



Consultation on Length of School Day – January 2023

Dear Parent/Carer

As indicated in the letter from Campbell Hornell sent out last week, we are one of four local Secondary schools who are launching a formal stakeholder consultation on the length of the school day.

The Proposal

Specifically we are looking to reduce the current length of the school day from 1650 minutes to 1600 minutes per week. This will involve removing the Registration period of 10 minutes each day. There would be no change to the number of taught periods per week which would remain at 32 – 50 minute periods.

Why are we asking to reduce the length of the school day?

As indicated in Campbell Hornell's letter, all six Midlothian Secondary Schools are aiming to work together to ensure an improved senior phase offer for all young people. Currently some schools are not able to offer the same range of senior phase subjects as other High Schools and we need to ensure we reduce any disparity.

Over the next few years Midlothian Secondary schools will collaborate more and take advantage of the new digital platforms introduced via the *Equipped for Learning* initiative where students can learn in a mixture of remote and face to face contexts to support more flexible learning. A necessary initial step to ensuring opportunities for flexible and wider opportunities is to establish a common school day for all schools and this is about the length and structure of the school day. This was planned to occur in Session 2024-25 to allow the school day to fit in with the stated Scottish Government policy to reduce class contact time for teachers. However, as part of this work we think the initial move to reduce the school day to 1600 minutes across the Secondary schools in Session 2023-24 will help support any collaborative work across the six secondary schools now and also allow a base for additional cooperation into the future.

What happens at Registration?

At Penicuik High School, Registration is at the start of the School day, every day for 10 minutes from 8:30 am to 8:40 am. At this time staff fill in the official electronic register and follow up on absences. They also highlight/ read the official daily bulletin which informs students about events, changes the school day etc... Registration is also useful for allowing staff to pick up on any issues young people have before they attend class and this information can be communicated to other pastoral staff

Could we still do these things without Registration?

A number of Midlothian Secondary schools already operate without Registration without major issues. The daily bulletin is available out with Registration and now we have Google classrooms more communication is delivered directly to young people in these digital classrooms. We have evidence that this is a more responsive system than the more passive Registration process. We are also told by a number of students that Registration teachers don't always highlight the notices or actively read them. On days where we can't have Registration we already use Period 1 to communicate the notices.

The Registration teacher is actively involved in clearing past. unexplained absences and helps keep the attendance record from the beginning of the day. If we drop Registration, period 1 staff will be the starting point for initial attendance registration. Attendance is taken across the day every period by all teachers. We will need to use capacity within the support staff team to pick up the unexplained absence clearing normally taken during Registration. We have built some capacity toward that already.

In terms of communication. The daily Bulletin or notices have been used for many years to communicate with young people but since we have developed the use of Google classroom this platform has become a vital tool to ensure direct communication. We also now have a regular assembly programme and can use core classes to deliver notices, letters or reports to young people.

The pastoral aspect of Registration is important and is sometimes a more relaxed place to intervene and assess student issues. If we do not have Registration then period 1 teachers will need to be more alert to young people's needs as they enter school that day. However, all teachers have a responsibility to look after the wellbeing of all young people in their care and would be expected to pick up any pastoral issues across the school day as they emerged and this responsibility would not change. Staff regularly complete welfare concerns forms to highlight issues they have picked up and these are assessed as a priority by senior staff. Period 1 staff will still also be able to accept notes as appropriate, check uniform and communicate any urgent messages.

Summary

Proposal – To remove 50 minutes (10 minute registration from Mon-Fri) from the school day

Current situation	Proposed Change
School day 1650 minutes /week	1600 minutes / week
Registration teachers check unexplained absences/notes/uniform / welfare during initial contact time in school. Teaching staff across the day also check attendance/uniform/ welfare/ support needs every period.	Period 1 teachers will be first point of attendance recording Teaching staff will still check uniform/ welfare during initial contact time in school as would all teaching staff period by period.
Registration teachers follow up past unexplained absences.	Support staff / guidance staff will follow up on unexplained absences.
Daily bulletin is communicated to students in Registration and is displayed on TV screens.	Daily Bulletin would be available on TV screen and fro Period 1 staff. Increasing use would be made of Google classrooms and Assembly time to ensure good communication.
Forms / documents distributed at Registration time for students to take home.	Forms/ documents will be distributed across core teaching times e.g. English or will be emailed home or be available online.
School day starts at 8:30 am	School day starts at 8:40 am – 10 minutes later.

	This would mean the current school day structure would not need to change further.
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What happens next?

All stakeholders will have an opportunity to give us feedback through a Google Survey form – <https://forms.gle/Bu8Ggp63oFs5149A8>

We will keep this survey open for three weeks from the date of this letter and collate the feedback to inform the consultation. I will write to all stakeholders again in February with further information.

If you have any questions or wish to make a direct submission please email penicuik_hs@midlothian.gov.uk over the next three weeks.

Thank you in advance for your feedback.

Best wishes

Craig Biddick

Head Teacher