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ANCILLARY STAFF MATTERS

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1. THE LATE TONY JACOB

Mrs Joan Wheatly has had 15 years experience as a senior assistant. She recently took over the supervision of non-teaching staff at Riverside School when the former senior assistant was transferred to a new school in Jurong. She is a very capable person. She supervises the non-teaching staff very effectively.

Riverside school is a well-managed school. The grounds and buildings are well cared for. The parents of the pupils of this school hold the school in high esteem. The teachers of this school are very conscientious. All the non-teaching staff are obedient and work to the best of their ability. In April last year the office attendant resigned from service because he had a better offer from the private sector. After eight months a replacement was transferred to this school from another school. Tony Jacob, the new office attendant, took medical leave frequently. On one or two occasions he took French leave. He was warned and his absence was commuted to vacation leave. Since then he has been conforming to regulations. He is a very good worker. He keeps the office clean and maintains the duplicating machine very well and does all the work that is expected of him. When he is engrossed in his work he even skips his lunch hours.

Recently, however, he has been coming late to school. Each time he comes late the senior assistant warns him verbally. After a while he repeats the offending practice. He is warned verbally again. This has been going on for a couple of months. The senior assistant now feels that her verbal warnings are ineffective. She has now placed this matter in the hands of Mr George Thomas, the principal of Riverside. While George has been following the case from the beginning he has not wished to interfere until the supervisor, in this instance the senior assistant, felt unable to cope with the situation. George realizes that Tony is a good worker and his only fault is coming late to school. If this matter is reported to the Ministry of Education he may lose a good worker. If George allows this situation to go on other members of his non-teaching staff may do the same thing.

2. THE CARETAKER

Mark Stanton was appointed to a newly-opened Govt. Primary School at Valetta as headteacher. For some reason the Public Service Commission had overlooked the appointment of a caretaker so Mark took the initiative of having the casual labourers of the school do the caretaker's work.

After repeated requests a caretaker (Abram Musad) was appointed and Mark thought that, at long last, his worries were over. But in fact they were just beginning!

On the first day of Abram's assumption of duty, Mark had a long talk with him about his duties at the school. He listened to Mark very politely and Mark thought he was going to have a conscientious caretaker.

The trouble began a few days later when Mark called at the school during the next school vacation in order to register the names of pupils who were asking for transfer to the school. He found the school gate locked. And the key was with the caretaker!

This meant that, as the school caretaker was in possession of the school keys, no casual labourer was able to enter the school premises to work in the school garden. Since Mark didn't know where the school caretaker lived he could not call at his house.

Matters came to a head a week later when Mark again called at the school to find the casual labourers on the road, outside the locked school gate, waiting for the gate to be opened. And the key was still with the caretaker who was nowhere in sight!

Quite by chance Mark located Abram's house and demanded an explanation. His excuse was that he was ill.

Mark then personally called on Mr Y, the officer in charge of school caretakers, at the Ministry of Education, and made an oral and written report on the caretaker. He also reported that the caretaker refused to do any cleaning of the school yard as he thought that was the job of the casual labourers.

The supervisor promised that the caretaker would be summoned to the Ministry and given a severe warning. If he didn't improve his case would be submitted to the P.S.C.

Three months later Mark is still waiting for action to be taken by the authorities and the position is no better.

Discussion

How would you have dealt with this problem if you were the headteacher?

3. THE NEGLIGENT WATCHMAN

Akhtar Ahmed was an understanding but firm and decisive principal whereas Mohamed Din, the watchman, who served in the school, was extremely lazy and, more often than not, found sleeping during working hours.

For one particular month, Ahmed found that the watchman's clock had not been punched which indicated that he had not been patrolling during the nights. Din, when summoned by the principal, claimed that the keys were missing and hence he could not punch the clock as required. The principal then instructed the watchman to report to him should the keys be found missing in future. Din refused to do this claiming that it was not his duty to do so. Nevertheless, the principal decided to place the keys in the watchman's clock and requested that he punch accordingly.

Subsequently, on three separate occasions the principal had to place new sets of keys during the day as it was found that immediately after each week the keys were missing. On the fourth occasion however, the principal found that the new set of keys had been hidden in the clock. Din was called upon to explain the reason for not punching the clock and again he claimed that there were no keys. Ahmed immediately brought him to the clock and showed him the keys. He was then given a written warning.

4. A TROUBLESOME SERVANT

Ahmad is a school servant at Kotapurna School. He is in his late forties and has had more than 20 years of service. Physically, he is weak and his eyesight is poor. He is, by temperament, quite aggressive and easily irritated. During the course of his service he has been transferred to at least ten schools.

On arrival at Katapurna, Ahmad informed the principal that his frequent transfers were due to victimisation. When asked to elaborate, he dismissed the matter as a thing of the past.

Ahmad was given a list of his duties by Paul Arasaratnam, the principal of the school and the Senior English Master, Roger Bohun, was made his immediate supervisor.

After a month the S.E.M. Bohun verbally informed Arasaratnam that Ahmad was slackening in his work. It had been necessary to instruct him many times in order to get certain areas cleared. In fact, Bohun realising Ahmad's age and physical condition, had been patient and tolerant in his approach but the situation was becoming acute.

Paul Arasaratnam decided to call Ahmad before Roger Bohun to remind him of his duties. Ahmad's reaction was quite aggressive and he accused the English Master of victimising him.

After two months a fresh incident occurred.

The principal was informed that Ahmad was absent from duty without leave for one day. When pressed for an explanation, Ahmad replied that when his wife rang the school, Bohun agreed to his wife's request for one day's leave. Roger Bohun however did not confirm the story and the principal then requested Ahmad's wife to call on him.

She showed evidence of recent injury and confessed that Ahmad had been very violent on the previous evening and that he had smashed the T.V. set. She begged for another chance for her troublesome husband saying that the family had no savings and that it would go hard for herself and Ahmad's six children should he be dismissed.

Paul Arasaratnam wanted to be humane - he also wanted efficient performance from Ahmad. What was he to do?

Discussion

What was the principal to do?