

## BHS consultation

28/1/2014

- Childcare issues, particular in rural area
- Childcare in very difficult. Carers for older children not available. This saving will create cost else where eg reduced economic activity
- How is Asymmetric week efficient now when it wont few years ago for secondary's
- I am only childminder in the local area. Parents need assurance there will be proper childcare locally.
- Rural area – different to Edinburgh and Lothians. Are there examples of other rural areas doing this? Timescale is impossible to get more childcare in place
- Childcare. Moved here from East Lothian to get away from Asymmetric week
- When will timetable alignment begin. Will there be less teaching time May – June
- Transport issues. Different pick-up times at different schools. Living in England but kids in SBC schools
- Are we asking our teachers to do more for less? Compared to other Countries. If financial crisi is over will the resources come back – will you reverse this. Teachers are overworked
- Have you spoken to local police about potential impact of all secondary kids at loose end on a Friday pm?
- How much time will teachers actually have on a Fri afternoon after kids are away
- Tight timescale. Can we get secondary time
- Need assurance that we don't change it next year. Say it doesn't work change it again next year. Are there more cuts on the way? Will you come back to tell us if it worked?
- Cant you align timetables without moving to an asymmetric week. What is the evidence that children will attain better. Need to focus on Children
- How did you get to your saving figures
- What is the alternative is this proposal is not accepted
- School say against nursery – 600hours
- Transport. Will all children get home at the same time
- How do we influence the service buses. Will transport be reviewed and more efficient
- Homework – when are we meant to fit homework in
- Benefits for Secondary Schools none for Primary
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## **Channelkirk Primary School Parent Council's response to SBC's proposed shift to an asymmetric week**

Channelkirk Primary School made an effort to encourage every single parent/carer within our parent forum to submit individual comments and feedback via the SBC survey. This was done by circulating the link via paper copies sent home in school bags as well as posting it on our Facebook page, which reaches 41 members of the parent forum.

The following points were raised by active members of Parent Council, which has four post holders (Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer), two active fundraising officers and four other regularly attending members.

### **1. Impact on the younger primary school children and their ability to learn**

With longer days, younger children become more tired, which is obviously less conducive to optimal learning levels. This begs the question 'is the quality of education going to be the same?' We are used to very high standards; however, if the children are tired then the teachers may find they are not as focussed and therefore not as able to benefit from those standards.

### **2. Loss of afternoon teaching block versus add-on time at end of the day**

There have been mixed feelings concerning what would be lost on the half day afternoon, which we have been assuming will be a Friday, and also how extra time added to the other days will be structured. Some members of the council feel that the loss of golden time on Friday afternoons is detrimental (in terms of children losing time in which to bond with classmates and also appreciate and reap the benefit of reward time). Conversely, one member was concerned that add-on times to other days would be more likely to be used as golden time, rather than more substantial learning time.

### **3. Cost of childcare for working parents**

Savings achieved by the SBC will essentially become costs inflicted on parents who will need to become reliant on childcare. There seems to be an issue of fairness involved here.

### **4. Provision of childcare**

Questions were raised as to the actual logistics of this provision, particularly given that Channelkirk Primary School is already struggling greatly to maintain its After School Care Club. It has been suggested by a member of our council that, at the very least, the SBC make a firm commitment to help solve this problem (and similar in other places), as they are in a unique position to offer advice based on a broad overview of all services currently provided in the Scottish Borders. Help to engage private childcare providers could be centralised in order to avoid duplication of work by every school.

### **5. Impact of extended weekdays on extracurricular clubs/activities**

After school activities will definitely be affected. For example, swimming lessons starting at 4pm will be impossible for children in rural areas to attend. Therefore, they will be looking to get a later slot, which will only add to the lengthening of their structured days. 'As a parent,' remarked one of our council members, 'I don't want to

stop my children from being active... but homework may become difficult.' This is to say nothing of the importance of unstructured time or 'down time', which is also crucial for young minds.

Others were concerned about increased tiredness and one member was approached by a parent who is alarmed at the idea of picking her child up in what will essentially be darkness for two months out of the year.

## **6. Transport**

One member was curious to know if the transport companies are willing to run their services at different times and, if so, will there be a cost incurred? If yes, how is this cost factored into the saving? Another member wondered if better savings might be had by examining current school transport and how best to deliver this.

## **7. Concern regarding the teachers' views**

The teachers are losing out on valuable time during the week, where they are used to their RICCT time. This time allows them to plan, mark and reflect on work. They too will be tired after four long days but will then be expected to do this work on a Friday afternoon.

## **8. General feeling that proposed decision is financially rather than educationally based**

One member has asked: 'how much does this system actually save? It would be more beneficial to see the figures in order to see exactly how much will be saved by schools.

Another member suggested that more focus be placed on how to generate income when providing new infrastructure – e.g. solar PV on all new schools must surely be a priority given the FITs available and the 25-year nature of PFI projects.

## **9. Primary into Secondary**

One of our council members has been heavily involved in preparing Earlston High School's response to this consultation and has asked that thought and consideration be given to issues surrounding those primary students who will be moving up to Earlston HS. Her comments are condensed below:

Children from Channelkirk Primary School generally move to Earlston High School for secondary schooling. I have the following concerns if the asymmetric week goes ahead for my primary aged children when they move up to EHS. The Parent Council for EHS shares these concerns.

Aligned timetables: If the asymmetric week goes ahead, the consultation will underpin the move towards harmonisation of timetabling across all high schools. There will not be a separate consultation on this. I am particularly concerned about the effect will be on my child's choice of subjects if this goes ahead.

I am particularly concerned that a full alignment of timetables will mean that there will be a reduction in the number of subjects currently offered to pupils studying National 4s and 5s. At present, EHS offers two years of general education in first and second year and eight subject choices to be studied over third and fourth year at National 4 and 5 level. If the timetable is aligned with other schools in the Borders, EHS may have to offer three years of general education in first, second and third year, with only six subjects studied at National 4 and 5 in fourth year. The notion of 'one size fits all' may appear to answer financial questions but with the huge difference

between the individual characteristics of each school in terms of academic achievement, this has the potential of reducing educational opportunities for young people.

Loss of Registration: This means losing valuable first line guidance to all pupils, which is an integral part of pupil care and communication. The registration period also acts as a 'buffer' period if there are transport issues (86% pupils EHS are bussed in). Losing registration has the potential effect of reducing the role of guidance & communication.

Shorter lunchtimes: EHS offers a large amount of extra curricular activities and pupil support during lunch break. The proposed shorter break may mean the loss of games practices (not enough time to change, etc), pupils are unable to stay after school for practices due to transport issues. Pupils will therefore lose out.

## **10. Conclusion**

On the whole, our parent council agrees that the process has seemed a bit rushed. There is clearly a whole raft of issues being raised by individuals and parent councils across the Borders and we therefore pose the following question: why not wait? Instead of rushing to implement the new system by August 2014, why not try to sort out some of these pressing issues and progress toward a model that is seemingly more workable in the first instance? Our fear is that implementation of the system as it stands right now will most likely result in a chaotic, bug-ridden process. In such a process it will mainly be the children who suffer, as proper attention, instead of being focussed on the provision of their education, will be wasted on solving all the other adjunct problems that will inevitably crop up.

## Cheviot Consultation

- Website doesn't work – Others say it worked for them
- Will the results of the consultation be made available to the public – Yes the reports will be able to be accessed from the website
- Will there be any reduction to in-service days – No but clarified core/additional
- Is there some chance it wont be a Friday – Need your views
- What is the feedback from the reviews from the authorities who have been working this system – GR spoke about Lothians. Also the fact that we have no alternatives eg gave examples of all class sizes
- Alignment means satellite of teaching – what about supervision – you are reducing the quality of education – we need to recognise we need to do things differently. In senior school – elements of independent study. Do not see that coming down school into junior schools
- I can accept financial constraints but don't sell this on Educational benefits – other Authorities have opted for this prior to financial constraints (Ruth came in to give practical examples)
- Primary children travel considerable distance at present (but have spoken to H/T and think with changing lunch/break times we can do it – morebattle) – More flexibility re agreeing start/finish times if one size does not fit all
- Parkside/Ancrum – we have a staggered start/end time to allow parents to go to both – We haven't looks at this – we need to pick this up
- Primary/Early Years (600 Hours) – concern that pressures on parents as 2 different start/finishing times – Glenn explained background to this over next few years. Nursery group looking at this – it may be possible to align 4 days
- Nursery Teacher at H/Burn – with 600 hours – I'm not going to benefit from staff, development opportunities provided by asymmetric week – Looking at this
- What is your proposed day as we are all just guessing – My proposed shorter day is Friday but need to hear your views for us to report back to council
- What is the implication for other staff working in schools eg ANAs – We are looking at this. Although not looking at savings from here as pupils still need support
- Who makes the decision – what do we need to do to influence this – political decision but we need to ensure elected members have your views
- Is there an alternative plan to this? 7 projects at moment but this is where significant saving targets are
- Impact on town of a shorter afternoon – are more children not just going to be hanging about the street
- Even if extra – curricular is offered parents still need to take them there and bring them back – pressure on parents

- Its unrealistic to expect employers to provide w/exp placements especially as they will be dealing with their staff who have childcare issues caused by this
- How will BSLT cope with the number of pupils who may now want to take up opportunities – they don't have the staff to cover it – Could also use CLD but not going to solve every parental issue
- Also if these opportunities are available they can only do them if parents can afford it – that is going to disadvantage some pupils – There will be redistribution re cost of childcare (4 days you will need less one day more) but identify the pressure
- How will IT infrastructure be provided – what will it cost? Historically we have never been able to do it – NGFL refresh. Modelling this being looked at
- Regarding childcare – what about 11/12 year olds – Got schools looking at after school clubs but that might be an additional cost (a suggested was given from the floor)
- Reduction in teachers in secondary schools and pupils travelling from one school to another – would this impact on the younger secondary pupils – No this would be for the senior secondary pupils
- If we amalgamated 2 schools for some subjects how big would these classes be? National agreed sizes for maximum numbers must be adhered to. (Ruth came in – non viable classes focus)
- How is funding for education provided? Show freeze on council tax be reconsidered – political debate
- Will the referendum affect out budget allocation?
- Do you see a big cut in Primary teachers? Primary Teachers is already quite an efficient model number of pupils = number of teachers. Spoke about historical allocation. Projected rolls v DSM allocation
- Is there any thought to changing numbers regarding composite classes? We have composite classes? We have composite class policy – currently looking at this regarding free places
- From the savings graph you are going to loose vast number of teachers? Yes and our challenge is to do the best we can to protect our pupils to the best of our abilities. Doing things differently doesn't necessarily mean things getting worse
- Workload of staff getting worse and worse – We will not be asking teachers to do anything outwith their national agreement. Asymmetric week will help with workload regarding sharing with other colleagues regarding stage/level/subject. Also looking at technology to help us out. Online payment as an example
- Are you considering closing schools? Lots of myths about school estate. If you close small schools we would suffer financially as we receive rural payments. Benefits maybe looking at town schools eg Gala
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## Earlston Consultation

- Childcare
- Length of school day for younger children
- When was this last introduced in Scotland?
- Will there be an investment in IT and other resources
- Not just a change for children but for family/carers
- Cost of childcare here in Borders
- How are you engaging with Childcare providers?
- Childcare provision. Not enough in Earlston. Cant up provision in S maths
- Length of the day – especially younger ones
- Can you go Asymmetric in secondaries but not primaries?
- Understand the issues but different for primary parents compared to secondary. We would have to stop. Hope EHS extracurricular activities would capture
- Walking to schools in the dark
- How about shorter day in middle of week
- CPD is admirable. Currently doing extracurricular at EHS – will this be lost. Keep lunch breaks to a decent time
- Single parent will there still be INSET days?
- Childcare issues for Earlston – It is impossible to deliver
- Is this going to happen – What's the point? Has a decision been made
- Child-minding provision. No facilities in St Boswells. Ok for high Schools. Do the High Schools themselves
- Is secondary timetable full alignment or partial
- Do you know of schools who are doing visual learning
- CfE
- Parent councils should be able to make representation. How will that be weighted? Will PC submission be treated accordingly
- Don't understand teachers contracts
- If you have calculated obligation. Why not delay this for 12 months. Give us time to facilitate the changes
- Childcare provision – no room for expansion
- Primary are different to secondary schools. Long days for younger Children
- Will transport re-align also core public transport
- Childcare issues

- Childcare provision. Getting the qualified people
- Longer days for Children, has anyone investigated the potential effects.
- Journey times and longer day
- Worry about no registration at High School
- Is it worth trying to ask everyone what the childcare need is



To Scottish Borders Council

From Earlston Primary School Parent Council

We should like to take the opportunity to respond to the current consultation being conducted by SBC re the proposal to move schools to an asymmetric week from August 2014.

We have brought the proposals to the notice of the parents/guardians of all current pupils at our school and have invited their response. Parents were advised about the opportunity to attend meetings in Earlston and Lauder on the subject and a number did so.

In responding, our overriding concern is for the quality of education to be provided for our and future children attending the school, and the consequent life opportunities that will result.

We have grouped our comments under three broad headings – pupils' educational needs and opportunities; parents/guardian's issues; other practical considerations. There is considerable overlap between these.

1. ) Pupils' Educational Needs and Opportunities

There is concern that extending the school day might be detrimental to children's education, particularly in the case of younger children. Concentration levels might diminish and children could become more tired. Organisation of school hours should be based principally on educational needs and other factors such as avoiding transport difficulties should be secondary.

While alignment of timetables between schools might be advantageous to high schools, it should not remove individual schools' autonomy nor restrict subject choice for children.

The organisation of the school week into a number of periods should facilitate learning and not be altered principally to meet inflexible working practices.

2. ) Parents/guardians' issues

Additional child-care costs for a half day extra per week could be very challenging for many parents. There is also evidence that there are insufficient registered child-minders, in Earlston in particular, to be able to cope with likely demand from August 2014. Our belief is that if this change must occur for financial and other reasons, it should be deferred until how to meet this need has been identified and resources put in place.

3. ) Other Practical Considerations

There is concern that potentially reduced lunch breaks and later finishing will restrict valuable extra-curricular activities. It could also affect the times available for children to do homework.

Children will need to travel to and from school in darker conditions in winter if the school day is extended at both ends, which could affect their safety. There are also concerns about pupils who use public transport to travel to and from school, regarding the compatibility of the timing of buses with the new school day.

While we have no firm view on whether any shorter school day should be on Fridays or any other day, would children be provided with school lunches on such days? We believe this service should remain in place.

We would ask you to take our views into consideration when deciding on this issue.

Thank you.

Earlston Primary School Parent Council

February 2014

## Eildon West Consultation

- Work fulltime, schedule means have to work Friday. Sports clubs not saying they'll get funding – cant afford to loose work. Worried crime levels will increase. Info has been good but more needed
- Out catchment area so transport important, if times change affect getting daughter to EHS. Sole earlier, worried budget (own) No privilege lift
- Could align only sec schools. Stressing teachers working same hours and don't understand his? Will this reduce number of teachers?
- Will teachers spending more time teaching? (answer no but secy teachers will)
- Friday 1.30pm finish, very few childminders will cover ½ hour while I finish work. After schools activities will be affected as later finish. Who can supervise children on Fri Pm
- I teach online, needs lots of training, quality goes down
- 30-33 periods, do teachers do all time? No
- Nursery hours – can they be done in 4 days
- Girls lot more tired, finish tea, do homework, my numbers will drop off. Swimming pool 3.30-5 very few spaces on sat so children miss out on swimming
- P1/2 Children – Hour concentrate of longer day. What about homework, tea, long day at work, how to manage?
- Will we have set proposals from BSLT as my son will look for this – I don't work on Friday but hell look for it. Will we have something in writing?
- Will the Council pay for/provide this? BSLT are out-priced themselves
- What times will schools be starting and finishing? How will students progress over 3 long and 2 short days?
- Lots of changes with new nationals and new higher, can see what trying to fo but lot to do
- Financial saving – what plan if this doesn't go through?
- Do you believe that you will align secondary schools? You didn't do it with CfE alignment.
- Schools in TCS would work together was promise but you're saying schools work in isolation so hearing some again... if this gets passed will music tuition not get cut (used as eg)?
- Our children not central so have to get activities – timing difficult if going swimming to Gala and your working. Why primary and Secondary both having Asymmetric week?
- Infrastructure of IT, how ready is that? If reducing teachers, how cover sickness? If bussing children between schools, how is that efficient?

## Hawick

- 45 Parents
- Why does East Lothian have 8 subjects? – they don't
- Is there a clear financial advantage in East Lothian from the asymmetric week. They have to look at savings – would we have any advantage in adopting the Asymmetric week?
- Is the longer day better for little ones?
- Principally was against it but as a rural parents who does a 9 hour day, will still have the option to be based at home on Mid-day on Friday. Also early breaks will create a sensible time for lunch as there was such a big gap between breakfast and lunch
- Are we running the risk of pupils not turning up on a Friday? Will show give extra pressure on other services
- Activities on a Friday afternoon costs money on already tight budgets – parents HHS/Wilton businesses of parents finishing on Friday afternoon
- Parent Stirches – work every Friday, Two children, Friday afternoon will be difficult for childcare, worried the capacity for childcare would be there
- Run of school clubs across the Borders wasn't to know if it is worthwhile opening on a Friday. It will be challenging re-organising staff.
- Also an out of school childcare club in Burnfoot – 600 hours will necessarily increase on our income. If parents are working on a Friday afternoon their drop in income will impact on ability to buy time as childcare club. Will the Childcare Partnership still be there?
- Secretary of parent council – some organisations already say they will provide none of a service (for free) on a Friday
- If one of the school clubs eased with little service it is very difficult to get back for your child and difficult to convince volunteers
- Parent – Drumlanrig – Majority of BSLT clubs paid for but they have a limited number of spaces there will be enough to cover all pupils.
- How do we set rural children into after school provisions
- Hawick as a community will step up eventually but initially there will be a drop in extracurricular will drop because of longer days
- Teacher/parents – Stirches – Nursery staff wont get the opportunity for Collaborative working on Friday (because of 600 hours) If we have full time and your day all is a Friday how will it work?
- Would there be an exception for P/T staff to attend collaborative time on a Friday afternoon
- If 70% of parents identify childcare as an issue then it is a financial issue for most parents what can be done above this.

- If feeding numbers will be cut then will class size increase?

Lisa Anderson

Parent Council Liaison

Scottish Borders Council

Consultation on Asymmetric: Response from Heriot Primary Parent Council

Dear Lisa

The proposed asymmetric week was discussed at the Heriot Primary Parent Council Meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014 at which 8 parents were present. Further views were also requested via e-mail and the collated response is below.

The benefits for teachers in primary school were recognized, however several serious concerns were raised including:

- **Very problematic for working parents**

“As we are in a very rural location, it may in effect mean a full day off work for some parents as it would not be reasonable to attend work for half a day and be back in time to pick up the children after school. Many parents travel an hour to their place of work”

- **Increased cost to parents**

This was raised by almost all parents “After school care will need to be offered, but why should the parents have to pay for this? ...It'll end up costing parents more money, on an already tight budget, due to current financial climate.”

We would have to reduce working hours and therefore income.

The cost of proposed after school care is significant. This will have a serious financial impact on families.

- **Increasing children's time at home was beneficial to some but may be detrimental to others**

“Although from children's point of view a long weekend and shorter working week may well contribute to a happier more relaxed child reducing the impact of the demands of educational performance expected from them assuming they have adequate care and a

welcoming home to go to. This is not the case for all children unfortunately and this could place an extra burden on an already stressed family.”

- **After school care issues**

“In rural areas where there is little or no child care available this will cause headaches for working families. Whilst Heriot is lucky to have an after school club, it is unlikely to manage the demand a whole school half day off would place on it.”

A review of afterschool care provision was requested prior to this change being enforced.

“It'll mean outside agency after school activities will all have to alter their timings for activities, and again leads to a later night for everyone”

- **Quality of schooling**

Children may not take the short days' tuition seriously.

“It will make it a very long day for the Heriot high school children, by the time they finish and get the bus home again. (it's a long enough day)”

One parent believed that the restructure may mean that registration is removed from the day and raised the concern that “this was where often vital information is passed over”

- **Lunch on shorter days**

The issue of where and how children will be given lunch was raised several times and was of serious concern.

“Families in rural locations have a distance to travel, what with split bus runs, this would mean a considerable delay for children to be fed at home on the half day which was not acceptable. Furthermore eating a packed lunch whilst on the bus was also seen as not acceptable to either parents and probably not the bus company either.”

A show of hands was taken amongst the parents who attended the meeting: one person supported the change, one person abstained whilst six were against the change.

Furthermore several parents were sceptical that their views would have any impact on the decision making process.

Sharon Abrahams

Chairperson Heriot primary parent council.



## Asymmetric school week Consultation: Lauder Parent Council Response

After canvassing the views of the parent body at Lauder Primary School, Lauder Parent Council have prepared the following as a response to Scottish Borders Council's consultation on the asymmetric school week proposed for all schools within the Scottish Borders. Views were gathered by a variety of means and from a variety of sources. These included an open meeting attended by parents from a number of primary schools in our area (Lauder, Stow, Channelkirk, Westruther, Earlston) which Glenn Rodger, the Director for Education and Lifelong Learning was good enough to attend; we have an active Facebook page with 134 members; and we have also heard opinions by word of mouth (e.g. "at the school gates", at events, etc.).

Please note that throughout our response we have referred to the proposed half day as being Friday. We are aware that no final decision has been taken on which day will be the half-day, (and have addressed this in point 2.3). However our understanding is this is the most likely choice and so have adopted Friday as the example where appropriate.

Concerns have been raised on a wide range of issues. These fall into three common themes. Our response addresses these three themes in turn: the process followed by SBC; the asymmetric week concept; the planning and implementation of the transition to the asymmetric week timetable. Some additional issues have been raised at the end.

1. The process followed by SBC
  - 1.1 The time taken to conduct the consultation seems to have been driven by the hoped for start date of August 2014. This will require council approval by end March 2014, and therefore the consultation needs to be completed by 28 February. The view suggested to us is that the consultation period was unnecessarily short, and that if a longer consultation period would have meant delaying the implementation to January or August 2015, then this is what should happen. In the spirit of transparency, it would also be useful to know the timing between SBC's initial consideration of the need to make significant savings from 2014/15; the floating of the asymmetric week option; and the subsequent public consultation. It would be worrying if there was a significant gap between SBC's internal decision to pursue the asymmetric week option and the consultation, given the tight implementation timescale.
  - 1.2 We have been asked if a proper Equalities Impact Assessment has taken place. The suggestion was that it should have taken place early enough to inform the decision, e.g. alongside any financial assessment of the costs and savings of the asymmetric week. It therefore seems reasonable to assume that SBC will have already completed this, and that it would therefore have been beneficial to have the results made public so as to inform (and potentially reassure) those responding to the consultation. However, this information has not been made available, and as a result parents who feel that the impact of this new school week may be negative are not reassured.
2. The asymmetric week concept
  - 2.1 Concern was raised about the ability of children (especially younger children) to concentrate at the end of what would be an extended school day. We note that this was raised by SBC's own discussion document for the council meeting in December. It would be beneficial to know what evidence SBC has gathered on this. The need for revised lunchtimes and/or introducing an afternoon break has also been raised. It would be useful to know if decisions such as these will be left to individual schools or if

there will be a central SBC policy on the structure of the school day should an asymmetric week be implemented.

- 2.2 Concerns have also been raised over the potential impact on Pastoral care. These concerns specifically include the end to registration at High School, as also the fact that savings are planned in various departments. This is perhaps something that needs considered in the EIA referred in point 1.2, and we ask that the impact on Pastoral care caused by the end of registration and the consequent loss of contact with pupils is specifically considered. The concern raised to us is that vulnerable youngsters particularly at high school may be less well supported and issues picked up less expediently with the end of registration.
  - 2.3 One concern has been raised which is directly related to the day chosen as the half day in the new timetable. It is noted that most, if not all councils operating this system choose to close early on a Friday. It is suggested that, with this being the last day of the week, it may lead to increased absences on a Friday (eg in order to facilitate a long weekend). We ask if there is any empirical evidence available from attendance records at other councils which would support or counter this possibility.
  - 2.4 There is little clarity on how schools will operate on the half-day. What sort of provision will there be for school lunches on that day? If so, who will supervise lunches on that day? Will school buses leave before or after lunch? Will pupils be expected to leave as soon as classes finish if they are not staying for lunch? In Lauder, an after school club operates within the school grounds and we would expect many parents who cannot collect their children at Friday lunchtime to look to utilise this facility on Friday afternoons. If school lunches are not provided then, with no catering facilities available, SBC will effectively be denying these children the opportunity of a hot meal at lunchtime.
  - 2.5 There has been some scepticism expressed about the effectiveness of utilising IT to implement shared teaching facilities of larger classes. We cannot find any examples of this being done currently in the region and are unsure how widely it will be, or is expected to be used. We are wary of too much store being placed on the potential for IT to help with savings unless there are demonstrable examples. We would hope that borders children are not to be used as a test bed for these technologies.
3. The change implementation planning and transition to the asymmetric week
    - 3.1 The short timescale (five months from confirmation in mid-March 2014 to commencement in mid-August 2014) gives rise to concern. Parents, employers, providers of leisure facilities and child care and many voluntary groups will have little time to plan and put in place alternative arrangements. This short timescale will lead to decisions being taken independently by these groups rather than collectively. It is highly likely that some of the decisions taken will have conflicting outcomes. Providers of after school activities will have to consider either moving activities to later in the evening or, if they do not already do so, to rescheduling to Friday afternoon. We envisage the following potential scenarios:
      - A restriction on the activities that children can undertake after school due to a later finish.
      - A glut of activities on the afternoon of the half day with the potential for significant overlap and, therefore, limited choice.
      - A longer day resulting in children less willing to undertake after school activities.If an asymmetric week is implemented it would be helpful if some consideration were given to these issues at an early stage to allow for providers of after school activities to

plan for change and, where possible, co-ordinate with others. It may be that implementation by August 2014 will not allow enough time for this to happen. What contingencies can SBC put in place? What mitigation in terms of early warning, planning with these providers has SBC undertaken or plans to undertake?

- 3.2 Any parent who needs to use child care on the Friday afternoon is likely to see an increase in child care costs from this year to next. This may be partially offset for parents who work five days a week, as they may see reduced costs on the other four days, but this cannot be guaranteed and will depend on the price structure of individual child care providers.
  - 3.3 Lack of childcare places. Many smaller towns, Lauder being one, are already in a situation where there are few available spaces with child care providers. At the meeting held in Lauder Primary School it was suggested that private providers of both childcare and other extracurricular activities would evolve to fill the gaps. Even if that is the case, it is unrealistic to expect any new entrants into this market place to become fully licensed and operational by August, given the number of checks these providers (rightly) have to undergo. A shortage of childcare may lead to parents having to give up work and so cause economic hardship. Shortages are likely to be particularly acute in smaller towns and villages, such as Lauder, as businesses will naturally look to operate in areas with larger populations and so more customers.
  - 3.4 We feel that as SBC are implementing the change, they have a duty of care to the community to manage the transition as smoothly as possible. This means leading the way in engaging with all providers of activities for school age children; using parents and schools to ensure a comprehensive list is gathered; ensuring providers are fully informed about the proposed changes; looking at the options available and trying to ensure that providers move their timetables around this in a cohesive manner that collectively makes sense. This goes beyond Borders Sport and Leisure and out into the wider community. What is being done in this regard is not visible. We would welcome information from SBC on their plans in this regard – School Parents Councils are one of the links they should be seeking to utilise in this respect.
  - 3.5 SBC have indicated that many local employers would be willing to allow parents and other child carers to alter working patterns to accommodate the new school week. Is SBC able to share details of what proportion of local employers have made a commitment to this? Having a public list of employers who are willing to support this would be helpful to parents, and perhaps encourage other employers who are less than receptive being as flexible. As the largest employer in the region, will SBC lead the way in this and ensure that all requests from employees with child care responsibilities will be accepted unless there are strong reasons for rejection; that such requests will be encouraged; and that every effort will be made to support affected employees in this instance?
  - 3.6 Communication with employers outside the region. Many of the Borders population commute to Edinburgh or elsewhere – we are not aware of any activities being undertaken by SBC to inform, communicate with or encourage flexibility by such employers of people who live and are parents in the Borders. SBC should begin such exercises to understand the socio-economic impact of these changes, to gauge the level to willingness to accommodate such changes amongst their workforce and understand the wider implications for those parents who are unable to make changes to their working times.
4. Other issues
    - 4.1 Dependence on a change to national agreements. It appears that many of the savings suggested, including those of the asymmetric week are dependent on the adoption of new national agreements with e.g. a relaxation of the 22.5 hrs contact time limit, or the

moratorium on teacher redundancies. It would seem a somewhat all or nothing risk, and if the national agreements are not favourable to these changes, what will the impact on savings be then?

- 4.2 Lack of teacher cover. In calculating the efficiencies in terms of numbers of teaching heads saved, it's not clear if this assumes all teachers will be having the maximum 22.5 hrs a a week contact time. If this is the case what happens to a class where a supply teacher cannot be found? Are agreements broken? Is a class sent home?

As a group, we feel that SBC should only go ahead with an asymmetric week if they are satisfied that the shift will not affect children's education and care adversely, in the short, medium and long term. They need to consider both the impact of the asymmetric week and the impact of the short time scale of implementation.

The benefits of the asymmetric week set out thus far have been predominantly financial, and SBC needs to make either a stronger case in terms of any qualitative improvements that will come through or provide greater reassurance to parents regarding perceived negative or unequal outcomes.

Also, it may be that the asymmetric week is the correct outcome, but that in the short-term there will be negative consequences that could be alleviated by setting a later start date (eg January or August 2015) and so having a longer lead time. If that is the case then, given that the benefits of this change in terms of cost saving are not expected to come through in the short term, SBC should have an open mind in considering whether August 2014 or a later date is the most appropriate start date.



20<sup>th</sup> February 2014

Mr G Rodgers  
SBC  
Newtown St Boswells

Dear Mr Rodgers,

**ASYMMETRIC WEEK**

I am writing on behalf of Morebattle Primary School Parent Council with regards to the Consultation re the proposed Asymmetric Week for Border's Schools in August 2014.

We had a Parent Council Meeting this week and after some discussion and debate we had a vote.

The unanimous vote of those present was in favour of the Asymmetric Week Proposal but they also appreciated that there were obviously concerns re childcare on a Friday afternoon for those who don't have a flexible working system.

Yours Faithfully

Gillian R McFadyen

Chairman

28 February 2014

To Scottish Borders Council  
School Week Consultation  
Education and Lifelong Learning  
Council Headquarters  
Newtown St Boswells TD6 0SA

**Information provided by the Parent Council of Newlands Primary School**

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for offering us the opportunity to comment on the proposal for an asymmetric week.

Our Parent Council has considered this matter on the 27 January 2014. After discussion with the Head teacher and the parents present, we developed a proposal that we believed would be the best way for our school if an asymmetric week went ahead. We put this proposal out to all parents via the weekly school notes and invited comments within around four weeks. Specifically we proposed:

Start time remain at 8.30am Monday to Friday  
Lunch break, currently 1hr be reduced to 45mins Monday to Thursday  
Monday to Thursday end of day 3pm  
Friday end of day 11.45am (before lunch).

We received just over 5 email responses, out of a total school roll of just over 70 children (approx. 50 families). These raised concerns mainly around the length of the school day/shortness of the lunch break and the early Friday finish. Most were asking for lunch to remain at an hour, one response actively supported the Parent Council proposal as detailed above.

We have informed parents that any further detailed discussions would be taken forward if an asymmetric week went ahead.

Parents had also been encouraged that they should respond directly to the SBC consultation via the Scottish Borders Council website.

Yours faithfully

Silke Isbrand on behalf of the Parent Council  
Newlands Primary School

## Peebles Consultation – Issues from the floor

14/1/14

- What does this consultation occur? Have decision been made
- Selection of which is the half day Wednesday might be preferable
- Accept HTs point of view – would we loose our CSTs. Childcare availability in Peebles
- What are the savings? Why not before?
- How many pupils are going to travel between schools as part of aligned timetable
- Split journey with busses. Primary earlier and secondary later
- In favour of secondary move. Reflect whether we should be lobbys Scottish Government. As a county 6 shy. The Scottish Government
- I already work asymmetric week but lets go for Friday
- In favour of this. Can we input into actual times. 1.15 on a Friday is too late
- Ed View is compelling. My concern is what savings will follow – will we be consulted
- Is use of IT mean cut teachers
- Rather pay increased council tax in Peebles HS could cut lunchtime. If extra activity is on a Friday PM what about bus kids
- What about INSET days. Children walking home in dark because of extended day
- Driven by cuts – what are the savings. More than childcare issues
- Surely teachers will do more hours
- Issues are school meals. Free meals on Friday should be hot
- Additional nursery hours – parents going back and forward
- Cost benefit primary V secondary. Concern about the timeline for implementation
- ED benefit or finance
- Primary days will be too long consider reducing the infant day
- Transport logistics. Should have 5 days of learning rather than 4.5
- Where to go after school
- Ok for secondary. But no benefit to principles. Will we be consulted in future
- Young people and then after-school employment
- What are the savings into the future

## Selkirk

- Employers position – Small businesses don't have flexibility to let staff change hours
- Small businesses also rely on pupils at lunchtime, if there is a shorter lunch time pupils will not be visiting shops
- Additional childcare for afternoon across a month or families with more children – very expensive, availability of childcare limited
- Parents collecting Prim/Secondary – problem being in 2 places at same time
- Yarrow Primary – Length of bus journey for young pupils and impact on them – can they remain focused/ability to stay learning for education of school day (but can see huge benefits)
- High schools – Parent thought we were taking Principle Teachers out (E.Loathian example given)
- Is Friday afternoon the best afternoon to do development work?
- If the pupil half day was a Wed would it not be more disruptive for pupils?
- Nursery 600 hours – are we going to align nurseries with school times under this proposal. (Parental issues regarding collecting nursery and primary pupils)
- Can you confirm that it is Friday the half day – Mixed messages out there.
- Will there be a lunch time on Short day
- Is there a Plan B if councillors don't agree
- It feels like you are cutting budgets and we (parents) are subsidising it. Even if alternative are found for Friday afternoon we still need to pay for them so increase in costs for parents (at a time when money is tight)
- What would be the impact on pupils extra-curricular activities eg swimming lessons at 3.30 – with longer day will BSLT change their times to still allow this to go ahead
- If all extra-curricular activities are moved to a Friday afternoon then children at childminders will miss out as childminders will not be able to take them as they have other children – so our children are going to miss out on more
- Clarify if nursery is going to change at the same time as schools (600 hours)
- What are next steps re-agreeing school day and how does this impact on Primary hours
- Are staff/teachers/elected members behind this?
- Will there still be a requirement for in-service training days
- On half day will school buildings be open for user groups to use
- Can you align school timetables without going to a 4 and half day week
- How long should lunch time be



- If teaching staff are still going to be in on a Friday afternoon how does that save money? – impact on pupil choice
- If we speak about alignment would this allow there to be 8 choices rather than 6 choices (national guidance)
- Timing of decision being made and then sorting out details – should all details be out before to consultation – only showing half the picture – asking us to comment when we only know some of the detail
- Lack of time for children to have their lunch – sit down and eat
- How exhausted are pupils going to be and what impact will this have on the children
- Will this lead to more absenteeism on a Friday
- Massive change

## **Stow Parent Council's response to the asymmetric week consultation**

This response is based mainly on the opinions of Stow Parent Council, although it also includes some comments from other parents. Although views from the Parent Forum were sought we do not know how representative these are. The comments are specifically around the issues for the asymmetric week in primary schools.

The issues and concerns raised addressed the following:

### **1. Length of school day**

We have concerns regarding the increased length of school day particularly for younger children and those with additional support needs. Children are likely to be tired and this may impact negatively on behaviour and ability to learn. Children as young as 4 years, entering P1 this year would be expected to go from 2.5 hours pre-school education straight to 6hours 35min day. A negative start to education could have a lasting impact on our children.

### **2. Extra-curricular activities**

Extra-curricular activities would be affected. There will be less time for these at the end of a long school day and young children are less likely to have the energy to engage positively in extra-curricular activities. There is also very little time for organisations that provide extra-curricular activities to restructure their timetable to be able to provide activities in a reduced after-school timeslot.

### **3. Safety**

In the winter months children will be travelling to and from school in the dark/limited daylight which raises safety concerns particularly when children are encouraged to 'walk to school'.

### **4. Rural transport**

There is a concern that for rural children who rely on taxis, their days will be significantly longer.

### **5. Childcare**

There is a concern regarding childcare arrangements for the half day. These include availability, cost and appropriateness of childcare.

### **6. Short implementation time**

We believe there is insufficient time for working parents to change working arrangements or source appropriate childcare; for childcare providers to increase childcare provision or for clubs to establish extracurricular activities before August 2014. As a parent council we are also concerned on the pressures on the school who are already having to implement the additional pre-school hours.

### **7. Transport dictating delivery of primary school education.**

The main driver for the introduction of the asymmetric week in primary schools seems to be the potential increased transport costs if it was only implemented in high schools. However, we feel that transport should not be dictating how education is delivered in primary schools when there are no clear benefits to the children.

We would like to stress that our concerns around the introduction of the asymmetric week in primary school lie primarily with the length of the school day and the effect that this may have on young children as outlined in point 1. Issues around childcare (excluding cost for some families) are likely to be things that can be solved in the long-term and parents are more likely to put up with these if they thought there was a direct benefit to their children's education. However, we feel that the biggest negative impact will be felt by primary school children and their families without any direct benefit.

We do not feel that the proposed benefits of better cross school working, transition to high schools and better delivery of the 3-18 curriculum are sufficient to balance the negatives. The proposed benefits are all things that we have been told are currently in place now. We do understand that the asymmetric week is necessary at secondary level to ensure a certain standard of education in the current economic restraints. We will, in the future, all be parents of children in high school and will wish our children to have the best opportunities when they are there. However, this is not sufficient reason to support a model that may be detrimental to

our children whilst they are in primary school.

We feel very strongly that even if the asymmetric week is introduced to high schools in August 2014, its introduction to primary schools should be delayed for the following reasons:

1. To allow further investigation of school transport costs. If the main reason that primary schools have to follow the same model as high schools is to prevent an increase in transport costs then we would request that this is looked at again. Can school transport be delivered in a way so as not to increase costs if only high schools have the asymmetric week?
2. To allow parents, extracurricular activity providers, childcarers and schools time to plan for its introduction if primary schools do have to follow the asymmetric week model.

**Stow Parent Council**