

SHARED HEADSHIP

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The main purpose of this report is to update members on the progress of the Shared Headships in place in Argyll and Bute schools and in line with the policy agreed on 6th October 2011 by The Executive.
- 1.2 The introduction of Shared Headship policy in Argyll and Bute in 2011 is leading to improved leadership and management across our small schools and better equipping them to meet the challenging curriculum and current learning and teaching requirements in the 21st century. The appointment of one head teacher responsible for more than one school is reducing duplication of making increasingly effective use of scarce resources and time.
- 1.3 The Shared Headship policy for Argyll and Bute has taken the learning from Shared Headships arrangements currently in place within the authority as well as those of other authorities across Scotland, who have adopted a similar model. This is allowing us to consider the appropriateness of a Shared Headship when a head teacher vacancy arises in any of our primary schools. The Executive Director of Community Services, on the professional advice from the Head of Education will decide if creating a Shared Headship is more beneficial than advertising for a stand-alone head teacher.
- 1.4 Experience from the existing Shared Headship arrangements confirms four key reasons for the continued development of Shared Headships in Argyll and Bute. These are as follows:
- The overall quality of educational experience for learners; including joint learning, enhanced curriculum opportunities and opportunities to interact with peer group pupils;
 - Enhance the sustainability and viability of small schools;
 - Identified pressures associated with undertaking a teaching head teacher role in a small school;
 - Recruitment difficulties, both within Argyll & Bute and Nationally.

1.5 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:

1. note the benefits of the joint headship initiative (now routinely known as Argyll and Bute Shared Headship Policy -Primary);
2. note the advantages of the existing Shared Headships arrangements; and

3. note that the Executive Director of Community Services, on the professional advice from the Head of Education and after seeking the views of the respective parent councils, will decide if creating a Shared Headship is more beneficial than advertising for a stand-alone head teacher for any new vacancy that arises in our primary schools.

SHARED HEADSHIP

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 On 6th October 2011 The Executive Committee reviewed the evaluation of the Joint Headship pilot (now known as the Shared Headship) between Carradale and Drumlemble Primary Schools and agreed to establishing this Joint Headship as a permanent arrangement.
- 2.2 The Executive Committee approved the success of the Shared Headship pilot, both in educational impact for pupils and in contributing to the development of a sustainable and viable school in each of the two locations.
- 2.3 The Executive Committee agreed to establishing further Shared Headships, where appropriate and as outlined by the following criteria:
- suitable head teacher vacancies becoming available in schools;
 - a maximum of two schools for a Shared Headship arrangement;
 - location of partner schools (member of an existing cluster) and within reasonable drive time;
 - the consideration of schools similarities and differences based on each school's self-evaluation information, authority evaluations and HMIE reports;
 - travel implications for a joint headship (costs, travel time , driving licence);
 - the ability and experience of applicants match the criteria set out in the Scottish Qualification for headship;
 - consultation with both parent councils and the wider parent body; and
 - financial sustainability.
- 2.4 Since the introduction of the Carradale and Drumlemble in May 2010 eight further Shared Headships have been established as follows:
- Easdale and Luing established in January 2012
 - Keills and Small Isles established in January 2012
 - Minard and Furnace established in August 2012
 - Clachan and Skipness established in April 2013
 - Innellan and Toward established August 2014
 - Craignish and Kilninver established August 2014
 - Lochdonhead and Ulva established August 2014
 - Tayvallich and Ashfield established October 2014

- 2.5 The criteria agreed by The Executive Committee in October 2011 has been adhered to and a formal evaluation with pupils, parents, and staff was undertaken after the first year of operation.
- 2.6 During the programme of establishing Shared Headship the feedback has been received that the programme should be known as Shared Headship to give each school its own unique identity whilst sharing a head teacher with another school.
- 2.7 Pilot arrangements have also demonstrated the benefits for a shared headship across three smaller schools – the positive evaluation of this arrangement provides assurance that similar arrangements across multiple schools or across cluster boundaries provides an equally supportive outcome for learners.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:
1. note the benefits of the joint headship initiative (now routinely known as Argyll and Bute Shared Headship Policy -Primary);
 2. note the advantages of the existing Shared Headships arrangements; and
 3. note that the Executive Director of Community Services, on the professional advice from the Head of Education and after seeking the views of the respective parent councils, will decide if creating a Shared Headship is more beneficial than advertising for a stand-alone head teacher for any new vacancy that arises in our primary schools.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 A range of strategies were put in place to gather evidence and evaluate the impact of the Shared Headship model. Evidence was gathered from the following sources:
- Shared Headship HT group;
 - school audits and questionnaires to staff, parents and pupils;
 - school Improvement visits and discussions with staff, pupils and parents;
 - extended Learning and Achievement Visits (including discussions with staff, pupils and parents); and
 - parent meetings.
- 4.2 The benefits which have been gathered from the establishment of Shared Headships are many and have been seen as having positive impacts both educationally and to the sustainability and viability of each of the schools.

These can be best summarised as follows:

Benefits for pupils

- Pupils who were previously taught by a teaching head and another teacher for part of the school week now have continuity of one class

teacher. This has minimised the experience of periods of disruption when the head teacher was out of class due to attendance at management meetings or undertaking leadership duties of the school. Pupils are now taught by a full-time class committed teacher/s, experiencing continuity of learning.

- Pupils benefit from extended educational experience having had the opportunities to work collaboratively with their peers in the other school in the Shared Headship. They have become more actively involved in their own learning, providing enhanced opportunities to express their views and contribute effectively to the wider school community whilst still retaining their school in their own community. Activities for developing learners social and integration skills in a wider forum are having an increasingly positive impact. Evidence indicates that the pupils are happy and having a positive educational experience.
- Pilot arrangements have also demonstrated the benefits for a shared headship across three smaller schools – the positive evaluation of this arrangement provides assurance that similar arrangements across multiple schools provides an equally supportive outcome for learners.
- That pupils, parents and staff have reported experiences of learners in all schools having a shared headship have been seen to be very positive and enhanced.

Benefits for teachers

- Historically, one of the challenges of our small schools is that a small staff group is responsible for the same range of curriculum developments as in larger schools. A collaborative model of Shared Headship has given access to a larger team and wider range of specialisms. Opportunities for collegiate working and improved professional development for staff have supported developments across the Curriculum leading to improved learning and teaching. Having one head teacher oversee more than one school has reduced duplication of management duties and has led to the more effective use of existing resources and time.
- Within the Shared Headships there has been the creation of a principal teacher post in each of the schools with a shared head teacher. The purpose of this post is to deputise for the head teacher, as appropriate, act as a point of liaison for the head teacher in their absence and have a specific focus on curriculum, learning and teaching. This is providing greater opportunity for leadership and management opportunities which would not normally be possible within the smaller school setting. Through a collegiate, cross school approach staff are developing a greater knowledge and understanding of the skills required to deliver Curriculum for Excellence.

Benefits for the Education Service

- Being a class committed head teacher (potentially up to four days a week in some cases) can be challenging. Attraction to, and competition for, class committed head teacher posts is posing significant challenges for our small schools. The number of applicants for these posts is often low and it is not unusual for class teachers to be the only applicants for these

senior posts because the salary is comparable with the depute head teacher of a larger school. Retaining a successful applicant once appointed is also an issue as talented post holders quickly move on to larger schools and pupils and families in small communities will often experience discontinuity in educational experience. Shared Headships posts are seen as more attractive and offer career progression overcoming difficulties with recruitment and retention. Approaches to self-evaluation leading to improvement, are more rigorous and challenging in a wider forum across more than one small school.

Benefits the community

- Schools under a Shared Headship have enhanced the sustainability of small schools. Experience shows that parents quickly appreciate the availability and access with a non-teaching head to raise any issues that they may have. The parents and the community also benefit from access to a non-teaching head teacher who has more time to plan and prepare for meetings, events and activities. Parents from all the schools have commented favourably on the improved quality of the learning experiences for their pupils.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 The Argyll and Bute Shared Headship programme is demonstrating a range of benefits and advantages to schools and communities. Identifying and creating Shared Headship posts where the opportunity arises will ensure that Argyll and Bute Council has in post excellent head teachers who will provide leadership and support to our schools ensuring that they provide high quality learning experiences for all of our pupils. The Shared Headship policy will ensure that we are able to:

- 1) provide a model of Headship fit for the 21st Century;
- 2) provide high quality provision of education for all Argyll & Bute pupils; and
- 3) retain small, local community schools.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Policy – Implementation of the Shared Headship Policy will continue to be developed in Argyll and Bute

6.2 Financial – The extension of the shared headship arrangements may contribute to the future efficiencies in staffing and management posts.

6.3 Legal – The appointment of any shared head teachers will involve the appropriate parent council as per the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006

6.4 HR – None

6.5 Equalities - An Equality Impact Assessment would be carried out as part of the process of creating a Shared Headship in two or three educational

establishments.

6.6 Risk – None

6.7 Customer Service – None

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