

## **EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNALS**

Claimants (1): Ciara Turner

(2): Clare Whitehill(3): Penelope Gibbins

(4): as per attached schedule

Respondent: Belmont School (Feldemore) Educational Trust Limited

(in Administration)

**Interested Party:** Secretary of State for Business and Trade

Heard at: Croydon by CVP

On: 30 & 31 October 2024

Before: Employment Judge Liz Ord

Tribunal Member Sheik Khan

Tribunal Member Claire Chaudhuri

Representation:

Claimants 1 & 2: Ms Imogen Egan (Counsel)

Claimant 3: In person
Other Claimants: Not appearing

Respondent: Ms Rebecca Paterson (Counsel) instructed by the

Administrator

Interested Party: Not appearing

# **JUDGMENT**

#### 1. Protective Award

- 1.1. The Respondent failed to adequately comply with a requirement of section 188 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (TULR(C)A) and the Claimants' claims for a protective award brought under section 189 of TULR(C)A succeed.
- 1.2. The Respondent is ordered, to pay remuneration to the Claimants named in attached Annex 1 for a protected period of 60 days beginning on 31 December 2023 (being the date on which the dismissals to which the complaints relate took effect).
- 1.3. The Employment Protection (Recoupment of Jobseeker's Allowance and Income Support) Regulations 1996 apply to this award.

#### 2. Breach of Contract

- 2.1. The claims of breach of contract for non-payment of notice pay brought by the first Claimant (Ciara Turner) and the third Claimant (Penelope Gibbins) are well founded.
- 2.2. The Respondent is ordered to pay to the first Claimant the gross sum of £2,788.40.
- 2.3. The Respondent is ordered to pay to the third Claimant the gross sum of £1,966.00.

#### 3. Preferential debts

3.1. Subject to the normal categories of preferential debts set out in Schedule 6 of the Insolvency Act 1986, any payments made by the Respondent (rather than the Secretary of State) pursuant to this judgment will be paid as an unsecured dividend.

# **REASONS**

#### **Background**

- 1. For the purposes of the Protective Award claims, it was agreed by the parties attending that Ciara Turner, the first Claimant, was the relevant employees' representative for the Claimants listed in Annex 1. Therefore, hers was the lead case for the purposes of the Protective Award claims and all other such claims were dependant on her outcome. As put by the Administrator's representative, all other Protective Award claims "piggy-backed" on that of Ms Turner. Therefore, this judgment disposes of all Claimants' claims as listed so far as they relate to a Protective Award.
- 2. The third Claimant, Penelope Gibbins, had been inadvertently omitted from the list, although there was correspondence from the Administrator agreeing to her claim being consolidated with that of the first Claimant. With the agreement of the parties, her claim was consolidated with that of the first Claimant and added to the list (a separate Case Management Order has been made to this effect). Therefore, Ms Gibbins' claims were heard in full at this hearing.

#### **Findings of Fact**

(References in brackets are to page numbers in the 288 page bundle that was before the Tribunal).

#### **Protective Award**

- 3. There was no recognised Trade Union at the Respondent school for the purposes of collective bargaining. Nor did the school have an HR function.
- 4. The Respondent was in financial difficulties throughout 2023. It was in litigation

with a construction firm, who obtained a financial judgment against it in August 2023. The school expected the claim to be in the sum of around £90K. In fact the award was for £567K plus VAT. At that stage it became apparent to the Respondent that the school was potentially unable to meet its liabilities. The construction firm took steps to enforce the judgment and a hearing date was set for 31 January 2024 (202).

- 5. The school board discussed whether it could re-open in September 2023. On the basis that two potential investment partners were undertaking financial due diligence and appeared to have intentions to make an offer to acquire the school, it stayed open. However, negotiations broke down and no deal was achieved (202).
- 6. The Respondent did not tell its employees about the financial state it was in and the potential impact this might have on their jobs.
- 7. By November 2023 it was apparent that the school was likely to close.
- 8. On 30 November a letter was sent to employees from the Chair of Governors saying the school "will almost certainly be closing" (111). This was followed the same day by a letter from Marc Broughton (Head teacher) (113-4) giving context to what was happening. A Governors' briefing was also sent out that day which, as well as setting out the problems, said that they had not given up hope of a "rescue" buyer emerging (115-17).
- 9. A parent-led working group was set up to try to rescue the school and avoid closure.
- 10. On 5 December, a parent, Taryn Timperlake, who had an HR and employment background, met with groups of staff and gave presentations to them about redundancy procedure, their employment rights and support on offer (slides 125-132). She sent staff an email that day (124) saying she hoped she had reassured them that they would be supported and consulted with appropriately. She said that a message regarding election of staff representatives would follow and she would produce a Q&A document for circulation.
- 11.On 6 December Mr Broughton sent a letter to staff inviting them to elect representatives (135) with whom he said there would be consultation. He also said it was the Respondent's sincere hope that the parent-led working group would be successful in saving the school.
- 12. Elections of staff representatives took place between 6-8 December (159) and Ciara Turner was elected to represent teaching staff.
- 13. On 11 December the Governors and Head Teacher wrote to staff saying that they were unable to keep the school open and it would close on 15 December (138).
- 14. The Insolvency Service Form HR1 Advance Notification of Redundancies was completed by the school on 1 December 2023. It indicated that the first dismissal was to take effect on 18 December and that the reason for giving less than the required 30 day notice was an inability to attract a buyer and exhaustion of financial resources. The school employed 61 staff and all were to be made redundant (120).

- 15. Meetings with staff representatives were held on 13, 14 and 15 December and detailed information was provided about what was going to happen (151-154). There was no discussion on how to avoid closure.
- 16. The school closed on 15 December 2023. There was no support for staff or any consultation after this date.
- 17. It went into administration on 2 January 2024 and RSM UK Restructuring Advisory LLP were appointed as administrators (173-179).
- 18. On 4 January the administrators wrote to employees saying their last day of service with the school was 31 December 2023 (173 179). Staff were paid up until this date.

#### **Breach of Contract - Notice Pay**

- 19. The notice period in Ciara Turner's contract was one full term's notice, which would have taken her pay up to 30 April 2024 (para 8 p88). Claire Whitehill and Penelope Gibbins had the same provision in their contracts. This was agreed by the Administrator's representative.
- 20. No formal notice of dismissal was given to the employees and this is acknowledged by the Respondent (27).
- 21.Ms Turner and Ms Whitehill both started new jobs with effect from 1 January 2024. Ms Whitehill's salary was more than she was earning with the Respondent. Ms Turner's salary was less than she was earning with the Respondent.
- 22. Ms Gibbins was unable to find work straight away. She obtained a fixed contract on 19 February 2024 for the remainder of the school year at a lower pay rate than she was on with the Respondent. She also obtained a small amount of substitute teacher work in January and February. She received statutory notice pay from the Insolvency Service.

#### Conclusions

#### **Protective Award**

- 23. The Respondent acknowledged both in the written evidence and in submissions that it did not comply with its requirement to consult for the full 30 day period (64). It does not seek to rely on the special circumstances defence and concedes that the circumstances it was in did not render full consultation not reasonably practicable. Therefore, the issue for the Tribunal is how serious the default was.
- 24. We have taken account of the school's small size and its lack of an HR function.
- 25. The staff were first warned of the school's financial circumstances and potential closure on 30 November. They were provided with a detailed briefing of the School's circumstances and, at this stage, would have understood that their jobs were at risk. However, this was not a consultation about redundancy and the briefing also spoke of hopes of saving the school.

- 26. Whilst the staff were helped by another parent, Ms Timperlake, this was not tantamount to consultation.
- 27. The staff were only informed definitely about the closure on 11 December, four days before the school closed. Although they were provided with detailed information and some guidance at the meetings on 13-15 December, this was extremely late in the day. In any event, consultation at these meetings was limited and no discussion took place about how redundancies might be avoided.
- 28. The Respondent knew of its serious financial difficulties in August 2023. Whilst it was hoping for a buyer and to save the school, it took no steps to warn its employees of potential job losses. If it had reasonably considered its employees, it would have put them on warning of redundancies and started consultation. Instead, it left it to the last moment.
- 29. For these reasons, whilst we find that some limited consultation took place, more consideration should have been given to the Respondent's employees earlier in time. Therefore, we find it just and equitable to make an award of 60 days pay.
- 30. The protective period runs from 31 December 2023.

#### **Breach of Contract - Notice Pay**

31. The Administrator's representative does not oppose the notice pay claims from Ms Turner and Ms Gibbins. Ms Whitehill makes no claim. Therefore, taking account of the evidence before us and the Respondent's concessions, the Tribunal finds Ms Turner's and Ms Gibbins' claims to be well-founded.

#### **Calculations of Notice Pay**

#### Turner

32. The Administrator's representative agreed the amount of notice pay set out in Ms Turner's Schedule of Loss (273-274), which equates to one term's gross pay minus her gross pay from her new job as follows:

From 1 January 2024 to 30 April 2024

£15,115.08 - £12,326.68 = £2,788.40

33. We therefore make an award of £2,788.40 gross

#### **Gibbins**

34. From documentation provided to the Tribunal at the hearing, the parties agreed the amount due, equating to one term's pay minus Ms Gibbins' pay from her substitute teacher work and her fixed term contract as follows:

From 1 January 2024 to 30 April 2024

Amount due from Respondent:

655.80 (week's gross pay) x 17 weeks (one term) = £11,148.60 gross

Minus:

Substitute teacher pay of £625.00 gross Fixed term contract pay from 19.2.24 to 30.4.24 of £6,772.60 Statutory notice pay of £1,785.00

Total deductions = £9,182.60

Remaining:

£1,966.00 (11,148.60 - 9,182.60)

35. We therefore make an award of £1,966.00

\_\_\_\_

Employment Judge Liz Ord

Date 1 November 2024

#### **Notes**

- 1. A protective award is a two-stage process. The Tribunal at this stage makes no financial award, but gives a judgment that the Claimants are entitled to a protective award in the terms set out above. The Claimants must then seek payment of their individual awards from the Respondent, quantifying the amount.
- 2. Failure to pay (should that occur), or any dispute as to the amount payable, then becomes a matter for a further separate claim under s192 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 for payment of the award.
- 3. Annex 2 provides details on recoupment of benefits.

### **ANNEX 1**

Schedule of Claimants entitled to a protective award for a 60 day period and who are within the scope of this judgment.

	Multiple:	Multiple Schedule 2300613 - Belmont School		
	Multiple:	2300813 - Belliont School		
	Case Number	Claimant	Respondent	
		Miss Ciara Turner	Belmont School	
		6	Feldemore	
	2301137/2024	Whitehaven Drive	Pasturewood Road	
	====;	Bookham	Dorking	
		KT23 4FE	RH56LQ	
	n i x	Miss Ciara Turner 6	Belmont School Feldemore	
	2301138/2024	Whitehave Drive	Pasturewood Road	
		Bookham	Dorking	
		KT23 4FE	RH56LQ	
		Mr Matthew Dixon	Belmont School	
		Hilltop	Feldemore	
	2301139/2024	The Woodlands	Pasturewood Road	
		Wallington	Dorking	
		SM6 0QZ	RH56LQ	
		Mr Aled Leyshon	Belmont School	
		25	Feldemore	
	2301140/2024	Earles Meadow	Pasturewood Road	
		Horsham	Dorking	
		RH12 4HP	RH56LQ	
		Mrs Kayleigh Fellingham	Belmont School	
		Hazeldene	Feldemore	
	2301141/2024	Haven Road	Pasturewood Road	
		Rudgwick	Dorking	
		Rh12 3jh	RH56LQ	
	1/4	Mr Graeme East	Belmont School	
	R110 Petro Calabratica	. 6	Feldemore	
	2301142/2024	New Road, Forest Green	Pasturewood Road	
		Dorking	Dorking	
		RH5 5SA	RH56LQ Belmont School	
		Mrs Rachel Eastment	Feldemore	
22	222442/2024	West Cottage	Pasturewood Road	
	2301143/2024	Hayes Wood Road	Dorking	
		Five Oaks RH14 9AS	RH56LQ	
		Mr Christopher Brailsford-Cox	Belmont School	
		43	Feldemore	
	2301144/2024	Divot Way	Pasturewood Road	
	2301144/2024	Basingstoke	Dorking	
		Rg24 9YB	RH56LQ	
		Mrs Frances Crossley	Belmont School	
		Trout Tickler	Feldemore	
	2301145/2024	7 Trout Lane	Pasturewood Road	
		Barns Green	Dorking	
		RH130QD	RH56LQ	
		Mrs Sarah Emmett	Belmont School	
		Morningside	Feldemore	
	2301146/2024	Guildford Road	Pasturewood Road	
		Rowly	Dorking	
		Thomas and the same and the sam	DOWNING	

		Mr Simon Fellingham	Belmont School	
		Hazeldene	Feldemore	
	2301147/2024	Haven Road	Pasturewood Road	
		Rudgwick	Dorking	
		Rh12 3jh	RH56LQ	
		Mr Simon Cotton	Belmont School	
		38	Feldemore	
	2301148/2024	West Farm Avenue	Pasturewood Road	
		Ashtead	Dorking	
		KT21 2LG	RH56LQ	
		Mr James Timmis	Belmont School	
		144	Feldemore	
	2301149/2024	Manor Road North	Pasturewood Road	
		Thames Ditton	Dorking	
		KT70BH	RH56LQ	
		Mrs Samantha Spiller	Belmont School	
		56	Feldemore	
	2301150/2024	Speedwell close	Pasturewood Road	
		Merrow	Dorking	
		GU4 7HE	RH56LQ	
		Mrs Nicola Barriball	Belmont School	
		Loreto	Feldemore	
	2301151/2024	The Ridgeway	Pasturewood Road	
	2302234,2024	Cranleigh	Dorking	
		GU6 7HR	RH56LQ	
		Mrs Alison Owen	Belmont School	
		34	Feldemore	
	2301152/2024	Tynedale Road	Pasturewood Road	
	2302232/2027	Strood Green, Brockham	Dorking	
		RH3 7HX	RH56LQ	
		Mr Timothy Stannard	Belmont School	
		22	Feldemore	
	2301153/2024	Danesfield Close		
	2301133/2024	Walton-on-Thames	Pasturewood Road	
		KT12 3BP	Dorking	
		Mrs Jade Thomas	RH56LQ Belmont School	
•		4		
	2301154/2024	Weald View	Feldemore	
	2301134/2024	Alfold	Pasturewood Road	
		GU68UF	Dorking	
		Miss Clare Whitehill	RH56LQ Belmont School	56
		34		
	2301155/2024	77.0	Feldemore	
	2301133/2024	Tychbourne Drive Guildford	Pasturewood Road	
		GU47DH	Dorking	
		Mrs Annabel Blanch	RH56LQ	
			Belmont School	
	2301156/2024	19 - Holmbury Drive	Feldemore	
	2301130/2024		Pasturewood Road	
		Dorking RH5 4TU	Dorking	
			RH56LQ	
		Mr Ross MacGregor 46	Belmont School	
	2201157/2024		Feldemore	
	2301157/2024	Churchill Way	Pasturewood Road	
		Broadbridge Heath	Dorking	
		RH12 3TZ	RH56LQ	

		Mrs Dawn Tolley	Belmont School	
		Cop House	Feldemore	
	2301158/2024	Old Road	Pasturewood Road	
	5355=55 N 12	Buckland	Dorking	
		RH3 7DY	RH56LQ	
		Mr David Collins	Belmont School	
		1.	Feldemore	
	2301159/2024	Belmont Close	Pasturewood Road	
		Holmbury St Mary, Dorking	Dorking	
		RH5 6LQ	RH56LQ	
		Mrs Georgina Collins	Belmont School	
		1	Feldemore	
150	2301160/2024	Belmont Close	Pasturewood Road	
	2301100/2024	Holmbury St Mary, Dorking	Dorking	
		RH5 6LQ	RH56LQ	
		Mrs Danielle Evans	Belmont School	
		The Old Laundry	Feldemore	
	2301161/2024	Milton st	Pasturewood Road	
	2301101/2024	Westcott	Dorking	
		Rh4 3px	RH56LQ	
		Mr Robin Benton	Belmont School	
		2	Feldemore	
	2201152/2021	John Wiskar Drive	Pasturewood Road	
	2301162/2024		Dorking	
		Cranleigh GU6 8RA	RH56LQ	
		Mrs Rachel Wilson	Belmont School	
			Feldemore	
		Stanton	Pasturewood Road	
	2301163/2024	Deepdene Ave Rd	Dorking	
		Dorking	RH56LQ	
		RH4 1ST	Belmont School	
		Mr Krzysztof Nowotny	Feldemore	
	lie observation)	Flat 2		
	2301164/2024	3 Whitmore Way	Pasturewood Road	
		Horley	Dorking	
		RH68FX	RH56LQ	
		Mrs Sarah Clover	Belmont School	
		Rainbows End	Feldemore	
	2301165/2024	Church Road	Pasturewood Road	
		Partridge Green	Dorking	
			RH56LQ	
		Mr Richard Hearn	Belmont School	
		Garran Cottage	Feldemore	
	2301166/2024	Elmers Road	Pasturewood Road	
		Ockley	Dorking	
		RH5 5TL	RH56LQ	
		Miss Emily Mortimer	Belmont School	
		1 birchens coast hill farm	Feldemore	
	2301167/2024	sheephouse lane	Pasturewood Road	
		wotton	Dorking	
		RH56QH	RH56LQ	
		Mr Matthew Codrington	Belmont School	
		Belmont School	Feldemore	
	2301168/2024	Pasture Wood Road	Pasturewood Road	
		Holmbury St Mary	Dorking	
		RH5 6LH	RH56LQ	

		Mrs Myra Ervine	Belmont School	
		1 Evelyn Cottages	Feldemore	
	2301169/2024	Abinger Lane, Abinger Common	Pasturewood Road	
		Dorking	Dorking	
		RH5 6JE	RH56LQ	
		Mrs Charlotte Codrington	Belmont School	
		Belmont School	Feldemore	
	2301170/2024	Pasture Wood Road	Pasturewood Road	
		Holmbury St Mary	Dorking	
		RH5 6LH	RH56LQ	
	100	Mr Mathew Devassy	Belmont School	
		64	Feldemore	
	2301171/2024	Charrington Way	Pasturewood Road	
		Horsham	Dorking	
		RH12 3TH	RH56LQ	
		Mr Donald Booker	Belmont School	
		9	Feldemore	
	2301172/2024	New Road, Forest Green	Pasturewood Road	
		Dorking	Dorking	
		RH5 5SA	RH56LQ	
		Mrs Lotti Ellis	Belmont School	
		Woodlands	Feldemore	
	2301173/2024	Oak Grange road	Pasturewood Road	
		West Clandon	Dorking	
		GU4 7UB	RH56LQ	
		Mr Steven Heath	Belmont School	
		48	Feldemore	
	2301174/2024	South Terrace	Pasturewood Road	
		Dorking	Dorking	
		RH4 2AE	RH56LQ	
		Mr Adrian Prasca	Belmont School	
		80	Feldemore	
	2301175/2024	Rough Rew	Pasturewood Road	
		Dorking	Dorking	
		RH4 2PA	RH56LQ	
		Mrs Carol-Anne Drage	Belmont School	
		1	Feldemore	
	2301176/2024	St Nicholas	Pasturewood Road	
		Dorking	Dorking	
		RH5 4ER	RH56LQ	
		<ul> <li>Mrs Liezel McCulloch</li> </ul>	Belmont School	
		2	Feldemore	
	2301177/2024	Lanyon Close	Pasturewood Road	
		Horsham	Dorking	
		RH12 5JP	RH56LQ	
		Mr Alexander Hammond	Belmont School	
		1 Marley Way House	Feldemore	
68	2301178/2024	Thakeham Road	Pasturewood Road	
		Storrington	Dorking	
		Rh20 3PP	RH56LQ	
		Mrs Kate Ward	Belmont School	
		6	Feldemore	
	2301179/2024	Caenwood Road	Pasturewood Road	
		Ashtead	Dorking	
		KT21 2JE	RH56LQ	

N	Mr Michael Cooper	Belmont School	
	99	Feldemore	
2301180/2024	Queens Road	Pasturewood Road	
	Bisley	Dorking RH56LO	
	GU24 9AT	Belmont School	
	Mrs Faith Sykes	Feldemore	
	Oakview	Pasturewood Road	
2301181/2024	Surrey Gardens		
	Leatherhead	Dorking RH56LQ	
100	KT24 5HH	Belmont School	
	Mrs Kelly Wharton	Feldemore	
Secretary -	24	Pasturewood Road	
2301182/2024	Warwick Close	Dorking	
	Dorking	RH56LQ	
	RH5 4NN	Belmont School	
	Mr Richard Dixon	Feldemore	
	104		
2301183/2024	Onslow Gardens	Pasturewood Road	
	Wallington	Dorking	
	SM6 9QG	RH56LQ	
	Miss Sarah Pridmore	Belmont School	
	14	Feldemore	
2301184/2024	Cricketts Hill	Pasturewood Road	
	Shere	Dorking	
	GU5 9JY	RH56LQ	
	Mr James Dixon	Belmont School	
Service and Automotive and	7	Feldemore	
2301185/2024	Aultone Way	Pasturewood Road	
	Carshalton	Dorking	
	SM5 2LQ	RH56LQ	
	Mrs Joanne Parfett	Belmont School	
	Hunters Green	Feldemore	
2301186/2024	Ridgeway Road	Pasturewood Road	
	Dorking	Dorking	
	RH4 3AT	RH56LQ	
	Mrs Pauline Pallant	Belmont School	
	6	Feldemore	
2301187/2024	Friday Street Ockley	Pasturewood Road	
	Dorking	Dorking	
	RH5 5TE	RH56LQ	
	Miss kim Edwards	Belmont School	
15000000000000000	32 Evelyn Cottages	Feldemore	
2301188/2024	Abinger Common	Pasturewood Road	
	Dorking	Dorking	
	RH5 6JE	RH56LQ	
	Mr Lance Owen	Belmont School	
Vision Consideration	7 Mill Reach	Feldemore Panel	
2301189/2024	Mill Lane	Pasturewood Road	
	Albury	Dorking	
	GU5 9BA	RH56LQ	

Case number	Name
2300035/2024	Penelope Gibbins

#### **ANNEX 2**

#### (PROTECTIVE AWARDS)

#### **Recoupment of Benefits**

The following particulars are given pursuant to the Employment Protection (Recoupment of Benefits) Regulations 1996, SI 1996 No 2349.

The respondent is under a duty to give the Secretary of State the following information in writing: (a) the name, address and National Insurance number of every employee to whom the protective award relates; and (b) the date of termination (or proposed termination) of the employment of each such employee.

That information shall be given within 10 days, commencing on the day on which the Tribunal announced its judgment at the hearing. If the Tribunal did not announce its judgment at the hearing, the information shall be given within the period of 10 days, commencing on the day on which the relevant judgment was sent to the parties. In any case in which it is not reasonably practicable for the respondent to do so within those times, then the information shall be given as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter.

No part of the remuneration due to an employee under the protective award is payable until either (a) the Secretary of State has served a notice (called a Recoupment Notice) on the respondent to pay the whole or part thereof to the Secretary of State or (b) the Secretary of State has notified the respondent in writing that no such notice is to be served.

This is without prejudice to the right of an employee to present a complaint to an Employment Tribunal of the employer's failure to pay remuneration under a protective award.

If the Secretary of State has served a Recoupment Notice on the respondent, the sum claimed in the Recoupment Notice in relation to each employee will be whichever is the less of:

- (a) the amount (less any tax or social security contributions which fall to be deducted by the employer) accrued due to the employee in respect of so much of the protected period as falls before the date on which the Secretary of State receives from the employer the information referred to above; OR
- (b) (i) the amount paid by way of or paid as on account of jobseeker's allowance, income-related employment and support allowance or income support to the employee for any period which coincides with any part of the protected period falling before the date described in (a) above; or
  - (ii) in the case of an employee entitled to an award of universal credit for any period ("the UC period") which coincides with any part of the period to which the prescribed element is attributable, any amount paid by way of or on account of universal credit for the UC period that would not have been paid if the person's earned income for that period was the same as immediately before the period to which the prescribed element is attributable.

The sum claimed in the Recoupment Notice will be payable forthwith to the Secretary of State. The balance of the remuneration under the protective award is then payable to the employee, subject to the deduction of any tax or social security contributions.

A Recoupment Notice must be served within the period of 21 days after the Secretary of State has received from the respondent the above-mentioned information required to be given by the respondent to the Secretary of State or as soon as practicable thereafter.

After paying the balance of the remuneration (less tax and social security contributions) to the employee, the respondent will not be further liable to the employee. However, the sum claimed in a Recoupment Notice is due from the respondent as a debt to the Secretary of State, whatever may have been paid to the employee, and regardless of any dispute between the employee and the Secretary of State as to the amount specified in the Recoupment Notice.