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Dear Parent/Carer

Maths Staffing – Session 23/24

I write to update you on the challenges the school has experienced this session in terms of secondary Maths staffing. As you will be aware, the Principal Teacher of Maths, Mr Kevin Hodgson, has been absent since the October holidays, and Mr Keith Ritchie submitted his resignation with effect from November 2023.

To cover these vacancies, amounting to ten teaching days in total, we are deploying the following staff:

- Mrs Fiona Fennell, teacher of Maths (Acting-Principal Teacher) - available from Pitlochry High School for **one and half days** per week.
- Mrs Monica Warren, teacher of Maths, available from Crieff High School for **one day** per week.
- Mr James Craik, teacher of Maths, on supply cover for **four days** per week.
- Mrs Donna Jenkins, Primary teacher, for **five days** a week (in most cases, to date, covering classes up to Curriculum for Excellence Fourth level/National 4.)

Also, from next week:

- Mr McLean, Head of Science, also a qualified Maths teacher, supporting with some senior classes, equivalent to **one day** per week.

With these additional staff we have been able to cover almost all classes in the Maths department with appropriately qualified staff, though inevitably many classes have experienced discontinuity in teaching personnel. As of next week, with the planned addition of Mr McLean, we hope to be able to cover all classes with an appropriately qualified teacher.

As parents may be aware, there is a very challenging national recruitment environment for a number of secondary subjects, including Maths, which can affect the school's ability to recruit, or engage teachers on supply. However, we have recently interviewed for Mr Ritchie's post and are hopeful of being able to make an appointment, though it may not be until after the Easter break that a new member of staff can start.



We will have a further staffing change later in this term when Mrs Lumsden will begin maternity leave. We are now in the process of recruiting a temporary replacement for this post too but have already put robust contingencies plans in place for the event in which we cannot fill this vacancy ahead of Mrs Lumsden's departure.

Understandably, the school has had contact from several parents to express their concerns about continuity of delivery of Maths teaching, and senior management also responded in detail to concerns that were raised at last week's Parent Council Meeting.

I am writing to all parents now to reiterate the assurances we gave to parents at that meeting that the school is doing everything in its power to ensure that the current situation does not result in detriment to any pupils. Due to the absence of the permanent Principal Teacher and the significant turnover of staff, the senior management team have been heavily involved in the ongoing operation of the department, including curriculum and assessment planning, and quality assurance. In particular, there has been a high level of scrutiny of pupil performance in assessments. To date, assessment across all years have been at least in line with previous years, with a marked improvement in both S3 Numeracy grades and our most recent S4 'tracking' returns. Going forward, we will closely analyse performances in the recently completed S4-6 prelim examinations.

The school has also been in discussion with colleagues at Perth and Kinross Council to seek their support in addressing our staffing difficulties, and together we will continue to look at where further support from other schools may be required to cover needs that may arise.

Further to points raised by parents at the Parent Council meeting, we have also taken the following steps:

- Reviewed the current tracking system of pupil performance in S4-6 Maths assessments to ensure the teachers can precisely identify gaps in pupil learning and implement further strategies to address any such gaps.
- Agreed to share videos on Teams to support pupils in their learning.
- Agreed to hold pupil focus groups to gather pupil views and opinions on the current situation, and act on any issues arising.

In conclusion, the school will continue to plan and seek supports as appropriate to minimise the impact of staffing challenges on our young people. Should any parent have a specific concern about their child's progress in Maths this session, I would urge them to contact either Mrs Fennell, Acting-PT; or Mr Scott Douglas, Acting-Depute Headteacher, who has taken on senior management responsibility for Maths. The information in this letter is general by its nature, but we are keen to respond to any individual concerns as they arise.

Yours sincerely

John Devine
Headteacher