

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

COMMUNITY/PARENTS' MEETING HELD AT 6.30pm

Present:

Rupert Gough	Parent
Helen Hartshorne	Parent
Sarah Gittins	Parent
Andrea Fannon	Parent
Lynne Preece	Parent
Andy Edwards	Parent
Diane Jenks	Parent
Sarah Baker	Parent
Helen Roberts	Parent
Cathy Hammond	Parent
Clare Oliver	Parent
Sharon Gill	Parent
Tammy Simms	Governor/Parent
Marianne Davies	Parent
Lynne Wild	Holy Cross Staff & Parent
Karen Lightwood	Governor/Parent
Alistair Mitchell	Governor/Parent
Rebecca Dolbey	Governor/Parent
Jackie Brennand	SABC Councillor
Karen Higgins	Governor/Parent
Rachel Harper	Governor/Teacher
Sara Evans	Governor/TA
Nikki Cartwright	Governor/Parent
Jatis Dale	Parent
Lorna Mead	Parent
Martyn Lightwood	Parent
Vicky Hall	Parent
Sue Barrett	Parent
Amy Jackman	Parent
Liz Williams	Parent
Elaine Almond	Acting Headteacher, Holy Cross
Allison Edwards	Parent
Angela Rigby	Parent
Marisa Fernandez	Parent
Susan Marine	Parent
Jarred White	Parent
Jen Tharby	Assistant Headteacher, Springfield
Wanda Wheeler	Headteacher, Springfield
Colin Hopkins	Director Of Education, Lichfield Diocese

Robin Chakroverty	Parent
Kandis Bailey	Parent
Julie Williams	Parent
Ben Williams	Ex-pupil
Karen Calder (KC)	County Councillor
John Rowley (JR)	Acting Assistant Director
John Baxter (JB)	Education Places Manager
Val Hawley (Note taker)	Admissions Manager

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

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

R Dolbey	If there are no other bids is the Local Authority obliged to put in a bid?
JR	Yes
A Edwards	Please explain the statement in the proposal (page 2) about transitions from one school to another.
JR	Any point of transition from one school to another can lead to a dip in learning. This will vary from child to child and of course all schools will work towards trying to minimise any problems.
J Brennan	Disagree. From her experience in education for many children it can be an exciting time. What about financial implications?
JR	Stressed that the statement about latest Ofsted inspections had no bearing on these two particular schools. It could be a factor with some amalgamations but not this one. The projected numbers of children on roll based on the best available information shows a decrease. This is the case across the county although it is not uniform. However the numbers would require the use of both buildings so a new primary would occupy the whole site.
J Brennan	How do the numbers break down between Infant and Juniors?
JB	134 in the Infants, 183 in the Juniors. This area could be part of the strategic housing plan. Any new housing between Weeping Cross and Percy Throwers would be good news for the school. Where there is significant building development the Local Authority works with the builders to ensure there is adequate accommodation. The Local Authority has always worked closely with the planning officers of SABC so this will continue with unitary status.
JR	New housing often produces fewer children than might be expected.
JR	If schools are amalgamated, one has CE Controlled and Foundation status, the other is a Community school. Ten years

	<p>ago the Foundation or Grant Maintained status would have made a significant difference, but now the funding formula is pretty much the same, as are terms of employment, etc. As part of the consultation parents and governors may wish to express a view on this, but in practical terms it makes very little difference.</p> <p>Staffing issues have been discussed at the previous meeting with staff. All staff will automatically transfer, with the exception of the headteacher(s), depending on which option is taken.</p>
JB	The Local Authority works closely with headteachers in order to try and have no compulsory redundancies. There will in any case be a loss of about 40 headteachers over the next 3 years through retirement.
JR	<p>In terms of the school buildings, a new primary would occupy the whole site but there are still options to think creatively about how to use the accommodation. It would not be unusual in an all through primary to have a dedicated provision for different age groups. Options can occur which make better use of the site. There are some substantial funds which are being made available over the next few years to help improve school facilities. At some stage all schools should become eligible to access the Primary Capital Programme which is looking at both new build and upgrades of existing schools.</p> <p>The key benefit of all through primaries is in minimising transitions, making transfers between Key Stages easier for the children. This does not mean that the work done in separate infant and juniors is not good, but the primary scheme is better.</p>
R Chackroverty	Are there any educational benefits in keeping them separate?
JR	There is an argument about school size, hence the Local Authority would not opt for very large primary schools. There is an issue about "focus". An Infant school has a stronger focus on Key Stage 1, whereas Primary schools see KS1 as a stepping stone and the greater focus is on KS2.
R Chakroverty	What about the child's confidence?
JR	All schools will try and cater for these needs. Primary schools can still differentiate between infant and juniors, there is not necessarily just one package across the whole range.
J Brennand	Please explain the bullet points about school size on page 4.
JR	The third bullet point about schools for no more than 420 is pertinent to the future model from this amalgamation.
J Brennand	In her opinion 420 is too large.
JB	Gave an assurance that this type of model was being looked at in other counties beside Shropshire.
JR	Of the 141 primary schools in Shropshire, more than 100 would be classed nationally as small and only 8 as large. 420 would not necessarily be described as large. However, Shropshire Local Authority has set this size in the local context because in

	Shropshire most schools are quite small.
KC	Shropshire provides an excellent service and would not be proposing or agreeing to anything to the detriment of the children.
JR	Emphasised this is not a “done deal”. It is still all open to debate and therefore open to all views.
K Hammond	Surely the plan will go ahead whatever views are expressed.
JR	Not necessarily. This is a genuine exercise to collate views. It is already apparent that different decisions have been taken since the proposals were first put forward.
KC	The Cabinet has only made the decision to proceed with this formative consultation at this stage and only on amalgamations. The public are aware that closure of a number of schools was halted. The County Council has a policy in favour of primary schools. It will also look at whether we can stay the same and how this fits in with the policy.
K Hammond	But can parents really do anything about it?
KC	One governor stated that he could only be in favour if there was appropriate funding. That is the sort of comment which will be fed back for consideration.
JB	Claimed that of all authorities he had worked for, Shropshire was the best in terms of assurances given to the staff and governors. Officers would work to the best of their abilities to smooth the whole process and take away parents’ concerns. Shropshire has a good track record, good examples of how amalgamations have worked are at Albrighton and Bicton. Both parents and children are very happy with the outcomes. The Local Authority is trying to work for you as parents and for your children to give the best possible value for money. Officers and the Councillors would not propose anything to diminish the best possible provision.
JR	If you don’t agree put across your case for the opposite or an alternative. The Local Authority also wants to know what the disadvantages of the proposals would be.
B Williams	Why amalgamate Infant and Junior schools, why not junior and secondary schools? Why gives parents a choice? Why not just tell parents which school their child will attend?
JR	Good point and one that has been proposed in another part of the town. It is also a model which is being looked at in other parts of the country. The practical problem here is that children from the primary schools go to a variety of secondary schools around the town. It could create a very large primary school or a very small secondary school.
JB	Parental preference exists in law. In the case of the new Hadley campus which incorporates both primary and secondary schools on the same site, the primary is not the only primary school which feeds into the secondary school. Telford & Wrekin was in an earlier wave of funding under the Building

	Schools for the Future scheme. It may be possible from 2010/11 onwards to look at campus type schools, although this idea was rejected at Much Wenlock where a new secondary school is being built. Experience shows that transition from a larger primary to secondary school is much easier. Secondary schools do work very hard on transitions.
JR	Emphasised again the need to send in views. Any phone calls will go through to the Customer Service Centre but parents can ask to speak directly to the Local Authority Officers.

John Rowley thanked people for attending and the meeting closed at 7.45 pm.