPOWERING SUPPORT STAFF

Introduction

The term “support staff” is generally applied to all staff in school settings who provide support to the learning and teaching process and the well-being of children and young people. The guidance contained in this document applies to all such support staff who are employed by the local authority.

‘Clear policies and procedures are in place to ensure pastoral support and wellbeing of staff. These are shared with staff and well understood. The culture and ethos of our school is positive and focused on the needs of all staff, partners and learners. We actively promote equalities for all, so staff feel confident in the workplace. Our staff feel empowered and motivated to take decisions and lead aspects of school improvement.’

Quality Indicator 1.4 How Good Is Our School 4, Education Scotland, 2015

An empowered system expects, and creates, the conditions for all staff to work within a culture of collaboration and collegiality with learners, parents, colleagues and multi-agency partners. All share a vision for education based on the values and needs of the community.

The culture should foster feelings of trust, openness, well-being and satisfaction for all, enabling all staff and learners to be the best they can be.

Support staff are key members of school communities and are part of a whole school team. They perform a wide variety of functions; many play a vital role in supporting children and young people with additional support needs, while others support learning in more indirect ways.

They encourage children to play safely and promote positive attitudes among children. They actively attune to children by noticing, commenting and responding sensitively to their communication and behaviours.

A comparatively high percentage of support staff work part-time. In an empowered system, every effort will be made to ensure that part-time and full-time staff have equal access to information and to development opportunities.

Empowered support staff make a positive difference to the ethos of a school. They link positively with parents and encourage them to play a positive role in the life of the school and to support their child’s learning.

Empowering support staff means improving and strengthening the ways in which they contribute to the life of the school. It means senior staff value and involve them actively in planning for individual children and for improvement.

In a school where support staff are truly empowered, individuals and groups of support staff will have the confidence to express their opinions and share their knowledge, expertise and any concerns they may have with teaching staff and the

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school's senior leadership team, in the knowledge that their views will be respected, listened to and acted upon as required.

Principles

In an empowered system, support staff, as appropriate:

- are actively and meaningfully involved in school improvement planning;
- are actively involved in review processes relating to additional support needs and support for the children and young people they support;
- are involved in joint career long professional learning with teaching staff in areas such as: developing positive relationships and behaviour, child protection, nurture and additional support needs;
- have well-planned and purposeful professional learning linked to their individual needs and the needs of the school, particularly on in-service days;
- have clearly defined roles and opportunities for career progression;
- have access to professional development leading to qualifications and accreditation;
- are included and involved in staff meetings and all relevant staff communications, especially those which relate to the welfare of children and young people with whom they work; and
- meet regularly, individually or as a group, with a senior member of staff to review and plan their deployment.