Helping school leaders to conduct difficult investigations with specialist HR support

We've used our HR expertise to support a secondary school in managing a high-risk situation, making sure it followed all the right procedures and helping staff members through a very stressful time.

We had been providing a secondary school in Cumbria with day-to-day HR support when a sensitive and difficult HR issue arose that required a confidential internal investigation in accordance with its policies and procedures. The head teacher asked Capita HR Solutions to manage this complex situation using our specialist HR support and knowledge.

The head and governors needed a thorough and independent investigation to be carried out, as well as support in liaising with other parties involved such as trades unions and local authorities. As an existing client of ours, we had a good knowledge of the school and were able to quickly pick up the case.

Bringing together Capita's expertise in HR, employment law, workplace investigations and HR in education, plus our deep knowledge and experience of supporting high-risk HR activities such as grievance procedures, disciplinary investigations, workplace mediation, redundancy and employee redeployment and outplacement, we managed the process on the school's behalf, ensuring that all protocol was adhered to and that it acted within the law.

Our HR advisor provided guidance on which bodies, such as the local authority, the school needed to make aware of the situation. We also advised it on how to organise the investigation and ran the disciplinary investigation on its behalf, removing a stressful burden from staff members.

Our HR advisor also carried out investigatory interviews as an independent HR expert, keeping the process impartial and making sure that it followed the correct procedures.

As is often the case, the situation involved liaison with a trade union representative. These exchanges can be challenging, complex and stressful for school staff to tackle alone because they require an in-depth knowledge of employment law and workplace investigation proceedings. We supported the school in responding to the union on numerous occasions to demonstrate the investigation's robust nature and to assure the union that we were complying with policy and the law.

We completed the investigation in the required timescale and helped the school to work through delays. We kept in close contact with the head teacher and governors, informing them of their options and the associated risk with clear advice and guidance. At the close of the investigation, we produced a report that enabled the school to make an informed decision about how to proceed.

We fully supported the school and maintained confidentiality throughout the investigation, which reached a prompt conclusion. Our HR expertise provided reassurance that the school was acting in line with best practice and the law at all times, and our HR advisor's support reduced the burden on members of staff.

The head teacher said afterwards: "We received excellent HR support from Capita throughout this complex and difficult staffing issue. A real strength of the service provided by Capita was the advice from our HR advisor, which was calm, consistent and completely reliable at all times."

We're continuing to support the school with the next stage of the process and have fully prepared it for any similar situations in the future.

To find out how we can support you in a challenging situation with specialist HR support, contact education.hrservices@capita.com

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