

**Cluster Primary School Management
LNCT Teachers' Panel comments**

	LNCT Teachers' Panel Comments	EL&L Service Responses
1.	It remains our view that each school should have their own Head teacher to lead teaching and learning within the school community. We would welcome a clear statement being included in the report which limited Cluster heads to situations where it has not been possible to recruit a Head teacher for the school.	It is confirmed that cluster heads will only be appointed where it has not been possible to recruit a head teacher for a school.
2.	It is regrettable that the paper does not seek to examine the reasons for the perceived problems in recruiting Head teachers which is not limited to small schools. Whilst some of these reasons are common across Scotland (and forth of Scotland) there are particular issues within Aberdeenshire. The most notable is the lack of a career structure for those who wish to pursue a management pathway. It remains a matter of regret that some eight years after the "McCrone Agreement" Aberdeenshire has only introduced seventeen PT posts into the Primary sector. The small number of PT and DHT posts compared to HT posts fails to provide the opportunity for sufficient teachers to gain experience in a formal management role.	It is not accepted that there are particular head teacher recruitment problems in Aberdeenshire. Such difficulties have been well publicised nationally over a number of years. Most of the staff appointed to posts of head teachers of small schools are classroom teachers and it is not accepted that the existing number of principal teacher posts in Aberdeenshire has a material influence on current HT recruitment difficulties.
3.	We are unaware of any evaluation reports of shared headships where there has been any consultation or input from trade unions. It is also of interest to note that, according to reports from our colleagues elsewhere, Shetland has reversed Cluster arrangements. We also understand Highland is conducting an internal evaluation of shared headships with trade union input.	The EL&L Service is keen to engage with the teacher trade unions on the proposals to introduce cluster heads and in future evaluations of these.
4.	Paragraph 3.1.1 A maximum of three schools in a Cluster is suggested. If the purpose of introducing Cluster heads is to address recruitment problems and thereby reducing the number of teaching HTs, we see no reason why Cluster HTs should have more than two schools to manage. Amongst other issues we would be seriously concerned about the amount of time that the HT would spend in each school would be very limited once Cluster and other meetings are taken into account.	It is accepted that the maximum number of schools in a cluster management arrangement should be limited to two.

	<p>There is additional workload associated with running two discrete establishments which, arguably, is compensated for by making the HT non-teaching. However, adding a third discrete establishment will require further additional workload demands such as a third school improvement plan, a third working time agreement including parent's evenings etc. would clearly not be compensated by the additional management time available to the HT. Many of these responsibilities would not fall within the remit of a PT.</p> <p>It is difficult to see any good reasons to extend a Cluster to three schools apart from the obvious financial saving.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>Paragraph 3.3.1 It is proposed that a Cluster HT may manage schools across Clusters. The increasing trend to share curriculum developments and other matters at a Cluster level suggests that managing across different Clusters may add considerably to the workload of the HT as opposed to managing two schools within the same Cluster which have the same Cluster plans, Cluster meetings and QIO.</p>	<p>It is envisaged that only in exceptional circumstances will the schools in a cluster management agreement involve schools in more than one cluster.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Paragraph 3.4 Whilst any increase in the number of PT posts is welcome to develop a career structure, the introduction of PT posts to replace a HT post is not a positive development. Nevertheless, it does provide some management presence on each site and provides reassurance that a recently qualified teacher would not start their teaching career as the sole teacher on site at a Cluster school for a significant part of the week.</p> <p>However, it should be made clear to all staff involved that the duties and responsibilities of a PT are quite distinct from a HT or a DHT. For example, if there is serious indiscipline while the HT is not on the premises, the PT does not have the power to exclude. This is in contrast to the situation where a HT is off the premises in a non-cluster school, where there should be someone Acting Up who would have such power. Similarly, it is a decision for the HT to close the school.</p> <p>We have serious concerns that where the line manager in school is a Principal Teacher, the duties of those post holders will be blurred in</p>	<p>The cluster head teacher will undertake the management duties associated with this post. There is no intention to "blur" the duties of a principal teacher with those of a head teacher or depute head.</p> <p>By virtue of being non-class committed the cluster head teacher will be able to address the issues raised by the Teacher's Panel in relation to pupil exclusion and closing the school.</p>

	<p>relation to the duties of a Head and Depute. There may be a perception among potential applicants that such a blurring will take place.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>Paragraph 3.7 The McCrone Agreement introduced a nationally agreed job sizing scheme applicable to all promoted posts across the sectors and was tested for equal pay implications. The SNCT is currently reviewing the job sizing scheme.</p> <p>The job sizing scheme does give extra points for posts where a post holder is responsible for a number of schools. If Aberdeenshire thinks that insufficient credit is given across schools then it should, through COSLA, seek changes in the job sizing scheme. It should be noted that other post holders may also receive such credit (e.g. PT of SFL).</p> <p>The Teacher’s Panel does not agree that the use of SNCT paragraphs 1.23 and 1.69 is appropriate. Clearly, other post holders who have been job sized at the same level as the Cluster Head but do not receive this increment may feel aggrieved. Other groups of staff who feel that the job sizing has not adequately rewarded them may query why this facility has not been used to uplift their job sized salary. For example, it is unclear whether the PTs appointed to Cluster schools will have all their day to day responsibilities when the HT is not on the premises recognized and rewarded. Many of these responsibilities may formally remain with the HT. For example, the job sizing does not allow a PT to be recognised as a member of the Senior Management Team.</p> <p>Finally, it should be clear that Cluster HTs would be classified as essential car users and be entitled to the allowance for such users.</p>	<p>It is the view of the EL&L Service that the position of cluster head teachers is unique and, as such, it would be appropriate to use SNCT paras 1.23 and 1.69 in relation to remuneration.</p> <p>It is confirmed that cluster head teachers will be classified as essential car users.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Paragraph 3.9.1 We note that oral communication of “how the Cluster management will operate in practice” and would suggest that a written document would be more appropriate which would deal, inter alia, with the duties of the Cluster HT, the PTs and class teachers clearly detailed and in accordance with the agreed job remits of each post.</p>	<p>If the cluster management proposals are agreed by Committee a document detailing roles and responsibilities of staff in cluster schools will be prepared, in consultation with the Teachers’ Panel of LNCT.</p>

<p>9.</p>	<p>Paragraph 7.1 The example given in Appendix 1 is used to illustrate that there would be no financial saving. A worked example of a Cluster of three schools would be welcome as it would appear that there would be savings in this case.</p>	<p>Given that it has been confirmed that the maximum number of schools in a cluster management arrangement should be limited to two, a worked example of the three school scenario would not now be relevant.</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p>Paragraph 8.1 It is claimed that the proposals would “sustain smaller rural schools”. We are unaware of any school in Scotland that has closed or where there has been consultation on closure because of the failure of an Authority to recruit a HT.</p> <p>We fail to see how a Cluster HT, who may be in each school for a minority of the week, would provide for “greater continuity for pupils in the schools involved” particularly given that one of the schools would have previously had their own HT rather than a shared HT.</p>	<p>The EL&L Service is being pro-active and looking ahead to future possibilities. If it is not possible to recruit a head teacher, parental confidence in the school could be affected and pupils transferred to other schools using placing requests.</p> <p>All schools proposed for inclusion in a cluster management arrangement will have had their own head teacher at some time. However, this will not be the case if recruitment difficulties are such that it is impossible to appoint a head teacher. A cluster head teacher will provide greater continuity for pupils than a succession of temporary management appointments.</p>
<p>11.</p>	<p>Paragraph 9.2 This paragraph states the Clusters would be put in place when “vacancies occur in schools with rolls of 96 or less and where it is felt Cluster managements should be put in place”. This appears to be inconsistent with the assurance given at the LNCT that Cluster arrangements would be put in place only when a HT could not otherwise be recruited. Whilst it may be a pragmatic approach by Aberdeenshire to appoint a Cluster HT where it has been proven impossible to recruit a HT, we do not support any other planned introduction of Cluster HTs.</p>	<p>Refer to EL&L Service response in 1 above.</p>
<p>12.</p>	<p>Paragraph 10.1 We fail to see why Clusters should be extended to three schools other than a financial saving.</p>	<p>Refer to EL&L Service response in 4 above.</p>
<p>13.</p>	<p>Paragraph 10.3 Whilst accepting there is some merit in introducing PTs to each site, we have serious concerns that the duties that such PTs will be expected to undertake will in practise be those of DHTs and HTs. We would therefore suggest that the oral communication of how clusters will operate in practise, suggested in (our comments on) paragraph 3.9.1, should be supported by LNCT guidelines by clearly outlining, amongst other</p>	<p>Refer to EL&L Service response in 6 and 8 above.</p>

	matters, the roles and responsibilities of staff, clear lines for parental communication, etc. Such guidelines have proven useful in the case of Visiting Specialists, SFL staff, etc.	
14.	Paragraph 10.6 It remains our view that salaries should be determined by the LNCT agreed job sizing scheme for all promoted staff.	Refer to EL&L Service response in 7 above.