

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

15 October 1996

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Report No 747/96

**GUIDANCE STAFF IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this Report is to outline difficulties faced by secondary schools in fulfilling a wide range of Guidance functions with a reduced complement of promoted posts, and to offer possible approaches which could help to address these difficulties.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- (i) approves the establishment of Guidance posts in secondary schools detailed in Appendix 1;
- (ii) instructs me to monitor the impact of enhanced Guidance complements on the ability of secondary schools to provide effective personal, social vocational and curricular advice and guidance to all pupils, this monitoring to include school-based consultations within the agreed consultative mechanisms on workload already established in all schools, and consultation with secondary head teachers and teacher representatives on the JCC;
- (iii) approves the amended basis for the allocation of Senior Teachers to secondary schools detailed in Appendix 2;

**BACKGROUND**

The current arrangements for establishing promoted post complements in secondary schools have been operating now since 1972 when the then Scottish Education Department issued Circular No 826. This circular provided guidance to education authorities on the complements of promoted posts in secondary schools which the Secretary of State regarded as appropriate, including specifically recommended numbers of posts of Assistant Head Teacher (AHT), Principal Teacher of Guidance (PT(G)) and Assistant Principal Teacher of Guidance (APT(G)) within each secondary school.

## **ROLE OF GUIDANCE STAFF**

Since 1972 the role of a Guidance teacher in Scotland has developed steadily, and today every secondary school relies heavily on a Guidance team, led normally by an Assistant Head Teacher or a Depute Head Teacher. This team is responsible for the co-ordination and delivery of a wide range of activities central to the aims of the school, which include personal and social guidance, curricular guidance and vocational guidance. Each pupil in a secondary school at any given time will relate to one particular Guidance teacher, and the pupil should know who that teacher is. Guidance staff have an involvement as class teachers for curricular areas such as Personal and Social Education, they offer personal guidance to individual pupils as part of their pastoral roles which include a significant commitment to the counselling of individual pupils, and in recent years Guidance staff have played a pivotal role in assisting maturing adolescents in setting targets for themselves through the process of profiling. In addition, all Guidance teachers have a subject teaching commitment.

In order to ensure the concept of a Guidance teacher is meaningful, the number of children to whom each Guidance teacher is assigned needs to be manageable. SED Circular 826, in recommending the number of PTs (Guidance) and APTs (Guidance) in broad roll bands, offered a framework which provided a ratio of pupils to Guidance staff of between 100:1, and 200:1. On average, using Circular 826, the eight Angus secondary schools would have 48 Guidance teachers for 7253 pupils (August 1996), a ratio of 151:1. It is important also to stress the differences in roles between APTs and PTs : for example a PT (Guidance) is likely to carry responsibilities for whole school initiatives in addition to her/his pastoral role which are not part of the remit of an APT.

Different schools have adopted different systems for organising Guidance activities, loosely characterised as horizontal (guidance staff relate entirely to one year group), or vertical (guidance staff relate to a small group of pupils in each year group). Depending on which system the school has adopted, the pressure on guidance staff will manifest itself in different ways. For example, any Guidance teacher who is responsible for S4 or S5 or S6 pupils will require to devote considerable time to ensuring that the curricular and vocational advice available to these pupils is sound and comprehensive; the advent of Higher Still is likely to make this aspect of Guidance work even more demanding. Many Guidance teachers find themselves also providing a vital pastoral and counselling role to children and young people experiencing major problems whose source is often outwith school. Clearly the capacity of a Guidance teacher to devote adequate time to individual pupils depends partly on how effective the whole staff approach to Guidance is, and partly on how much time head teachers can ring-fence for Guidance duties, but critically also on how many pupils are allocated to each Guidance teacher for pastoral purposes.

## **OVERALL STAFFING LEVELS**

The teacher staffing levels in Angus secondary schools are higher than that supported by central government funding; all the available information suggests that they are also higher than those in many other Scottish education authorities.

Some adjustments have been made to staffing levels in recent years as a result of the temporary additional funding provided by central government for the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), which concentrated on children and