

Wolferstans' dedicated team of Education Solicitors providing specialist legal assistance for your educational establishment.

YOUR LOCAL EDUCATION SPECIALISTS

Wolferstans
SOLICITORS



SERVICE GUARANTEE

Wolferstans are committed to providing an excellent level of client service, better than most, and we are prepared to put our money where our mouth is in this regard; if you change provider to Wolferstans, but do not consider that you have had exceptional client service from us via the use of one of our packages, you may unilaterally reduce our fee by up to 20% with no strings attached.

WHAT OUR CLIENTS SAY

We have been working with Wolferstans for a number of years and it is a perfect solution for our MAT. James and Victoria have supported through a range of HR and legal issues such as absences, capability, restructures, redundancies, disciplinaries etc as well as GDPR which included staff training. They are always quick to respond and their support and expertise gives us confidence and peace of mind. I would highly recommend them to others and great value for money

Anna Pearce, Business Operations Manager at Horizon

We have been using Wolferstans Solicitors for the past 5 years now and have been really happy with the services we have received. They are always quick to respond to queries and have an excellent knowledge of the education sector. This has fitted in with our Schools needs really well over the years. Victoria and James have specifically been brilliant, very professional and thorough. Nothing is too much. We would highly recommend them'

Kingskerswell Primary School

ON GOING LEGAL AND HR SUPPORT

We offer platinum packages which not only provide the peace of mind required for the day to day running of your Trust or School, but also includes strategic support for bigger projects and all at a competitive price, with unlimited usage (save for the exclusions) and access outside of normal business hours. However, we appreciate that not all Trusts or Schools are alike, and we recognise that this high level of support may be inconsistent with either your budgetary constraints or you may have inhouse expertise meaning that you do not require this level of investment in legal assistance and you might prefer to opt for HR and/or Legal Plus which have a capped usage of 5 and 2 hours per term.

PLATINUM HR AND EMPLOYMENT LAW SUPPORT

This package entitles your Trust or School to unlimited access (telephone, e-mail and virtual meetings) to our specialist Schools support team in relation to any staffing matters. The majority of support tends to relate to disciplinary and grievances, performance management and capability, managing long term absence, handling flexible working requests and advice relating to entitlements and varying terms and conditions. However, subscription to the platinum package also entitles your Trust or School to strategic support and even project management when it comes to those complex and more difficult projects such as restructures and redundancies or the removal of senior individuals. Typically, strategic support would include a face to face meeting with the Headteacher (and governors if you wish) where we ensure the process, timescales, costs and next steps are fully understood in addition to providing a template and assisting you to draft the business case/plan and provide full support for any subsequent union consultation.

We feel that we can add real value when it comes to those tricky issues such as managing long term absence and underperforming staff. For example, if we advise that a member of staff should be referred to OH we would work with your School to ensure that the OH report was as useful as possible -in our experience unless you ask the right questions you do not get the right answers. Therefore, and by way of example, we will provide a tailored list of questions which generally produce OH Reports of a higher standard.

Similarly, if it is appropriate to have a protected conversation we will advise you of this fact and where necessary conduct the negotiation (usually with the member of staff's union representative). For the avoidance of doubt, the following services are all included within the platinum package; unlimited HR/employment law support, drafting and approving of letters/documents, negotiations and consultations with unions, bespoke drafting and negotiation of settlement agreements, support to governors for panel hearings and pay appeals, education law updates, drafting/reviewing policies and contracts in addition to access to our online Schools Policy Portal where you can download polices and other useful documents.

Signing up to our platinum package will also mean you have the benefit of a guaranteed 2 hour response to enquiries marked as urgent, and will entitle your Trust or School to bespoke training at least twice per year.

PLATINUM LEGAL SUPPORT

Our legal support package covers all other legal requirements your Trust or School might have save for property transactions or where a formal dispute has arisen. Common examples include advice and support provided to Headteachers and Governors in relation to complaints from parents, exclusions, reviewing contracts for the supply of goods of services (including negotiating better terms and/or exits from contracts for items such as photocopiers), GDPR, handling SARs and requests under the Freedom of Information Act, advising on data breaches, support relating to access to pupil records and parental responsibility, safeguarding issues, interpretation of DfE Guidance and producing Lease Reports if required.

HR PLUS

Our HR Plus package is designed for Trusts and Schools who require a lower level of support but still want to know they have the benefit of fixed fee advice they can call on throughout each term. The advice is capped at 5 hours per term (which may well be more than enough if you do not regularly require support) and does not include strategic support or project management, but will cover all day to day support including handling disciplinaries and, grievances, managing long-term absence, handling flexible working requests, advice relating to entitlements and varying terms and conditions in addition to supporting you through any redundancy or restructuring projects. If you require support over and above the 5 hours, we will offer the support at reduced hourly rates.

LEGAL PLUS

Our Legal Plus package is limited to 2 hours support per term for non-staffing matters which may well be more than enough support for the likes of GDPR, parental complaints, exclusions , parental responsibility etc.



ABOUT THE SCHOOLS SUPPORT SERVICE

We are the region's local education experts boasting a client base of more than 100 Schools throughout Devon and Cornwall. Our clients range from some of the largest MATs to individual primary Schools all of whom have chosen Wolferstans to provide their ongoing HR and/or legal support because of our pragmatic solutions based approach which is delivered at an affordable and cost effective price.

Our team includes education specialists dedicated to providing on-going support to Schools meaning they understand the unique quirks of the education sector. Providing daily support of this nature means our specialists are familiar with the STPCD, Burgundy Book, PCC, CCC and DCC existing template policies and the freedoms which are now available to academies.

OUR APPROACH

The advice we offer is pragmatic, we put ourselves in your shoes and offer advice that is the best for the School as a whole, not just to comply with legal obligations. Each of our Schools/MATs are allocated a solicitor specialising in education who will act as the key contact. The key contact will be supported by other members of the team, but it will be the key contact who will form close links with the Business Manager, Headteacher and to some extent the Governing Body so that they become familiar with your School's approach and ethos.

We offer a solutions based approach which routinely means identifying the School's objective/preferred outcome, analysing the issues, assessing the risks, presenting different options (which will vary dependant upon the School's attitude to risk/cost in a given situation) and then helping the Business Manager or Head to resolve the issue. This usually entails telephone consultations, exchange of emails, followed by drafting and approving letters. If a face to face meeting is required we are in a position to visit your School at short notice.

OUR OFFERING

Our packages for HR and/or Legal Services offer Schools a fresh alternative to services offered by the Local Authority and national providers. Signing up to our packages will grant your School or Trust unlimited access to our team of specialist education solicitors who will be available for immediate telephone advice and appointments at the School as and when required. We understand the importance of prompt advice and are committed to returning urgent emails and/or calls within two hours within our platinum packages. The packages will provide peace of mind in that you will know that for a fixed fee you will receive unlimited support from education specialists. The Schools support team are experienced at dealing with the challenges Schools are likely to face such as handling long term absence and progression to capability, negotiations and consultations with unions, advising on exclusions, complaints and parent's rights to educational records. There are no upper limits in terms of usage within our platinum offerings – our quotations are based upon our experience in the sector and knowledge of what is ordinarily required for a School or Trust of a comparable size. The only exclusions i.e. occasions where you will have to pay us something extra are when a claim is issued, a formal dispute has arisen, redundancy or TUPE exercises involving 20 or more employees, industrial action and property transactions such as the granting of a new lease or support in relation to converting, joining and/or expanding a MAT.



KEY CONTACTS



JAMES TWINE
Head of Education
School Support Team

James heads up the Education Department at Wolferstans, he is a dedicated employment and education law specialist whom provides ongoing legal and HR advice to support the day to day running of Schools and Trusts. He is well known for forming strong relationships with Headteachers and Business Managers and has a reputation for delivering pragmatic strategic advice to Schools throughout Devon and Cornwall. James has extensive experience of managing projects for Schools and Trusts including large redundancies, the removal of underperforming senior individuals and Trade Union relations. James also sits on the board of the Cornwall Association of Primary Heads (CAPH).



VICTORIA SARGEANT
School Support Team

Victoria is an employment and education Solicitor who provides support and legal guidance to Schools across the region. Victoria specialises in education and its unique employment issues. She has experience of dealing with union representatives and union consultations and provides strategic legal advice on both staffing and educational issues. Victoria has an excellent track record in successfully representing Schools at the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunals and sits as the Chair of a Local Governing Advisory Board. She is also a HR committee member for a large local MAT and is also a board member of the Cornwall Association of Primary Heads (CAPH).



MARA CUNHA
Paralegal

Mara is a paralegal within the Education Department and is on hand to take enquiries and provide legal advice.



STEPH MARSH
Solicitor

Steph is an employment lawyer and education specialist who advises Schools and Trusts on a wide range of staffing and legal issues.



JULIAN BURROWS
Associate Solicitor

Julian specialises in advising Schools and Trusts on responding to Subject Access Requests and requests under the Freedom of Information Act.

This leaflet is for general guidance purposes only. Your solicitor will be able to provide specific advice based on your circumstances. Wolferstans has taken all reasonable care to ensure this leaflet was accurate on the date of publication.