

PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING

PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF A SHARED HEADSHIP ACROSS STENTON PRIMARY SCHOOL AND INNERWICK PRIMARY SCHOOL

**MONDAY 26TH JUNE 2017
DUNBAR GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

PRESENT

Fiona Robertson, Head of Education

Richard Parker, Education Services Manager

Val McIntyre, Principal Officer

David Scott, Quality Improvement Officer

Katy Johnstone, Graduate Intern

Sally Leighton, Head Teacher, Sanderson's Wynd Primary School (previously Head Teacher of Saltoun & Humbie Primary Schools)

Moya Ramsay

Mary O'Mahoney

Ciaren Mackechnie

Kirsten Jeffrey

Niall Jeffrey

Rhian Hastie

Verity Sinclair

Hugh Sinclair

Moira Anderson

Alex Nightingale

Patricia Hilferty

Carol Robertson

Amanda Hall

Fiona Robertson introduced herself and outlined the purpose of the meeting:

- To discuss the proposed establishment of a shared headship across Stenton Primary School and Innerwick Primary School

She thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and asked the representatives from East Lothian Council to introduce themselves, which they did in turn.

Fiona confirmed that the consultation was not statutory, but an opportunity for the public to provide thoughts and feedback and to address any concerns regarding the proposed shared headship role. A formal report will be produced by the Education Service and presented to full council for consideration and approval. The report will include views taken by all school community stakeholders.

She explained that the delay in commencing the consultation was due to the recent elections. Previous elected members would not have been able to participate.

She confirmed that Gill Whitford would continue in a shared headship role across West Barns and Stenton until the end of this academic year, and then across three schools (Innerwick, West Barns and Stenton) until a decision is made and a new Head Teacher appointed.

Fiona outlined the recruitment process and confirmed that, following the final decision in August, if an internal candidate was successful they would be put in place very quickly. However, if the successful applicant was from another Authority, negotiations would take place with the relevant council to ensure the appointment was made as quickly as possible.

Fiona Robertson presented the Rationale for Change:

- East Lothian Council is committed to supporting small rural primary schools and maintaining local provision and high standards of education.
- Impact of recent National policy, initiatives and expectations NIF, SAC, HGIOS? 4th edition
- Education Governance: Next Steps (15th June 2017) set out the Scottish Government's plans to strengthen the role of Head Teachers, increased accountability.
- East Lothian Council considers a shared headship across Innerwick PS and Stenton PS to be the preferable option to providing the Head Teacher with the ability to effectively manage duties associated with recent and planned changes within education by releasing the Head Teacher from any class teaching commitment.
- It is believed that this proposal is the most reasonable, viable and appropriate course of action open to it in providing primary education and early learning & childcare provision.

Fiona expanded on the points above by stressing there had been significant changes to Scottish education in recent years, such as the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence and the Scottish Government's new national outcomes for education as set out in the National Improvement Framework , thereby increasing pressures and accountability for Head Teachers.

East Lothian Council has carried out a review of the Head Teacher role, considering the different factors and their impact on the role. As a result, the aim is to achieve the goal of non-teaching heads in schools to allow them time to concentrate on both recent and planned changes within education, and in so doing improve the quality of teaching within schools.

Fiona Robertson then invited questions from the members of the public present:

- **What is being proposed will mean the Head Teacher will no longer be a “teacher” but an “administrator”?**

Fiona confirmed this was not the case. The Head Teacher would be a Professional Leader ensuring quality assurance across the two schools.

Sally Leighton explained that the Head Teacher would still teach alongside staff in schools, supporting individual groups of children and relieving staff on occasions to allow for personal development. The role would be to support teaching in the schools and there would be the freedom and flexibility to work with teachers and children as required, rather than being tied to one class. The needs of classes/schools are very different depending on whether there are straight classes or composite classes, have children with special needs etc. and this role allows increased flexibility in teaching support.

- **What problems were encountered in a shared headship role?**

Sally responded by saying she felt there weren't really any problems, but huge benefits e.g. in terms of a greater pool of staff and the ability to pull resources across two schools.

She confirmed that although there was a clearly displayed timetable showing her attendance patterns in both schools, this was not in-flexible and the Head would have to react to the requirements in each school. There would be an equal distribution of time across the two schools at different times to allow for parents with different work patterns who wanted to meet with the Head.

- **If time is split between two schools there will be less engagement with children and therefore less opportunity get to know individual children and understand their needs?**

Sally confirmed there was a greater engagement with children because time was freed up from teaching one specific class to interact and observe children in different situations. There was more freedom to move around to ensure better planning. She gave assurances that the children had plenty of contact with the Head Teacher and she felt she knew the children very well.

She confirmed that each school would have its own identity and its own Parent Council but that one of the benefits for smaller schools was to bring the children from the two schools together.

A parent said this would not work between Innerwick and Stenton in terms of cost of transporting children. Fiona Robertson proposed the contact would not have to be physical, but could be done electronically, to which the parent replied, this could be done with any school anywhere in the world, not simply because there was a shared headship.

- **If given the choice would you (Sally Leighton) prefer a single or shared headship?**

Sally confirmed she had enjoyed her role as shared head of Humbie and Saltoun but left for her own professional development.

- **Were there any negatives to the role?**

Sally confirmed she could not think of any negative factors, only positive.

- **Would the role lead to duplication of tasks in each school?**

Schools have their own identity so there would be a different focus on each school. Each school has its own parent council so there would be very different tasks depending on the needs of the individual children. Some tasks would obviously be relevant to both schools but this would be an advantage as information could be shared.

- **What feedback has there been from parents re the shared role?**

Sally confirmed that parents were insecure at first but felt well supported and ultimately feedback was positive.

- **If the Head Teacher has no teaching commitment in the schools will additional staff be appointed?**

Fiona Robertson confirmed additionality would be put in to schools.

A parent from Innerwick raised concerns about the significant staff changes there had been at Innerwick Primary School recently and was concerned that supply staff would be used to plug teaching gaps. Both Fiona Robertson and Richard Parker gave assurances that there would be permanent contracted members of teaching staff in each school and supply staff would only be used to cover sickness and long term absences in the usual way. The new role is to lead learning so there would be better professional development opportunities for the existing teaching staff.

- **Would there be additional pressure on existing staff and a risk of disruption to the intimacy of the teacher/pupil relationship in the smaller school?**

Fiona confirmed that teachers would not be pulled out of class any more in a shared headship.

- **Is this just a cost cutting exercise?**

Fiona Robertson and Richard Parker confirmed this is not a cost cutting exercise and that indeed additional teaching time would be put in to both schools to allow the Principal/Class teacher to work in smaller groups and/or with the Head Teacher. Sally Leighton supported the statement by confirming East Lothian Council supported the schools by putting in additional resource.

- **If not a cost cutting exercise, why? What is the reason for the shared headship?**

Fiona Robertson reiterated that the role of the Head Teacher has become very challenging and many find the new duties and resulting workload extremely intensive. Nationally there is a huge crisis in a lack of Head Teachers because the workload is too great. The Head Teacher needs to be freed up from the classroom.

- **Would it not make more sense to restructure the roles rather than the schools i.e. should the teaching and administrative roles be separated?**

Fiona Robertson confirmed this is not how it's being rolled out nationally. The Head needs to be a leader within a school as well as meeting national requirements.

- **Would Stenton be at a disadvantage being the smaller school e.g. when standardised assessments are introduced?**

Sally Leighton confirmed the time split would be equitable and balanced out over the two schools. Fiona Robertson confirmed the authority would help staff manage the new assessments.

- **Would it be a single budget for both schools or two separate budgets?**

The budgets would be independent, however there may be occasions when the Head would want to combine resources.

- **How will Pupil Equity Funding be affected?**

The Head Teacher would discuss this with parents at both schools to agree which pupils would best benefit from the funding so the shared headship would have no significance.

- **Is there a risk of Stenton Primary School closing?**

Fiona Robertson confirmed this would not be the case and that East Lothian Council is committed to supporting rural schools.

- **Did Saltoun and Humbie Primary Schools keep their own identity (question directed to Sally Leighton)?**

Fiona Robertson and Sally Leighton confirmed the schools did indeed keep their own identity. The chairs from the two parent councils would be involved in the recruitment process, ensuring each community is represented.

- **Is there a difference in the remuneration for a share Head Teacher role in order to attract candidates?**

Fiona Robertson and Richard Parker confirmed the remuneration is greater. Richard explained that there is a National Toolkit used which takes in to account pupil role, size of budget etc. which will then determine the grade and associated salary. There would be additionality based on the fact that it is a shared headship.

There were no further questions.

Fiona summed up the meeting by reiterating that this was not a cost cutting exercise but a means of ensuring a high quality education by providing the Head Teacher with the ability to carry out effectively such duties associated with both recent and planned changes within education.

Fiona Robertson confirmed she would be attending Parent Council Meetings at Stenton and Innerwick on Wednesday 28 June 2017. Gill Whitford will also be in attendance at these meetings to answer further questions on shared headship. She invited all interested parties to complete the Consultation Hub on the East Lothian Council website.