



20 November 2017

Agenda Item: 8

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION, LEARNING AND SKILLS

CHANGE TO THE STAFFING ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COGNITION AND LEARNING TEAM WITHIN SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SPECIALIST SERVICES

Purpose of the Report

1. This report seeks approval to establish a 0.4 full-time equivalent (fte) Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) Technician post within the Cognition and Learning Team in the Schools and Families Specialist Services (SFSS).

Information and Advice

2. The Cognition and Learning Team is one of the four teams that form part of SFSS. The team comprises teachers and teaching assistants with qualifications and experience to support and advise schools to make appropriate provision for children and young people with learning difficulties, aged 8 – 19 years. Within the team there is a full-time post of Senior Teacher for ICT with a county-wide remit. The work of the Senior Teacher for ICT is supported by a 0.4 fte ICT Technician and it is this role that is the subject of this report.
3. The post of 0.4 fte ICT Technician has been commissioned by SFSS from Fountaindale Special School since April 2013. The school is reimbursed for the two days per week of support that the post holder provides to SFSS. The reasons for this historical arrangement are no longer apparent. There are however a number of reasons why it would be desirable to add the ICT Technician post to the staffing baseline for SFSS, rather than continuing with the existing arrangement:
 - It is a protracted process for Fountaindale School to pay the member of staff and then reclaim the funding from SFSS on a termly basis. It would be increase transparency and efficiency for the member of staff to be paid directly by SFSS via payroll.
 - If the post becomes established on the SFSS staffing structure, then the ICT Technician would also have access to systems that are currently unavailable to him/her.
 - Formally adding the post holder to the staffing structure would support the post holder's inclusion within the Service and make line management and accountabilities clearer and more transparent.

4. The role of ICT Technician fulfils a number of key functions in support of the Senior Teacher for ICT. Due to the specialist nature of much of the equipment and the software that it runs, much of the ICT cannot be sourced from elsewhere and is consequently not supported by the County Council's IT Services Department. The ICT Technician is therefore responsible for the following:
 - a. **Preparing new equipment for issuing to pupils** – responsibilities include registering the warranty with the manufacturer; applying "Smartwater" security markings; recording the details of the equipment (including serial number) and the name of the pupil and school where the equipment has been allocated; adding additional software e.g. for a visually impaired user.
 - b. **Preparing equipment for SFSS staff** – responsibilities include all the tasks listed at i. above, plus additional software such as "Microsoft Office", "Sophos", "Communicate in Print" plus specialist software. The technician will deliver to staff in their bases or arrange for collection.
 - c. **Managing the return of old equipment from both staff and pupils** – responsibilities include cleaning and updating operating systems so that equipment can be reissued; recording the reissued equipment; assessing equipment as obsolete or beyond economic repair (BER); recording obsolete/BER equipment and arranging secure disposal; maintaining certificates of equipment destruction.
5. In addition the ICT Technician undertakes the following:
 - delivery of equipment to school by appointment, for receipt by the Head Teacher/SENCO
 - visits schools to troubleshoot hardware and software problems with supplied equipment
 - troubleshoots hardware and software problems for SFSS staff
 - arranges or oversees repairs as directed by the Senior ICT Teacher
 - monitors stock
 - sets up braille equipment and software
 - maintains and updates training lap tops
 - bulk copies CDs/USBs for special projects.
6. The activities undertaken by the ICT Technician are an extremely important component of the ICT service offer and also contribute to the wider work of SFSS, in helping to support the inclusion of children and young people with SEND in mainstream settings. The role is pivotal in enabling the Local Authority to demonstrate that it is making reasonable adjustments in line with the duties under the Equality Act 2010.
7. The Senior Teacher for ICT has in recent times been undertaken on a job share basis. The colleague undertaking the role for three days per week (0.6 fte) retired at the end of the 2016/17 academic year and the Cognition and Learning Team is currently in the process of recruiting to this 0.6 fte vacancy. The ICT Technician will offer support and continuity for the remaining 0.4 fte Senior Teacher for ICT. They will also provide additional capacity whilst the 0.6 fte post is being recruited to and be able to support the induction of anyone appointed to the Senior Teacher post.
8. There will not be a need to recruit to the ICT Technician post. The current post holder has employment rights having been employed on a rolling contract for more than four years. They are agreeable to formally transferring their employment to SFSS for two days per week.

Other Options Considered

9. Consideration was given to the following alternatives:
- continuing to reimburse Fountainsdale Special school for this support. This would mean continued lack of clarity in terms of line management and accountability.
 - Adding this responsibility to the role of the Senior ICT Teacher. It would not be a cost efficient use of Senior ICT Teacher time to undertake the activities described above. The teacher operates at a more strategic level and is responsible for leading and co-ordinating advice and support to schools and settings, children and young people with special educational needs/disabilities, and their parents with regard to ICT. The pupils supported may have cognition and learning difficulties together with a range of other needs e.g. autism or sensory, and so the post holder works across all four teams in SFSS - the Early Years/Key Stage 1 Team; the Sensory Team; the Cognition and Learning Team; and the Communication and Interaction Team.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

10. To ensure appropriate line management, accountability and efficient use of financial resources.

Statutory and Policy Implications

11. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

12. The cost of a full-time ICT Technician at the salary maxima (Grade 3 Spine Point 18) is £23,449 including on-costs. The cost of a 0.4 fte would therefore be £9,379.60. SFSS has been reimbursing Fountainsdale Special School for two days per week of ICT Technician time since April 2013. Moving the post onto the SFSS staffing baseline does not add an additional financial commitment to the budget as it is already funding the post.

Human Resources Implications

13. If this request is approved it will result in the 0.4 FTE ICT Technician post being added to the SFSS structure. It will mean that the post is funded directly from the SFSS. As the current incumbent has been fulfilling the role of ICT Technician since April 2013 through an informal arrangement with Fountainsdale Special School, the current post holder already has employment rights and would be entitled to a redundancy if the decision was taken to discontinue with the post, regardless of whether the post formally sits on the SFSS staffing baseline. There is however a clear business need to continue to employ an ICT Technician and from both the perspective of the employee and the service itself; it is a neater, more transparent arrangement, with clearer lines of accountability, if the post sits within the structure of SFSS.

Implications for Service Users

14. Service users should not experience any change to the support and advice that they receive. This proposal is designed to address an historical anomaly in where the ICT Technician post has been sited within the County Council. It is not intended to make any material change to the scope, nature or time allocated for the post.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That approval be given to establish a 0.4 FTE ICT Technician post (Grade 3) within the Cognition and Learning Team in the Schools and Families Specialist Services.

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Constitutional Comments (SLB 07/11/17)

15. Children and Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

Financial Comments (SH 07/11/17)

16. The financial implications of the report are contained within paragraph 12 above.

HR Comments (BC 26/10/17)

17. The business case for the transfer of the post from Fountaindale School to the SFSS structure is contained within the report. The post holder has been appropriately consulted and will transfer with their continuous employment rights.

Background Papers and Published Documents

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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