

## **Managing the curriculum in a combined school what are the potential benefits?**

### **Context**

It has been stated on a number of occasions that there are significant advantages to be gained from the economies of scale enabled by the amalgamation of the two schools.

Mr Tom Speirs, a former Deputy Head Teacher within Highland, was asked to undertake an exercise to determine what the timetable might typically look like and to identify the accompanying educational benefits, if any.

### **Analysis**

His analysis was based on assuming a school roll of 878 which is the combined roll of the two schools at present (the full report is available as a separate document on this site)

Since the staffing formula for Highland Council schools comprises of two components, an initial core of 9.5 staff and a roll related allocation, the amalgamated school would have 9.5 staff fewer than that of the two schools operating separately.

Irrespective of any developments at Alness and Invergordon, Highland Council schools are moving to a six subject model from 2014 when all pupils will study English and Mathematics and then a further four subjects of their choosing. The model developed follows that pattern.

At present each of the schools follows much the same broad general curriculum in S1 – S3 and so in devising the model timetable a calculation was made as to the number of staff required to service that commitment. Thereafter the calculation was made as to the number of periods needed to sustain the curriculum through to S6 on the basis of a 33 period week and with full articulation from S4 to S6. Full articulation in that context means that the subjects are timetabled in the option choice forms in such a way that a pupil in S4, S5 or S6 is able to continue with **all** of the subjects chosen through to the higher level

After that it is necessary to hold back a number of periods for absence cover, for Pupil Support and for Management Time for promoted staff.

### **Important Decisions**

Having fulfilled all of the specific requirements on the use of teaching time, decisions require to be made which will have an effect on the level of flexibility open to the Head Teacher in further defining the curriculum on offer in the school. For example, whether or not some or of all the Depute Head Teachers and the Pupil Support (Guidance) Staff will have some teaching commitment.

After all of these considerations have been accounted for the Head Teacher normally in consultation with his/her Senior management Team has a number of options as to how the rest of the teaching time available is used.

## **Educational Benefits**

- Some of the available time might be used to limit the number of pupils in S1 and S2 classes perhaps particularly in English and Maths.
- In the larger school there will be some limited scope for introducing subject choice beyond that which is presently available.
- There will be an increased range of combinations, i.e because subjects will appear in more than one option choice column there will be more opportunity for pupils to “mix and match” to suit their individual preferences.
- There will be a greater number of sets in subjects meaning that pupils studying for different levels of qualification will be likely to be in different classes, to their benefit and that of the class teacher too. In schools of less than 500 pupils bi-level or multi-level classes can be the norm in most classes with the possible exception of English, Maths and perhaps some Science subjects.
- College participation in a new school is likely to be enhanced by the greater number of students opting for particular courses and also hopefully by enhanced facilities.