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**TO: PRINCIPALS
SCHOOL STAFF**

RE: TEA BREAKS

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There have been recent enquiries from staff about the provision of tea breaks in schools. The following represents the long term practice promoted by this Department, and the long term understanding between the Department and the Unions.

Tea Breaks

Although tea breaks are not an award provision, it is expected that schools, in terms of long standing custom and practice, will make arrangements to provide non-teaching staff the opportunity to partake of a cup of tea/coffee.

Whilst it is emphasised that all school staff are still on duty during these times, the specific arrangements for preparing and consuming the beverage are to be determined at the local level depending on the particular circumstances of each school. Tea breaks are paid breaks and therefore staff are not required to make up the time. Principals must ensure that essential school services such as switchboard and front office reception coverage etc. are maintained.

This remains the current practice of the Department and is similar to the practices applying to other employees, both in the department and the wider public sector.

Whilst the roles of non-teaching staff are different from those performed by officers of the teaching service, it should be recognised and appreciated that ancillary staff are equal partners in the overall makeup of school human resources and have a right to be treated on an equal footing.

The Department has an obligation under the Public Sector Management Act 1995 to observe the general principles of personnel management standards identified in Part 2 which cover such matters as fair and consistent treatment, discrimination, equal opportunities etc. for all public sector employees.

Should you have any queries please contact the Human Resource Consultant for your site.

Tassi Georgiadis
DIRECTOR, WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT

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