
Head Teachers Leadership Academy | Online

Day One Scenarios

Scenario One

Six weeks in to a 3-18 headship you meet a music teacher leaving the school at 5pm with a newly completed coffee table which, he cheerfully tells you, is the third of matching set. When you mention this to one of the deputies, you are told that the all-male 'Techie Team' is like a mini state within the school. They do their own thing. For them, staff meetings are optional and rarely attended. They NEVER take part in all-school development work or policy development. They are always late with admin paperwork which often must be returned for more detail. Your predecessor often gave them a 'free pass' on in-service days if they claimed to have 'urgent departmental priorities'. This causes a bubbling undercurrent of resentment. But their courses are immensely popular with pupils. They are at the heart of pupil social activities, providing sound and light at social events and school shows. They built a large composter at the request of rural skills pupils and an equally large barbeque for a popular summer fundraising fete which they organise. They are often described by pupils as 'legends'. The department also has a long tradition of using school equipment to do 'homers' for members of staff. Mostly, it is done out of school hours and in evenings and weekends – they have keys to the school and know the security code for their part of the school. But it is not unknown for some items to be made in class time to 'demonstrate a particular skill to pupils' or in free time 'when the department is quiet'. When asked about what happens to the money exchanged, the deputy responds: "Never asked."

Are you going to ignore or tackle any of what you have heard?

For the Tutor:

If you decide to ignore it, what are the risks?

If you decide to tackle it, where would you start?

In addition, if time permits:

For the 'homers', is your reaction different if the response is:

- the money is kept by the individual teacher;
- the money is used by the department to buy better quality wood for pupils to use;
- the money goes to a department 'away weekend' at the Perth Races;
- the money goes to MacMillan Nurses in memory of a colleague who died of cancer nine years ago.

Scenario Two

A local businessman has three children at the school and is great supporter of school fundraising events. He has subscribed to 'an initiative to help schools in these difficult times' which encourages businesses to donate resources to their local school. The businessman wanted it to be a surprise and did not consult, nor forewarn you. 2000 jotters – emblazoned with the name of well-known energy drink on the front cover and the name of one of his local businesses (a nearby fish and chip shop) on the back – have just arrived at the school.

Developing a Health Improvement Policy is one of the school's three improvement policies this year.

The local businessman has paid twice the normal cost for the jotters. He has drafted a press release and has requested a school representative is made available for a socially distanced photo opportunity of him handing over the jotters outside Danny's Fish and Chip Shop.

What issues arise here? And your response?

Scenario Three

You have moved to a different authority to take up a head teacher post. It is a relatively small authority with seven secondary schools, 42 primary schools, one special school and 11 standalone nurseries. After six months in post, you realise that your core values do not chime with those of the Head of Service and the Chief Executive.

There is strong emphasis on:

- compliance and conformity to comprehensive policies and procedures developed at the centre and sent to schools as directives
- resource allocation that is driven more by equality than by equity to the detriment of your school
- monthly collation of data on multiple indicators that is then organised into league tables and circulated to head teachers as 'incentives to improve areas of underperformance'
- a centralised appointments system that appoints all unpromoted staff and all support staff – such staff can be moved at the authority's discretion
- etc.

The command-and-control approach has become particularly rigid in the current situation of a national pandemic and you find yourself being asked to do certain things that do not sit comfortably with your values.

How do you move forward?