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Circular 03/2009

To: Human Resources Officers
Grant Maintained Integrated Schools
Voluntary Grammar Schools

Dear Colleague

Job Evaluation of Classroom Assistants

We have just been advised by an integrated primary school that the School Finance Branch has issued a letter to all Grant Maintained Integrated and Voluntary Grammar Schools advising them that additional resources have been made available to implement rates of pay in line with the job evaluation process in the Education and Library Boards.

The Joint Collective Agreement to implement job evaluation for classroom assistants within the Boards included a Buy Out of historic terms and conditions. These historic terms and conditions included the 32.5 hour divisor and the special needs allowance. When a classroom assistant within the Boards agreed to the variation of contract their 32.5 hour divisor was replaced with a 36 hour divisor. The Boards also stated that no classroom assistant at the date of the agreement would lose out on their pension as a result of the implementation of job evaluation.

Under the LGPS (NI) regulations the calculation of pension benefits is normally based on the final year's whole-time equivalent (wte) pay and the whole-time equivalent membership. Therefore when an employee moves from having whole-time hours of 32.5 hours to whole-time hours of 36 hours there is an instant increase in whole-time pay for pension calculations. **Under the current regulations this final pay applies to all accrued membership – in other words there could be a potential immediate increase of 10.77% to the value of their pension benefits. This increase in benefits would cause a strain on the fund and the associated cost would have to be passed to the employers involved.** The Boards are currently seeking regulatory amendments from the Department of Environment to ensure that there is correct accrual of pension benefits for this group of members and no strain on the fund and associated actuarial cost.

Therefore, I wish to highlight that, without regulatory amendments, there would be an actuarial cost to each employer for the increase in value of pension benefits for this group of members. You may wish to either contact William Dobbin at the Department of Environment to seek a regulatory amendment or Schools' Finance Branch to see if they are willing to fund the actuarial cost.

Yours sincerely

Zena Kee
Pensions Manager