

PRIMARY SCHOOL ORGANISATION CONSULTATION

NOTES OF A JOINT MEETING HELD FOR HOLY CROSS (CE) (Foundation) JUNIOR SCHOOL AND SPRINGFIELD INFANT SCHOOL ON 19 MARCH 2008

GOVERNORS' MEETING HELD AT 5.00pm

Present:

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| Nicola Cartwright | Parent Governor (Springfield & Holy Cross) |
| Rebecca Dolbey | Governor (Springfield) |
| Keith Gee | Parent Governor (Springfield & Holy Cross) |
| Karen Lightwood | Governor (Springfield) |
| Mr A Manterfield | Chair of Governors (Springfield) |
| Alistair Mitchell | Parent Governor (Springfield) |
| Pat Swain | Governor (Springfield) |
| Wanda Wheeler | Headteacher (Springfield) |
| Mrs S Evans | Governor (Holy Cross) |
| Dave Foulkes | Governor (Holy Cross) |
| Rachel Harper | Governor (Holy Cross) |
| Karen Higgins | Governor (Holy Cross) |
| Tammy Simms | Parent Governor (Holy Cross) |
| Margaret Taylor | Governor (Holy Cross) |
| Mrs E Almond | Acting Headteacher (Holy Cross) |
| Karen Calder (KC) | County Councillor |
| John Rowley (JR) | Acting Assistant Director |
| John Baxter (JB) | Education Places Manager |
| Val Hawley (Note taker) | Admissions Manager |
| Colin Hopkins | Lichfield Diocesan Education Director |

John Rowley opened the meeting and introduced those present. He explained:

- the reasons for the review;
- the review process; and
- possible next steps

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| A Manterfield | What is the Cabinet? |
| KC | The Conservative Party which has formed the administration and has a Cabinet consisting of 9 Councillors who all have a distinct role. There is one Cabinet for the whole County. The system is similar to central government. |
| R Dolbey | What is meant by views being in the public domain? |
| JR | All Cabinet members will have sight of the collected views. When Cabinet meets they will consider all 8 of the current amalgamation proposals but as separate proposals. |
| R Dolbey | What can Governors see? |
| JB | All the unedited comments will be filed and made available to Cabinet. The Local Authority is currently considering whether all the comments can be put on the website and made available to the public in that way. These |

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| | comments will only be edited in order to hide the identity of particular children or where people have asked not have their names made public. If there are requests under Freedom of Information people must be given that information. It is also necessary for the Local Authority to be as transparent as possible. |
| KC | Will be reporting back to the local Member for the area, Cllr Liz Parsons, who had sent her apologies for the meeting. |
| JR | This process is not about a Referendum, it is about considering all different views and comments. The question is whether there should be an amalgamation, and if yes, then what route should be taken. Three methods could be looked at as described in the paper. There is no proposal to demolish either of the schools, the whole site would be used. Closure of one or other school or both schools is part of the legal process for the amalgamation to work. If one school remains open the status of the new school remains with that school. This could also have an implication for the "serving" headteacher. Governors may wish to consider this. The school could take on the character of either school and select the new head from a pool. Where a new school is opened it must enter into a competition of bodies which might wish to make a bid to run the school. If bids are received the County Council has to consider these. If the County Council also wishes to bid then the Schools Adjudicator has to make the decision. |
| K Gee | On 19 May what will be decided at that point? |
| JR | Whether to go ahead with amalgamation or not. Competitions mean extra complexities. If a successor school is opted for then it will be much quicker and easier. |
| T Simms | Who are the competitors? |
| JR | It could be anyone. Locally it is not as likely to draw as much competition as in a larger urban area. So you could have different Faith groups. Secondary Schools will often attract private companies wishing to set up Academies. Locally it could be the Diocesan Authority or a community group who form a Trust. |
| D Foulkes | Will the set timetable allow for this competition? |
| JR | If necessary it would have to. A fresh timetable can be worked out at each stage of the process depending on what happens. |
| D Foulkes | Presumably the timetable would require the co-operation of the Governors. For instance Holy Cross as a Foundation school would have to be given a 2 year notice. |
| JR/JB | Not aware of any such requirement. Will check this out. |
| P Swain | What are the financial implications because of Holy Cross being a Foundation school? |
| JR | In the past there would have been substantial financial implications, but not any more. All schools are funded almost by the same formula. One difference is the ownership of the site. The status of schools has changed since Grant Maintained status was originally granted. Whilst the governors of Holy Cross school own the school they cannot sell it or change its use. If it closes, ownership automatically reverts to the County Council. |
| JB | The status in itself makes no difference to what is best for the children. |
| KC | Another Foundation school which is involved in a proposal to amalgamate has already indicated that they would be willing to forego their Foundation status. |
| P Swain | Under local plans, large scale building plans are still on the cards from Weeping Cross island to Percy Throwers. Has this been taken into |

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| | account, particularly the plans for social housing? |
| JB | Unitary Authority status will leave the County Council in a better position to decide upon housing developments, although the Local Authority has always worked closely with the planning authorities of the different councils. Currently we don't know how much of the land will be developed for residential or for commercial use, but it will take a number of years which gives time for more detailed planning. Additional housing can only be a good thing for the school. |
| JR | There are currently 317 children on roll across the two schools but the forecast for 2012 is to drop to 291. There are falling rolls across the county, although uneven. There would have to be quite a substantial increase in housing to reach the maximum capacity of both school buildings. New housing does not always bring as many children as might be expected. Major new developments can mean newly built schools, but this is a longer term issue. Ofsted issues mentioned in the paper should be put on one side as it is not a significant factor for these two schools. Staffing has been discussed directly with the staff. A staffing protocol is in place in terms of what it would mean for staff in an amalgamation. All current employees would automatically transfer, with the exception of the headteachers. |
| K Gee | What would happen to the governing bodies? |
| JR | If there is a successor school, the governing body will stay in place, but often the governing body will expand to include some additional members. The intention should be to bring the governing bodies together. If there is a new school then a new shadow governing body would be formed leading up to the opening. |
| JB | Hopefully the strengths of each governing body should be used. This process should not be seen as a takeover. In terms of staffing issues there's a 10% turnover of administrative staff and in the next 3 years there are about 40 headteachers who will be retiring. There should not be any need to make compulsory redundancies and the Local Authority will work with all staff towards continuity of service. The overriding view is to look after all staff. |
| JR | School buildings – the whole site would be needed. It would be up to the management of the school to think about how creatively it could be used. There may be a need for a combined staff room. In the future it may be possible to access some of the Primary Capital Grant funding for refurbishment of facilities. |
| R Dolbey | How far away is that funding available? |
| JB | Capital Grant funding is already available and the County Council will be starting to put forward a programme. For some schools it will mean a complete re-build, for others it will be refurbishment. |
| JR | Shropshire has to present a case to the DCSF. |
| W Wheeler | Can we have further explanation? |
| JB | The Local Authority will need to look at the vision for conjoining, so this could come into being fairly soon. |
| W Wheeler | What about bringing schools into 21 st century? |
| JR | There is a vision in terms of access to IT. |
| K Gee | Governors want the chance to put their views forward, but this there needs to be some funding. Amalgamation needs to be done properly and schools will want some help. There needs to be proper support behind it. |

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| JB | The key will be building experts working with the governing body and this will be fed into the funding streams. |
| KC | A good example of an amalgamation is at Albrighton and governors are encouraged to visit. (Some already have.) |
| JR | We should not forget the benefits for the children. Nationally the momentum is towards all through primary schools. The document gives a number of points in favour of this. Whilst there is no criticism of current provision, there are many benefits to be gained. |
| JB | Extended School and Pre-school Providers are also seen as having a vital role to play in future planning. Possibly demountable buildings can become permanent build. The Local Authority will be offering to speak with the current providers and asking for their views. |
| K Gee | Are there any plans for Local Authority provision? |
| JB | Not usually where a private or voluntary provider is already established. The Local Authority would only step in where there are local difficulties. |

John Rowley thanked Governors for attending.