

**REPORT TO EDUCATION, LEARNING & LEISURE COMMITTEE – 10
DECEMBER 2009**

CLUSTER PRIMARY SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report sets out proposals for taking forward implementation of the Cluster Primary School Management Model, when such arrangements are to be put in place on a permanent basis, taking account of the results of the consultation exercise with Area Committees and the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers (LNCT).

2. Background

- 2.1 On 6 December 2007 the EL&L Committee considered a report on a Cluster Primary School Management Model.

The Committee agreed:

- (1) to adopt the principle of the cluster primary head teacher model,
- (2) to adopt the option of introducing cluster primary schools when vacancies occur in schools with rolls of fewer than 97 pupils,
- (3) to consider issues of geography and the proximity of neighbouring schools in such circumstances,
- (4) to consult with local elected members, Area Committees, teaching and non-teaching staff and Parent Councils in developing such proposals, and
- (5) that the detail of the associated terms and conditions for teachers be developed through the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers.

- 2.2 On 27 August 2009 the EL&L Committee considered a further report on a Cluster Primary School Management Model.

The Committee agreed to approve the following proposals for consultation with Area Committees and the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers, prior to a further report being submitted to the Education, Learning and Leisure Committee for a final decision:-

- (1) the number of schools to be managed as a cluster should be restricted to a maximum of three,

- (2) during the advertisement of a head teacher vacancy and a decision on whether to progress cluster management arrangements the vacancy should be filled on an acting basis following current procedures,
- (3) a principal teacher should be appointed in each school involved in a cluster management arrangement,
- (4) a cluster head teacher should always be non class committed. Head Teachers who are already non class committed prior to assuming the post of cluster head should be allocated additional management days,
- (5) the levels of administrative/clerical support in schools in a cluster management arrangement should be maintained at their current levels,
- (6) cluster head teachers should receive a salary enhancement as determined by the authority in line with advice in the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers Handbook,
- (7) cluster head teacher arrangements should be authorised by the Director of Education, Learning & Leisure on the recommendation of the appropriate Area Head of Service, and
- (8) there should be consultation with Parent Councils, Elected Members and school staff prior to advertising a cluster head teacher post.

2.3 In September and October 2009 Area Committees and the LNCT considered a report seeking their views on proposals (1) – (8) in paragraph 2.2 above.

2.4 The comments and recommendations of the Area Committees and LNCT, together with responses by the EL&L Service, are included in appendices 1 – 7 attached to this report.

3. Proposal

3.1 It is proposed that a Cluster Primary School Management Model is adopted for Aberdeenshire according to the criteria, consultation process and procedural arrangements set out in the Discussion and Recommendations in this report, when cluster management arrangements are to be put in place on a permanent basis.

4. Discussion

4.1 Having considered the comments and recommendations of the Area Committees and LNCT a number of changes and clarifications to the original proposals previously brought to the Committee are judged to be appropriate.

4.2 The Service now considers that it would be preferable if the maximum number of schools to be included in a cluster management arrangement is limited to two.

- 4.3 Clarification was sought by Area Committees and the LNCT on the circumstances when cluster management arrangement would be put in place and the criteria to be used. A number of other issues were also raised. It is therefore proposed that:
- (a) the use of a cluster management model will be considered where the head teacher post has been advertised on at least three occasions and the vacancy has not been filled;
 - (b) cluster head teachers will be appointed where it has not been possible to recruit a head teacher for a school;
 - (c) cluster management arrangements will only be put in place for vacancies in schools with a class committed head teacher (i.e. for schools with a P1-7 roll of 96 or less);
 - (d) applications for a cluster head teacher post will initially be sought from class committed head teachers within the Local Community School Network (CSN) and if no interest is shown from this group, from class committed head teachers in schools within 20 miles from the school with the head teacher vacancy. If no interest is shown from this group, applications will be sought from non-class committed head teachers within the CSN;
 - (e) Area Committees should be given the opportunity to comment on proposals for individual schools before the decision is taken on introducing cluster management (thereafter there will be consultation, on a case by case basis, with Elected Members of the ward in which the school is located, the Parent Council of the school, and teaching and support staff, as previously described);
 - (f) cluster head teachers will be appointed following the normal recruitment and selection procedures for head teachers, involving long leet and short leet interviews, and
 - (g) an evaluation of cluster management arrangements will take place within 18 to 24 months of each cluster management arrangement being put in place.

5. Area Implications

- 5.1 It is proposed that Area Committees be involved in consultation proposals for individual schools before the decision is taken on introducing cluster management.

6. Staffing Implications

- 6.1 These are outlined throughout the report.

7. Policy Implications

- 7.1 The proposals in this report develop the outline policy agreed by Committee on 6 December 2007.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The proposed cluster school management model is not seen to be one that will create budget savings. The worked example in Appendix 8 is illustrative of the financial implications, based on a two school cluster, one with 4 classes (pupil roll 72-96) and one with 2 classes (pupil roll 20-47). This compares the teacher staffing costs of two schools operating separately, each with their own head teacher, against the teacher staffing costs of the schools operating under cluster management arrangements. The net additional cost of the cluster management model in the worked example is £11,121 pa (NB administrative/clerical support, janitorial, cleaning, catering, auxiliary staffing and utilities costs are assumed to be the same).

9. Sustainability Implications

- 9.1 The proposals in this report are aimed at helping to sustain smaller rural primary schools and securing continuity in management arrangements. It will also provide greater continuity for pupils in the schools involved.

10. Consultation

- 10.1 The Section 95 Finance Officer and the Monitoring Officer with Corporate Services and Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development have been consulted and have no adverse comments.
- 10.2 If the proposals are approved there will be consultation with Area Committees on proposals for individual schools before the decision is taken on introducing cluster management.
- 10.3 Subsequent to consultation with Area Committees, it is proposed that the Area Head of Service/QIO will consult with the Parent Council of the school with the head teacher vacancy and the Elected Members of the ward in which the school is located regarding the proposed cluster management arrangement. The Area Head of Service/QIO will explain how the appointment will be made and how the cluster management arrangement will operate in practice. The Area Head of Service/QIO will also meet with teaching and support staff as above.
- 10.4 After the cluster head teacher has been appointed it is proposed that the Area Head of Service/QIO will meet with the Parent Council of the school where the new appointee is currently head teacher to describe how the cluster management arrangement will operate in practice and to listen to their views. The Area Head of Service/QIO will also meet with teaching and support staff as above.

11. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to agree that:

- 11.1 Cluster head teachers will be appointed where it has not been possible to recruit a head teacher for a school (with a P1-7 roll of 96 or less).**
- 11.2 The number of schools to be managed as a cluster should be restricted to a maximum of two.**
- 11.3 The use of a cluster management model will be considered for schools where the head teacher post has been advertised on at least three occasions and the vacancy has not been filled.**
- 11.4 During the advertisement of a head teacher vacancy and pending a decision on whether to progress cluster management arrangements the vacancy should be filled on an acting basis following current procedures.**
- 11.5 A principal teacher should be appointed in each school involved in a cluster management arrangement.**
- 11.6 A cluster head teacher should always be non-class committed.**
- 11.7 The levels of administrative/clerical support in schools in a cluster management arrangement are maintained at their current levels.**
- 11.8 Cluster head teachers should receive a salary enhancement as determined by the authority in line with advice in the SNCT Handbook.**
- 11.9 Cluster head teacher arrangements should be authorised by the Director of EL&L following recommendations by the Area Head of Service and Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development.**
- 11.10 There should be consultation with Area Committees, ward Elected Members, Parent Councils and school staff (as described in 10.2 and 10.3) prior to advertising a cluster head teacher post.**

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