

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: SHARED HEADTEACHERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS
Meeting: EDUCATION AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
Date: 20 May 2008
Author: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In October 2007 Education and Leisure Committee agreed to consultation being undertaken with relevant stakeholders on the principle of appointing headteachers with responsibility for more than one primary school. This report presents the outcomes of the consultation.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At present the headteachers of our seven smallest primary schools are regularly class committed. These primary schools have a primary roll ranging from around 30 pupils to 82. For the purposes of this report these schools are referred to as small schools. The management demands on headteachers have increased and necessary absences of the headteacher from school during the school day leads to disruption of teaching.
- 2.2 All Scottish local authorities have experienced a diminishing number of applicants for promoted posts and it can be particularly difficult to recruit to smaller schools. A number of local authorities have already moved to appoint headteachers with responsibilities covering more than one school. HMIe reports show that schools can be effectively managed in this way.

3. CONSULTATION

- 3.1 Consultation papers were issued to headteachers, parent councils and the relevant trade unions with a view to establishing:
- circumstances in which the appointment of a headteacher to more than one school would be deemed appropriate;
 - the management arrangements which would be required in each school jointly managed by one headteacher;
 - the consultation processes which would apply in each case before a decision to appoint such a shared headteacher was taken.

A copy of the consultation document is attached as Appendix 1.

- 3.2 Responses were received from three of the seven small primary schools with one parent council member in favour and one against: two school staff in favour and one against; and one headteacher was of the view that success would depend on geography and management arrangements in each school.

- 3.3 Responses were received from nine other primary schools and one special school. One parent council member was in favour, five headteachers were in favour and two against. Four school staff were in favour and ten were against.
- 3.4 A response was also received from the EIS Falkirk Local Association which states that EIS national policy is that every school should have its own headteacher in order to recognise and support the education and social integrity of the community and of each school. The proposal was also discussed at a meeting of the local Negotiating Group for Teachers (NGT) where concerns were expressed about the specific job remit of a shared headteacher, the workload implications and the management arrangements required if there were to be a shared headship.
- 3.5 A number of comments were made in the response documents and the following reflects the points made.
- There would have to be another responsible person in each school, paid and trained accordingly, to cover when HT is out.
 - There would have to be another promoted post in each school, perhaps a shared principal teacher.
 - In my opinion the shared headteacher experiment worked very well. Staff found there were few problems and staff and children benefited from closer links with Limerigg. We shared resources, buses and workshops, cutting the costs and allowing the children to mix with other pupils. (Drumbowie Primary School)
 - School improvement planning would have to be adjusted to accommodate.
 - Each school requires an individual headteacher.
 - The workload for the appointed headteacher would be intolerable.
 - Where schools are geographically close to each other.
 - Would need a clear plan of when the head is in each school and a fair allocation of time.
- 3.6 All responses were clear that before a decision to appoint a shared headteacher was taken there should be full consultation on the remit and the management arrangements with staff, parent councils, parent communities.
- 3.7 Where requested there have been discussions with parent councils to explore the issue in more detail.

4. PROPOSED WAY FORWARD

- 4.1 The response to the consultation does not demonstrate a clear outcome in favour of the proposal or against.
- 4.2 A number of responses express concern about the workload involved. It is recognised that there might be benefit in relieving the headteacher of the commitment to planning for and teaching a class, but the head would have two establishments to manage. Concern is expressed about the management responsibility when the headteacher was not in school and it is recognised that the management capacity in each school would have to be increased at principal teacher level.

- 4.3 The new appointment procedures state that the first step should be a discussion with the parent council and in most cases the agreement is to move to advertise a vacancy nationally. It is proposed that this should continue to be the case for all schools. If it proved difficult to attract applications of acceptable quality to the post of headteacher of a small school, then it is proposed that a wider consultation take place with parents, staff and others involved with the school to explore the opportunity to link to another appropriate school, taking account of geographical proximity.
- 4.4 It is proposed, therefore, that the first option should be to recruit a headteacher to each school. If that fails, it should be available to the Director of Education to consider the option of linking a small school to another school and having a headteacher with responsibility for both on a shared basis. Consultation would be required with staff and parents of both schools.
- 4.5 If that option were to be considered, the management capacity within each school should be reviewed and a principal teacher post created in the small school to ensure appropriate management support.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Committee is asked to note:

- the outcomes of the consultation exercise;
- that the first option should be to recruit a headteacher to each school;
- if it proves difficult to recruit a headteacher to a small school (as defined in paragraph 2.1), it should be available to the Director of Education to consider the option of a shared responsibility following consultation; and
- if a shared headship were to be agreed a principal teacher post would be created in a small school to provide appropriate management support.

5.2 Committee is asked to refer the proposal to Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

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Director of Education

Date:

Contact Officer: Ann Carnachan, ext 6685

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Letter from EIS Falkirk Local Association

FALKIRK COUNCIL : EDUCATION SERVICES

**SHARED HEADTEACHERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS
CONSULTATION**

1. BACKGROUND

At present, headteachers in seven Falkirk Council primary schools are regularly class committed. The management demands on headteachers have increased, making this traditional approach to school management increasingly inappropriate. The absence of the headteacher from school during the school day is a regular occurrence, leading to the disruption of teaching in class.

All Scottish local authorities have experienced a diminishing number of applicants for promoted posts. Falkirk Council has had to re-advertise a number of headteacher posts in the primary sector in recent years. It can be particularly difficult to recruit applications for smaller schools.

A number of Scottish local authorities have already moved to appoint headteachers with responsibilities covering more than one school. HMIe reports show that schools can be very effectively managed in this way.

When Falkirk Council had difficulty recruiting a headteacher for Limerigg Primary School, the headteacher of Drumbowie Primary School took temporary responsibility for the management of both schools. The evaluation of this demonstrated the clear need to engage fully with parents in cases where a headteacher might be appointed to manage more than one school.

2. PROPOSAL

It is proposed to consult with headteachers, the relevant trade unions and the parents' forum with a view to establishing processes for determining:

- circumstances in which the appointment of a headteacher to more than one school would be deemed appropriate;
- the management arrangements which would be required in each school jointly managed by one headteacher; and
- the consultation processes which would apply in each case before a decision to appoint such a shared headteacher was taken.

It is further proposed that any headteachers appointed on this basis would be relieved of any regular class commitment.

The findings of the consultation will be reported to Education and Leisure Committee.

FALKIRK COUNCIL : EDUCATION SERVICES

**SHARED HEADTEACHERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS
CONSULTATION**

Name:

School/Nursery:

(please tick as appropriate)

Pupil ☐ **Parent** ☐ **School Employee** ☐ **Parent Council** ☐

It has been suggested that, in certain circumstances, by creating more time for the headteacher to focus on the overall management and curriculum delivery and less time actually taking classes, that the sharing of a headteacher across more than one school would improve learning and attainment in some Falkirk schools.

1. In what circumstances do you think this proposal would be effective?

2. What management arrangements do you think would need to be in place in each school for the proposal to be effective?

3. What consultation processes should apply in each case before a decision to appoint such a headteacher was taken?

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4. Given these circumstances, do you support the proposal?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Please return this pro forma to the headteacher of your school for onward transmission to McLaren House by **Friday 21 December at the latest**.

Thank you for completing this consultation questionnaire.

Julia Swan
Director of Education