

APPENDIX 5D: PRIMARY SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE

PRIMARY SCHOOL REORGANISATION CONSULTATION EVENING

Venue: Meole Brace

Time: 6.15pm

Present:

Margaret Cooper	Headteacher	Ashford Carbonell
M Bennett	Headteacher	Beech Grove Junior
Jane Wild	Chair	Condover
Chris Ball	Headteacher	Corvedale
Jessica Kent	Governor	Corvedale
Jane Hughes	Headteacher	Hadnall
Charles Bolland	Chair	Hadnall
Hilary Burke	Headteacher	Meole Brace Sec
Liz Holmes	Headteacher	Norbury
Claire Heskins	Headteacher	Selattyn
Nicky Hill	Chair	Selattyn
Dr Brian Johnson	Governor	Selattyn
Mr K bowyer	Governor	Selattyn
Louise Whitgreave	Headteacher	St Andrew's, Nesscliffe
Rachel Warner	Chair	St Andrew's, Nesscliffe
Ann Hartley	Portfolio Holder for Children's Services	
Liz Nicholson	Acting Director of Community Services	
Carol Tiddy	Acting Director of Children and Young People's Services	
Ian Budd	Assistant Director – Strategy and Business Support	
Norrie Porter	Head of Premises and Planning	
Maggie Casserley	School Finance Officer	
Paul Salmon	School Finance Officer	
Julie Lewis	School Finance Officer	

Jane Wild, Chair of Condover Primary

Jane Wild queried recent news items that birth rate is increasing because of immigration.

Ian Budd explained how projected figures are worked out and the source of information. Figures are obtained from children known to the Health Authority and in discussion with County and District Planning authorities which would take into account proposed housing developments. So far, immigration has propped up projected numbers rather than increasing them above projections. Previous predictions had proved quite accurate.

Brian Johnson, Governor, Selattyn

Dr Johnson said that he had checked figures with the Health Authority and the birth is increasing having gone up 8% in Shropshire.

Norrie Porter said that figures are projected from known children to the Health Authority, but Shropshire would include Telford and Wrekin where figures may be rising. Other factors are taken into account such as when a cohort is likely to move from an area, eg where there are starter homes from which families move before children are school age. Also the likely years in which children move from or into the private education system.

Brian Johnson, Governor, Selattyn

Dr Johnson asked if information on babies born outside Shropshire is also taken into account. Norrie Porter said that information from other counties is also obtained.

Norrie Porter offered to discuss these projected figures at more length with Dr Johnson to clarify.

Nicky Hill, Governor, Selattyn

If you are looking at the model of 4/7 class school being effective, do you take into account the quality of education in smaller schools?

Carol Tiddy replied that in Shropshire we are fortunate not to have any poorly performing schools so the quality of education in all schools is recognised.

Claire Heskins, Headteacher, Selattyn

When children are removed from one school to go to another in the area, the reason for this is not logged unless there is an appeal. What happens when children leave one school because they don't like it and it leaves a hole?

Carol Tiddy replied that parents are free to move from one school to another according to their preference if places are available. Surplus places make this easier for parents but can destabilise other schools.

Liz Holmes, Norbury

The issues have been discussed by Governors and there appears to be a strong emphasis on weaknesses in small schools. Governors, Headteacher and parents feel strongly that small schools offer good quality education and are able to monitor children more because of their size.

Liz Holmes went on to say that, having taught in a larger schools, she sees working in a small school as a teaching Head as a strength as she can respond and adapt quickly.

Carol Tiddy replied that there was not meant to be this emphasis for smaller schools. One of our key points is stability for communities and staff.

Margaret Cooper, Headteacher, Ashford Carbonell

Margaret Cooper said that, as a small school, she feels vulnerable but realises something has to be done in Shropshire. She would like assurance that real consideration would be given for transition of children to larger schools. Margaret Cooper also asked if amalgamation is a possibility.

Carol Tiddy thanked Margaret Cooper for her breadth and vision and said that the consultation was to come up with solutions.

Ian Budd reiterated that this consultation is about overall vision for a policy to address the issues. Best practice from the past will also be looked at. In the past SCC has worked carefully with Governors, Headteacher, Staff and communities in a transition plan, eg amalgamating two schools, pupils moving to a neighbouring school where transport plans would need to be carefully considered. Some staff have transferred to a school with pupils providing continuity. We want to recognise the importance of the school in the community.

Rachel Warner, Governor, St Andrew's, Nesscliffe

Have you taken into account local plans ?

Ian Budd said that SCC is working very closely with planning departments, eg if there was to be a major development, a Section 106 would be sought from developers whereby developers contribute to costs of new schools or classes. It is also important in terms of entitlement as it would not be appropriate on a large development to tell parents that children should travel elsewhere.

Martin Bennett, Chair, Beech Grove junior

Martin Bennett referred to the West Midlands Spatial Strategy on Housing. In the Oswestry area in 2000 there were falling pupil numbers but then ended up with the biggest secondary in Shropshire.

He asked how you have calculated 2 miles and 6 miles.

Also, in the possibility of an amalgamation, would it be affected if an Infant was non-denominational and the Junior School was Church of England ?

Ian Budd replied that it is the distance by road from a child's home to school.

Ian Budd gave an example of two schools which had amalgamated last summer and had been welcomed by Governors, Staff and the local community as a way of addressing falling pupil rolls.

Norrie Porter said that if schools were amalgamated with one being a Church school, this would not make a difference in terms of Schools Organisation Policy but would need to look at the balance over the County.

Louise Whitgreave, Headteacher, St Andrew's, Nesscliffe

Louise Whitgreave said that the main concerns would be the children. She felt it was very important to keep children's friendship groups together.

Staff were also concerned about more school minibuses, especially on narrow country lanes.

Ian Budd replied that there had been a number of scrutiny activities around school transport issues. There is a very good record on safety. However, this would also be taken seriously as part of the process.

Jessica Kent, Governor, Corvedale

The Corvedale area has 4/5 small schools which are all very distinctive. Certain villages have built up around the school which, in turn, attracts young families because a lot of parents prefer children to go to local schools. If a school is threatened with closure it has an effect on the whole village.

Carol Tiddy said that she would welcome more information from communities on how they are affected by schools, eg a few bullet points on how a community would be affected.

Charles Bolland, Chair, Hadnall

Charles Bolland asked how much say do we have ? How can we influence the Government ?

Carol Tiddy replied that the only influence Central Government has is that it allocates funding. Approval of Schools Organisation Policy is required from Shropshire County Council's Cabinet.

Keith Bowyer, Governor, Selattyn

Parents have chosen to send their children to Selattyn and would not be happy for their children to go to another school which they did not wish to choose in the first place.

Rachel Warner, Chair, St Andrew's, Selattyn

Rachel Warner pointed out that recent headlines on the issue had not been very professional.

Ian Budd said that a letter had been emailed to Schools and letters sent to Chairs of Governors as soon as the report had been released. This is a big news story for local media but they did not always report accurately. A letter has also gone out to Parish Councils

Carol Tiddy reiterated that there is no list of schools earmarked for closure as had been reported by the media.

Dr Brian Johnson, Governor, Selattyn

Have you considered mothballing in larger schools?

Ian Budd replied that previously unused classrooms are now used for early years provision / after school clubs etc, as well as Multi Agency Teams working with children and families.

Claire Heskins, Headteacher, Selattyn

Claire Heskins said that, as a new small school Headteacher, this is just the type of issue that makes it difficult to stay positive.

Carol Tiddy said that she appreciated this point but reiterated the high quality of provision in small schools.

Margaret Cooper, Headteacher, Ashford Carbonell

Margaret Cooper said that she agreed with the above point.

Carol Tiddy said that she appreciated the above points and SCC is providing opportunities from all groups.

Ian Budd said that when rumours about a particular school have surfaced, he has worked closely with the Headteacher to deal with this.

Louise Whitgreave, Headteacher, St Andrew's, Nesscliffe

Louise Whitgreave pointed out that the Shrewsbury Chronicle had been contacting schools on the issue.

The Consultation Evening closed at 7.35pm