The Highland Council	Agenda Item	14.
Education, Children and Adult Services Committee 20 May 2015	Report No	ECAS 43/15

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Recruitment of Head Teachers

Report by Director of Care and Learning

Summary

This report sets out for members some of the issues around Head Teacher recruitment in Highland. The report is set against the wider context of a growing concern about the recruitment problems that now exists in schools across Scotland.

1.   Background

1.1   A national report on Head teacher Recruitment and Retention was produced for the Scottish Government in November 2009. At the time, the report set out a number of emerging concerns which were beginning to arise in the recruitment and retention of Head teachers.

1.2   The report examined the following:
- The factors that drive teachers to seek Head teacher positions.
- The barriers teachers face in becoming Head teachers.
- What Head teachers think about their role in terms of working hours, health and the demands of the job.
- The factors that cause Head teachers to stay in their post or change direction.
- The strategies that councils and central government have adopted for succession planning, identifying early leadership potential, and training and development.
- Why some teachers do not aspire to headship.
- Whether anything could change their views.

1.3   The report identified six key issues:
- Leadership expectations;
- Head teacher autonomy;
- Role support;
- The impact of inspections on heads' confidence and motivation;
- Recruitment disincentives;
- Promotion of headship.

1.4   During the following six years, several smaller reviews have been carried out. However the difficulties in recruitment of Head teachers appear to remain the same and there are signs that the situation may be becoming worse. New work has begun at a national level in an attempt to begin to address this issue.

2.   National and Highland Context

2.1   The number of applications in Scotland and Highland has been falling for Head teacher posts for a number of years. There is disparity across Scotland on the

number of applications received. Key differences appear to be geographical location, rural and urban demography and mean size of schools.

2.2   These two factors play a significant role in Highland, where we are presently carrying around 20 vacancies (with acting arrangements in place). Highland has tried to be innovative in the matter of school size, by establishing clusters in the primary sector. It is also investigating the educational benefits of creating 3-18 schools.

2.3   Recent figures suggest approximately 40% of posts are re-advertised on one or more occasions.

2.4   There is no evidence to suggest that the overall socio-economic context of the school is a significant incentive or disincentive to seeking headship. Indeed, there are many interview accounts from heads, deputes and teachers that working in challenging circumstances can be hugely rewarding.

3.   The Attractions of Headship

3.1   Autonomy

3.1.1   Head teachers value the autonomy they have to shape their school to meet the aspirations of their parents, pupils, staff and the authority.

3.2   Satisfaction with Support

3.2.1   • A sense of fulfilment
        • The engagement with pupils
        • Support from parents

3.2.2   A sense of fulfilment appears to derive from the esteem in which one is held. Parental support also impacted on Head Teachers' sense of esteem and fulfilment in the job.

3.3   Satisfaction with Efficacy

3.3.1   • Scope for strategic decision-making
        • Ability to make a difference to children's learning

3.3.2   The second of these ranked highest in discussion with Head teachers.

3.4   Impact on Learning and Teaching

3.4.1   Satisfaction with the influence they can have on learning and teaching across a school.

        • Amount of class teaching time
        • Opportunity to mentor teachers
        • Opportunities to work with students
        • Opportunity to develop strategic thinking across the school

4.   The factors influencing staff deciding not to apply for a Head teacher post

4.1 While there is no recent formal data available on the factors impacting on the number of applications for Headteacher posts, there is strong anecdotal evidence to suggest the following factors may be impacting on the number of applications:

- The long hours that appears to be compulsory to prospective candidates if they are to carry out the duties of the post successfully.
- The number of additional tasks that are required to be carried out by Headteachers which appear not to be related to the delivery of learning and teaching.
- The lack of financial incentives that staff feel is available to them by applying for Headteacher posts. There are examples in Highland were Depute Headteachers are earning more than Headteachers.
- The impact on family life – costs of applying for a post may be prohibitive as it may require one of the earners in the family giving up their job.
- The pace of change on the educational and corporate front, with some evidence of increased bureaucracy.
- The lack of management progression opportunities that exist, in part due to post McCrone promotion structures in schools.
- The perception of isolation that may exist in some of our smaller schools, and the lack of a regular supervision or peer support contact.
- The difficulties of maintaining standards with reducing budgets.

5. Strategies

5.1 The Care and Learning Service has initiated a series of local conversations, to consider strategies to address the current challenges. These conversations include consideration of the management role, as well as possible new approaches to filling vacancies and succession planning. Members of the Committee have been invited to participate in these conversations.

5.2 The following issues and possible options are already being raised as part of this process.

5.3 **Recruitment**
- Devise recruitment strategies which sell the many strengths of the Highlands.
- Develop in association with existing Head teachers and professional associations', policies to address work intensification and inappropriate expectations of headship.
- Audit the existing teacher workforce in order to identify pre-existing leadership dispositions and prior experiences and to consider how these may be better utilised.
- Provide teachers seeking Headship promotion with training in application writing, interviewing techniques and presentational skills.
- Explore the use of the use of local flexibility within the job-sizing framework in setting pay levels for Head teachers.
- Explore the use of recruitment incentives to attract a higher number of applications.

5.4 **Succession Management Policies**
- Develop succession management policies underpinned by appropriate CPD targeted at various stages of teacher careers to create incentives for teachers to seek headship.

- Provide support for teachers and deputes during periods of "acting up", through support networks, and mentoring.
- Provide aspirant heads with a range of leadership opportunities, such as sabbaticals or shadowing, and to explore development possibilities, where possible, in different schools.

5.5 **Support, Professional Development and Networking**
- Examine how newly appointed Heads can be better supported in their work, including the use of mentors and coaches.
- Continue to develop a climate in which Head teachers have the status of senior managers in the authority.
- Work with Head teachers to identify and overcome barriers which prevent some heads from taking advantage of networking and peer support events.
- Consider, taking into account the available resources, increasing the provision, and review the role and functions, of business managers in schools or clusters of schools.

5.6 **Inter-agency collaboration**
- Continue to explore how we can reduce bureaucracy in inter-agency collaboration.

5.7 **Devolved Power and accountability**
- Consider ways in which the scope and the nature of responsibilities devolved to schools may be reconfigured.
- Review authority-level leadership and management practices and associated accountability demands made of heads.
- Reduce the disproportionate effects of authority demands on Headteachers in small schools.

5.8 **Communication**
- Reduce the amount and nature of demands for information that authority require of schools and be more economical in the use of e-mail and IT.
- Devise communication policies which help Head teachers in dealing with the media, and specify the level of support for Head teachers with regard to parental complaints.

**6.	Implications**

6.1 **Risk:** There are significant risks to the Council and to children's education, if the current challenges are not addressed.

6.2 **Resources:** It is recognised that there are no new resources. It may though be necessary to reorganise how we allocate resources, to provide more sustainable future management structures.

6.3 **Rural and Gaelic:** There are particular challenges associated with sustaining management structures in smaller schools, including where there is Gaelic provision.

6.4 There are no **Equalities** or **Climate Change/Carbon Clever** Implications.

7.	**Recommendation**
7.1	Members are asked to note and comment on the key issues highlighted in the report.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

Date: 11 May 2015

Author: Jim Steven Head of Education