

## KINLOCHBERVIE HIGH SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL

### EXTRAORDINARY MEETING

16.3.16 7.00pm HIGH SCHOOL DINING ROOM

ATTENDING – Christine Corbett, Carol Keith, Anne Robbins, Julie MacKay, Jacqui Munro, Tanya Morrison, Heather Paterson, Amanda Amos, Christine MacKenzie, Tony Jackson, Nicholas Hird, Joanne Barnes, Sam Barnes, Audrey Morrison, Roma Corbett, Selena Campbell, Anne Morrison, Susan Robertson (Head Teacher), Linda Munro (Councillor), Graham Nichols (Area Manager) Barry Northedge (Quality and Improvement Manager)

APOLOGIES – Rebecca Ridgway, Hugh Morrison (CLLR), Donna Flett, Stephanie Breckenridge, Kerry Eastcroft, Valerie MacKenzie, Tracy MacKay.

TJ – Complained that the decision made at the previous Parent Council (2.2.16) meeting was made without full knowledge of the facts about the 4.5 day week and the change to 33 periods. He felt that a 1pm finish on a Friday leading to a “grab and go” lunch for pupils that had an early start to travel to school was wrong and a hot meal should be offered. In his opinion there were many possible models of the new system and parents had been presented with one option on a take it or leave it basis.

SR – Head Teachers received instructions from the Director of Education 10 December 2015 to consult with parents regarding a 4.5 day 33 period week. Primary parents had also asked if start times could be aligned between the Primary and High School. This was discussed at the Parent Council on 2.2.16 and it was agreed that rather than make the changes in two stages it would be less disruptive to make the change in one. However, since the meeting it was felt that there was not enough information to make a decision. The school transport may not be able to fit round changes to times and there is confusion as to whether all the periods are of the same length (50 mins) or can they be varied. To prepare the timetable the school would need to know the length of both the periods and the week.

LM – Bill Alexander said that the policy was for 50 minute periods across all schools. This was to open up the possibility of a virtual classroom, using technology to allow a teacher in one location to cover classes in different schools. This would combat recruitment difficulties and give access to more subject choices. The Sutherland Transport review has just finished and these changes would mean it would have to be revisited and contracts renegotiated. Parents were frustrated that they were being pushed into something without having enough information.

BN – The universal 50 min period would bring benefits for small schools. Where there is a small staff the time table is based on the staff available which can be restricting. The new system would allow for the development of a “virtual classroom” to keep depth in the curriculum, and to avoid schools being so vulnerable to a member of staff leaving. Primary Schools would move to a 25 hr week in 2018. This is Scottish Government policy.

LM – Use of technology should be an aid to learning not a replacement for trained staff. Schools would need support to teach the skills of distance learning. The core curriculum should be delivered face to face. There will be no allowance for local flexibility and teachers have shown resistance to standardised time tables. The problem in recruiting and retaining staff is Scotland wide and not

unique to Kinlochbervie. The remote location, part time contracts, lack of employment opportunities for partners all exacerbate the recruitment difficulties.

GN – The Highland Council has made the decision that in 2017 all schools will move to a 4.5 day week with 33 periods. There is a drive to standardise the timetable so that all schools can benefit from the “virtual classroom”. The periods would all be 50 minutes.

SR – She had originally been told that the periods could be of varying length. Flexibility is required to deliver the breadth of timetable that the High School prides itself on. This is the only High School which is unable to access college courses on Fridays because of the distance involved. A rigid timetable would disadvantage our school / pupils more than others in the Highland Council area due to our remote location. There will be a staffing meeting on 21.3.16 which will set the staffing level at the school. Until it is known what staff the school will be entitled to a timetable cannot be prepared as it will have an impact on what can be offered. SR felt that a rigid adherence to 50 minute periods would see a reduction in opportunity for pupils. There is a high proportion of part time staff which makes preparing the timetable difficult without being allowed flexibility to meet local circumstances.

TJ – Why had this not been discussed with parents before the model was set, why were parents not presented with a range of options.

BN – would go back to Bill Alexander and Jim Stephen to clarify the current policy regarding timetabling, period length and school meals.

The meeting agreed that we need to take time to consider a range of options to deliver the timetable under the new rules.

By 2017 the Highland Council has agreed that secondary schools will move to 33 periods and 4.5 days. Some schools have already moved to this model. Graham Nichols said the drive to standardisation was to allow all schools to tap into the proposed “virtual classroom”.

TJ – felt that a “grab and go” lunch to be eaten on the bus was a bad idea especially for those pupils who lived a distance from the school.

Transport Issues – There needs to be a 90 day consultation to change the bus contracts. This would make it difficult though not impossible to implement the change by August 2016. Graham Nichols was going to speak to Christine Donnelly who is the person responsible for school transport in Highland Council.

BN – would go back and find out whether the 50 min period was set in stone and what was the policy on the type of lunch that would be offered.

SR – Decisions were made on the information available at the time however the Education Department had since changed its position. Once policy has been clarified the school will be happy to go with what parents want.

The next Parent Council meeting on 19.4.16 will discuss the issue again and by that time we should have had answers from the education officials.

Meeting Closed at 9pm