



BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL RIYADH

OUR EXPECTATIONS OF A HEAD OF DEPARTMENT/ SUBJECT LEADER

One of our aims at BISR is to ensure that documentation has meaning and that it will not be consigned to a file, unread and never to be read. We have decided to eschew formal job descriptions and replace them with statements of expectation. We hope that these will be lively documents which will capture something of the realities of the tasks with which they are concerned. They require individuals to use their discretion to interpret what is written down in a way meaningful to the role to which they have been appointed.

Teachers take on a huge number of roles. Most teachers play several of them, sometimes, if rarely, consecutively, at others, and more often, concurrently. This variety is what gives the job its fascination and its interest. It also contributes to its complexity. It makes it hard work.

Our system of outlining expectations incorporates the values we expect our staff to hold, the responsibilities they bear and the tasks they undertake. All this can be summarised in a simple sentence, a sentence that contains a plethora of meanings:

“Everything we do has to be in the interests of the students for whom we work.”

Heads of Department/Subject Leaders have a particular responsibility for embodying and promoting the culture of the School. They have to support the School’s SLG and be seen to support School policies wholeheartedly. They themselves are important leaders within the School and the skill and commitment they bring to their jobs are critical to the School’s success. They have to be wedded to the idea of the School’s strategic intents and development plans.

Heads of Department/Subject Leaders have to be seen to do everything that is expected of teachers and tutors. Indeed, they should set an example in these roles. Besides everything that applies to a teacher and tutor, Heads of Department/Subject Leaders have to:

- Nourish the culture of their subject/department;
- Be the lead teacher in their subject;
- Ensure that teachers fulfil their roles;
- Be well-informed about syllabuses and subject developments;
- Ensure that examination (and other) syllabuses are covered properly;
- Hold regular departmental meetings and ensure that minutes are kept and circulated to the rest of the department and the SLG;
- Provide support and encouragement;
- Review performance sympathetically but honestly;
- Promote reflection and talk within their departments;
- Work towards the School’s intentions;

- Carry out necessary administrative tasks, such as:
 - Ordering books and resources;
 - Reviewing and auditing resources;
 - Overseeing coursework;
 - Overseeing the setting of examinations;
 - Analysing exam results;
 - Analysing staffing needs.
- Compare the performance of students in their subject against previous performance and measures of ability;
- Do something about those students who are not performing as they should;
- Monitor homework in terms of setting it and assessing it;
- Liaise with the SLG;
- Know the students;
- Get out and about from their department.

Such a list cannot be comprehensive and many of the tasks are open-ended. The role requires considerable commitment and intelligent discretion.

As with so much else in schools, Heads of Department/Subject Leaders have to be adept at constructing and maintaining relationships with their colleagues. They need to promote collaboration and collegiality. They have to promote their departments' or subjects' case, but they also have to be able to appreciate the wider picture of school life.

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