

# Shared Headships

## Introduction

- 1.1 The 2008 Annual General Meeting approved the following resolution:  

“This AGM instructs Council to investigate and report on the workload implications for teachers in schools where there is a shared headship.”
- 1.2 Advice was sought from Local Association Secretaries. Responses have been received from 11 Local Associations. This limited response is understandable since the introduction of shared headships only applies in some parts of Scotland.
- 1.3 Shared headships have been introduced for a number of reasons. In some Councils this has been a response to perceived issues of recruitment, in others the deployment of shared heads is explained as a consequence of a political decision to retain small rural schools and one Council has introduced shared headships pragmatically if a Headteacher cannot be recruited to a particular post. In this circumstance a neighbouring head is asked to carry responsibility across schools. It is unclear under what process this additional responsibility is added to a Headteacher’s remit and there may be a suggestion that some Heads have been pressurised into taking such roles.
- 1.4 Shetland Islands Council has reversed 3 “shared management” models under pressure from the Local Association. Two of these were a small primary linked to a Junior High School. In one case the HT supported this reversal and stated that the Junior High School lost out in the “deal” and the workload created a further issue. In the second case staff and parents felt that the Junior High School was losing out. The position was reversed. The third case was rather unusual in that 3 island schools were linked. This was again reversed after union pressure on health and safety grounds. It is also worth noting that three other attempts to implement shared management models have failed at the consultation stage due largely to the EIS influencing parents at public meetings.
- 1.5 While Shetland Council has stepped back from arrangements other Councils are consulting on shared headships. Given legislation changes regarding school closures Councils may be less likely to contemplate school closures and therefore the concept of shared headship will continue to develop.
- 1.6 The concept of shared headships is limited to a 2 school model in some Councils whereas in others 3 or more schools can be included in the responsibility of the Headteacher.

## School Management

- 2.1 In most Councils, regardless of the size of a school, the introduction of a shared headship will require another promoted member of staff. Some Councils have introduced Depute Headteachers while others have opted for Principal Teacher posts. In Shetland Council there was initially an agreement

to have Depute posts. However, post holders did not wish this arrangement as they felt that this would leave them open to abuse by management in that they would effectively be Headteachers, but without full authority.

- 2.2 The introduction of PT posts is nevertheless a matter of concern. A number of issues arise if a PT is in charge of a school if there is a shared headship and the post holder is not on the premises.
- 2.3 One concern arises in relation to serious indiscipline. The right to exclude, which lies with education authorities, is devolved to Headteachers. It is likely that a decision by a PT to exclude a pupil and to sign an exclusion letter would automatically be open to challenge. In one area, it has been reported that staff felt unable to make decisions which could then be reversed by the absent head or by the Council Headquarters.
- 2.4 Another concern relates to health and safety, particularly in circumstances in which a decision may be required to close a school, for example in event of inclement weather or arising from a heating failure. It is not clear whether a Principal Teacher has the authority to take that decision. From the EIS perspective this is a matter for senior management.
- 2.5 A further concern relates to key holding. Principal Teachers, and Depute Headteachers, are not designated key holders. The issue of key holding is already a contentious matter and any extension of key holding cannot alter extant contractual agreements “by the back door”. While in remote schools, staff may hold keys they are not designated key holders.
- 2.6 It is an unintended consequence of the introduction of shared headships that in circumstances where the senior line manager in school is a Principal Teacher, the duties of these post holders will be blurred in relation to the current delineation set out in the SNCT Handbook between Heads and Deputes and Principal Teachers.

### **Job Sizing**

- 3.1 The job sizing toolkit makes provision for split site schools. It is, however, clear that the toolkit was not designed to size either a shared headship post or the post of a Principal Teacher who may substitute for the Head when that person is not on the premises. There is evidence from two Council areas that the job sizing toolkit does not accurately capture the “size” of a Headteacher’s post. In these circumstances, Councils have considered the discretion to pay above the job sized score, as set out in the SNCT Handbook (paragraph 1.69, Part 2).
- 3.2 In one Council area there was evidence that the job sized score across schools was less than the job sized score in one school which took account of teaching time.
- 3.3 In circumstances where a Principal Teacher manages the school in the absence of the head there is an issue relating to whether the Principal Teacher is a member of the “Senior Management Team.” A Principal Teacher cannot have this recognised within the current job sizing arrangements. The solution is not

simply one which the SNCT can resolve by amending the toolkit. It would raise significant issue if Principal Teachers in shared headship schools were able to be recognised in one job sizing factor which treated them differently from other Principal Teachers. Furthermore, if Principal Teachers in shared headships can be members of SMTs, is there an implied threat to the post of Depute?

### **Workload**

- 4.1 On the information received it appears that shared heads are non teaching other than providing absence cover. However, it is less clear that there have been staffing adjustments to provide more management time for DHTs or PTs who have responsibility for schools in the absence of the shared head.
- 4.2 No overwhelming evidence was received on whether the workload demands for promoted post holders in shared headship situations is significantly different from the workload demands on other promoted post holders. The current evidence from SNCT is that the workload demands on all promoted post holders is currently excessive. While there is a benefit for a Headteacher in a shared headship situation in that the post will normally be non teaching, there are workload issues arising from the management demands of running two discrete establishments and of making bureaucratic returns required at the centre. This duplication of workload includes servicing discrete Parent Councils. In one area Principal Teachers in remote shared management models are reporting a disproportionate amount of additional workload. This is mainly due to the absence of a Headteacher from individual schools. In one Council area PTs receive 0.1 FTE for management time. In another the time provided is 30 minute weekly. Regardless of whether PTs are the appropriate staff to manage a school in the absence of a shared Headteacher the time available in these examples is totally inadequate for the tasks required.
- 4.3 In one Council area there are no other promoted staff in shared headship schools and classroom teachers have taken on board some management tasks, on the basis that the tasks have got to be done.
- 4.4 No overwhelming evidence has been produced on inadequate secretarial support for schools with shared headships. In one area secretarial support is confined to the school the HT is based in. In that area Principal Teachers in other schools report problems with telephone queries and dealing with visitors.
- 4.5 However, there is a particularly worrying development within Scottish Borders. The Council policy, Transforming Children's Services, will lead to an expansion of shared headships to 20, while reducing the number of PTs in primary schools from 101 to 54. These proposals, which are part of a radical restructuring, are likely to raise issues relating to workload.

### **Evaluation**

- 5.1 Highland Council is currently conducting an internal evaluation of shared headships with trade union input. The outcome of that evaluation will not be available for some time.

- 5.2 To date, the only available evidence of an evaluation is an external evaluation of the small schools initiative in South Ayrshire Council. This evaluation, published in 2000, reported on a pilot to link smaller primary schools to larger schools, with a view to considering the feasibility of “extended campuses”.
- 5.3 As part of the background to the pilot a Council paper identified a number of issues which would impact on small schools. These included the fact that candidates for Headteacher posts were less experienced, were required to have a teaching commitment while facing significant administrative demands. The particular pilot established a base school and satellite schools.
- 5.4 It should be noted that there was considerable external support in the pilot to facilitate the ICT support as set out in the pilot. The pilot identified considerable workload issues for Headteachers.
- 5.5 In the pilot, the management structures were initially intended to operate across schools. This applied to Headteachers, DHTs and AHTs. In practice the cross working on DHTs and AHTs was reduced over the period of the pilot and these postholders largely remained in their base school. The Headteachers believed there was an increase in workload, a perception amongst parents they were less accessible and a sense that they were no longer in “as close touch with their staff and pupils.”
- 5.6 While staff in small schools welcomed the pilot, it was questioned by staff in the larger schools. The evaluation revealed no discernible measure on pupil performance, although pupils had access to shared extra curricular activities. The outcome on “value for money” was inconclusive.
- 5.7 As it transpired South Ayrshire Council did not proceed with the proposals at that time. However, as is the case with other Councils, South Ayrshire Council is now considering shared headships.
- 5.8 The evaluation was useful in that it provided a framework for considering the issues arising from the pilot in an open, transparent way.

## **Conclusion**

- 6.1 It is recommended that this matter be continued beyond the AGM to ensure full consideration of a number of issues, not only workload.
- 6.2 In the future work to be considered the Committee will consider the issues arising from the evaluation of shared headships in Highland Council, issues relating to the patterns of deployment of headteachers, travelling expense arrangements and demands on promoted and non promoted staff
- 6.3 While it is heartening to note that Shetland Islands Council has reversed some shared headships decisions and not proceeded with other shared headship prospects shared headships are likely to become more common across Scotland. The further paper should delineate a number of key issues to be considered by those Local Associations which face the introduction of shared headships.