

MINUTES OF NORTH WEST SUTHERLAND SCHOOLS EMERGENCY PARENT COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 29th April 2021

Virtual Meeting via Google Meet at 6.00pm

1. Attendees

Graeme Smart, Aileen MacDonald, Katy Lee, Sophie Beveridge, Iona Shaw, Anne Morrison, Carol-anne Forsyth, Lynn MacDonald, Sally Czerwik, Leanne McKee, Julie Allen, Alanna MacLeod, Donna Morrison, Neil Galbraith, Rachel Thackeray, Keiron Thackeray, Selena Campbell, Rowan Watkins, Jacqui-Anne Munro, Denise MacDonald, Stefanie Breckenridge, Heather Paterson, Sian Curley, Katie MacFarlane, Joshua Keitany, Fiona Johnstone, Joanne Barnes, Alison Watt, Yvonne MacRae

Guests in attendance

Councillors Linda Munro and Hugh Morrison

Apologies

Diana Morrison, Kerry Eastcroft, Christina Findlay, Lisa Rhee

2. Situation

This emergency parent council meeting was arranged in order to discuss the reduction in teaching staff allocated to Kinlochbervie High School by Highland Council. The teaching staff allocation is based on a formula which includes the number of pupils in the school. It is the same formula used for all secondary schools within the Highland Council area. However, due to the current small pupil roll (35 pupils) in Kinlochbervie High School this means that the school has only been allocated 7.517 whole time equivalent (wte) teaching staff. This number includes the Head Teacher who is a manager and does not have a teaching role.

Formula: $4.5 + 0.0862 \times \text{pupil roll}$

Background

In previous years the Head Teacher was able to negotiate with the Highland Council in order to obtain a teacher staffing level above that allocated by the formula. This year the Highland Council have refused any such increase in teaching staff.

Assessment

The minimum baseline for teaching staff allocated to Kinlochbervie High School by Highland Council will not allow the school to cover the curriculum. Eight curricular areas should be covered and prior to this reduction in staff only 7 areas have been taught. This reduction in teachers will mean further reduction in subjects offered to pupils.

Subjects currently not offered – History, Modern Studies, Home Economics, Music, Drama, Accountancy, Information Technology, and Religious Education. This would have to reduce further.

It was felt that our pupils deserve an education that is equitable to others and the use of the formula on such a small pupil number is extremely unfair and not a viable option. Education in remote schools should not use the same allocation used in larger urban schools. Kinlochbervie has the smallest S1-6 pupil roll in Scotland and deserves recognition.

The following concerns were expressed:

- Right to have an equitable education

- Failure to cover the curriculum
- There is already limited subject choice
- Limiting subject choice further limits future prospects for pupils. Children are the priority and limiting their choices further would be detrimental.
- Broad curriculum is desired
- Senior pupils may have access to some subjects through the Highland Virtual Academy but this was not felt to be suitable for practical subjects or a motivating way of learning for our pupils. Further isolates our pupils, further limits social interaction.
- Pressure on teachers to teach multiple subjects
- Pressure on teachers to teach multiple levels of subjects within the same class
- Amalgamating junior year groups erodes transition.
- Due to remote location of the school pupils are unable to do extracurricular activities available in more populated areas therefore they heavily rely on opportunities provided by the school.
- Range of subjects currently offered is limited compared to other nearby schools such as Ullapool High School and this means that some pupils in the Scourie / Kylestrome area are choosing to travel to Ullapool instead. This further fuels the problem of small pupil number.
- Families are considering leaving the area due to poor subject choice and impact this has on future prospects of their children
- Future prosperity of the area relies on a High School
- Following the impact of lockdown pupils require additional support

Recommendation

In order to cover the curriculum and offer pupils a reasonable subject choice the school requires 9wte teaching staff in the High School.

Counsellors Linda Munro and Hugh Morrison will feedback the concerns raised by the parent council to the Highland Council and ask them to reconsider the extremely low teaching staff allocation.

The parent council eagerly await their feedback and will then consider whether further action is required.

If the request is refused then the parent council are likely to take further action. Suggestions include contacting our community councils, initiating a media campaign / petition.

3. Date of next meeting

26th May 2021 at 6pm via Google Meet, this may be subject to change

Meeting close 8.05pm