

## Head Teacher & Parents meeting, Marykirk Primary School

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2019 @ 1.00pm

### Minutes

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**Present:** Fiona Thomson (Head teacher), Morag Williamson, Kim Tait, Lesley McNamee, Katrina Suer, Fiona Cooper, Leanne Hill, Carrie Diack, Paul Diack, Emma Kellas, Willie Brown

1. Fiona welcomed all and apologised for short notice. Reason for this was due to having only recently had confirmation that support was forthcoming from within the council Education department. With various deadlines approaching, now is ideal time to push forward and take a plan to the council for staffing arrangement rather than wait any longer.
2. Current arrangement where Fiona is Head Teacher of both Marykirk & Luthermuir Primaries had been supposed to finish late last December.
3. The intention of calling this meeting is to get an idea of which approach parents are most supportive of.
4. Approach 1: to formalise the shared headship but with the addition of a Principal Teacher (PT). The working arrangement would be that whenever the Head Teacher (HT) is in one school, the PT would be in the other school.
5. This would allow good practices to be shared amongst both schools and also arrange joint activities which help prepare pupils for moving onto secondary.
6. The HT will remain non-class committed and the PT will have a class commitment of 2 days which will be shared between the two schools but in effect if so, would still be an improvement on current state where for a significant time of the week, as regards Marykirk, it isn't possible for parents to contact a member of the teaching staff where necessary.
7. In a similar vein, matters arising within the school requiring the attention of the HT have to wait for the HT's return. Inevitably, results in the HT arriving back to an ever-expanding demand on time/attention.
8. At present there is no accepted best practice for how a shared headship is structured or run but intent is to select an approach that works well for the context of two relatively small rural primaries. Aberdeenshire Council are currently reviewing staffing structures, including dual head arrangements.
9. Given the previous point, if the shared HT structure is favourable with parents then the plan would be to approach the council with a view to running it as a pilot until December 2019.
10. Approach 2: Single Head Teacher. Essentially a return to what had been before. This would mean Fiona returning full time to Marykirk with a class commitment of 2.5 days.
11. Irrespective of whichever structure is selected, Fiona is also very keen to increase teaching staff numbers for forthcoming year. Numbers in current P3 are such that with current structure, it won't be possible to have them all move up as a single group into the senior classroom. Instead, it would mean splitting them between two separate classrooms. Clearly, this is a less than desirable scenario for obvious reasons.

12. Plan is therefore to seek another teacher which would allow for a three-class structure split as P1-P2, P3-P4 & P5-P7. This won't be straight-forward with only two main classrooms but with some creative scheduling & use of the GP room, there is scope to make the most of this arrangement. This would be much better than having to split next year's P4 group between the two classrooms. It also helps in addressing the fairly wide development span in a P4 – P7 classroom.
13. Of these two alternatives, Shared versus Sole Headteacher, those present were largely in favour of the shared structure. No opinion voiced against either of the two options presented. Rather, all opinions expressed were basically that either of the proposed structures would be an improvement on the current situation.
14. Fiona still needs to hear what preference the Luthermuir parents have as regards the structure.
15. What comes next: once Fiona has spoken to Luthermuir parents and has an indication from them on their preference, Fiona will liaise with the authority and keep parents informed of any developments via groupcall.
16. Still other aspects that remain unclear e.g. age & condition of school building including number of classrooms, esp. in light of new housing developments underway. Very close to capacity; current school roll 44 vs capacity of 47. Not likely to be any resolution this any time soon but attention is being given to highlighting this with the council.

Minutes prepared by W. Brown