

from Culter School Parent Council

Dear Rhona Jarvis,

Culter School Parent Council held a special meeting on Thursday 6th November, to discuss the proposal for a 4.5 day week in Aberdeen City schools. Prior to the meeting, we received emails from the parents of Culter School, on the subject, and we talked to as many parents as possible. The majority of parents in Culter, that we heard from (85%), are against the proposal. 15% were in favour or undecided.

Many parents in Culter are working parents and there were, not surprisingly, serious concerns about childcare (both practical and cost). However, the main concerns, of the majority of parents, were about the education and welfare of the children.

Here is a summary of the concerns of Culter parents:

1. The increased length of the school day.

Tiredness for all ages of school children, reduced concentration, reduced time for after school activities, reduced time for homework, coming home in darkness in winter (has any research been done on the increased chance of road traffic accidents and cost implications?). Cramming the school week into 4.5 days by working for longer with shorter breaks contradicts the health message directed at working adults to strike the correct work life balance.

2. Shorter breaks.

Reduced social interaction, reduced physical activity - health issues and this can affect concentration, shorter lunchtime - less time to choose and eat healthy food, some children missing their only hot, nutritious meal of the day, on a Friday.

3. Unsupervised children on Friday afternoons.

'Latch-key' children, roaming teenagers.

4. Friday morning absence.

This would inevitably increase.

5. Working parents.

Additional costs for working parents or reduced income (this would have a negative impact on children and ultimately cost implications), difficulty for after school clubs recruiting extra staff and providing facilities/ space for a lot more children on Friday afternoons.

Parents were not convinced by the supposed advantages of the 4.5 week:

1. Opportunity for staff professional development.

Parents felt that teachers would not benefit (and therefore neither would the

children) because they would be doing more than they are currently contracted to do - which they do already anyway!

2. Saving Aberdeen City Council money.

Parents thought this very short sighted. They were not convinced that ACC has worked out the full cost implications. Some parents suggested that the initiative would ultimately incur extra costs for the council relating to all their arguments against (eg additional Support for Learning staff for children struggling as a result of longer school days, vandalism caused by teenagers with no where to go).

One parent summed up the feelings and views expressed by many:

"It seems to me that the council are not putting our children first. They do not want to invest in the future, it is all about cost and not about what is actually best for our kids."

We strongly urge Aberdeen City Council to abandon this proposal.

Yours sincerely,
Clare Danielian
Chairperson, Culter Parent Council