

Performance agreements – Some thoughts

There are some given elements of this agreement. They include

- The principal's job description
- Professional Standards for principals
- Annual performance and development objectives for the principal
- Criteria for registration as a teacher
- The appraisal process to be followed for the principal

The principal's job description

This should set out basically what the statutory requirements are of the principal's position, and can then go on and spell out in more detail what might be the key elements eg professional leadership, chief adviser to the board, management of staff and so on. Over-arching all of this should be a specified document about delegations.

Professional Standards for principals

These are set out in the SPCA

There should not be an intention that all standards are assessed each annual cycle; rather that those standards that relate to specific goals for the review period are used.

Annual performance and development objectives for the principal

These should relate back to the school plans – strategic and annual. The principal should be able to demonstrate here that there is a central role for the principal in leading the major initiatives that are engaging the school at that time. The detail of this part of the agreement should show what the objectives of that work are and how success will be evaluated. It should also include support the principal may need to achieve those goals and how that support will be made available.

Criteria for registration as a teacher

This element remains as currently principals have to be registered teachers and there are no registration criteria for principals.

The appraisal process to be followed for the principal

Sound appraisal of performance is a right principals have as part of their professional work. This is one of the ways for principals to improve.

Elements should include:

An annual process. The process may include a delegated board group or individual but research shows that there should be an external view - say every 3 years. This enhances the process by validating what has been appraised internally and in essence provides a triangulation.

The external process may include elements of 360 degree data collection but this will depend on the process agreed to. It is essential that any such process should seek information only from those people who are in a position to comment in an informed way about the principal's performance. The process should also make extensive use of agreed evidence available from a number of sources within the school.

Conclusion:

The agreement needs to sit comfortably with the principal and the board as an agreed position. It is after all a working living document and should be used to enhance the educational outcomes of the school.