

Schools could call in nursery teachers to deal with recruitment crisis

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14 Jul 2017



A Scottish council has warned it may have to call in nursery teachers to take primary school classes if the nationwide recruitment crisis doesn't improve.

In a briefing note, Clackmannanshire council set out a number of bleak scenarios facing the local authority as it prepares for staff shortages when children return in autumn.

As well as moving teachers out of nurseries and into the classroom, it warned some schools in the area may be "unable to run classes for certain year groups".

In addition, some children with the right catchment areas may be turned away, while class size limits would likely be breached, with some even breaking the 30-child limit.

The warning was sent from the council's chief education officer Anne Pearson.

She said schools across Clackmannanshire would have to find room for 90 extra pupils, and would need to employ 13 extra teachers to meet that demand.

However, it already brought in 25 teachers in February as part of a process in which the council "appointed all applicants who met our minimum standard".

The report adds: "We have carried out a risk assessment and identified that there could be a major impact on school improvements and closing the gaps.

"Senior managers in schools will have to cover for absences, which would take them away from their leadership roles.

"It could be the case that some schools may have to turn catchment children away and offer alternative places in other schools.

"Ultimately, a level of teacher absence beyond the norm could lead to some schools unable to run classes for certain year groups.

"The service may have to move nursery teachers out of nursery classes into primary classes."

The paper stated that actions to address the shortage could include

“exploring recruitment beyond Scotland”.

Yesterday, the Scottish Conservatives revealed how teacher shortages were leading to secondary schools reducing the number of subjects offered to Higher pupils.

In some councils, schools just miles apart had a huge variation in the number of options available.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

“We’ve heard warnings for many years about the possible impact of teacher shortages.

“Now we have hard-hitting predictions which could happen within a matter of months, and there will undoubtedly be negative consequences for children.

“Parents will be alarmed that things have got so bad nursery teachers may have to be drafted in, and entire age groups in some primary schools may have to be sent elsewhere.

“This is the consequence of an SNP government which has had a boom and bust approach to teacher training.

“The nationalists have planned disastrously, and really left councils in the lurch when it comes to dealing with the impact.

“The SNP must take serious heed of these warnings, and act urgently to ensure these scenarios coming down the track don’t play out.”

Notes to editors:

To see the briefing note, visit:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/22-June-2017-Primary-School-Teacher-Shortage.docx>