

## Appendix 2

### Proposed amalgamation of Hangleton Infant and Junior Schools from January 2015

#### Notes of a public consultation meeting held at Hangleton Junior School, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2014

By agreement with the two governing bodies, this was a single consultation meeting to which parents, staff, governors and others with an interest in both schools were invited. Approximately 35 people attended the meeting, which was hosted by the two Chairs of Governors, Lesley Walker (Hangleton Infant School) and Kate Matthews (Hangleton Junior School). Emma Lake, Head Teacher of Hangleton Infant School was also present and answered questions.

Michael Nix (Head of Education Planning and Contracts) and Rose Wisdom (Partnership Adviser, School Governance and Leadership) attended the meeting on behalf of the local authority.

Michael Nix gave a brief presentation, setting out the Council's policy in relation to separate infant and junior schools and how it was proposed to apply this policy through the proposed amalgamation of Hangleton Infant and Junior Schools. He emphasised that although the amalgamation, if approved, was to be achieved through the closure of the Junior School and increasing the age range of the Infant School, this was a true partnership development, supported in principle by both Governing Bodies and leadership teams and in no way a takeover of one school by the other. The governing bodies had already set up a joint committee to oversee the process towards amalgamation and Rose Wisdom has joined this committee as an Associate Governor.

Michael Nix invited those present to comment or ask questions on the proposal. Comments and questions were addressed to both Michael Nix and Emma Lake, and these are summarised below. (Some questions have been grouped together where they related to similar themes.)

#### **How would staff be appointed to the new school? What will the new structure be like?**

Emma Lake said it was proposed in due course to publish a new structure and consult with staff. However, there would be only gradual change in January to August 2015, with the aim of having the new structure in place from September 2015. There would be the same number of classes in the primary school as now across the two schools. As far as possible, any changes would be achieved through staff moving to other jobs or retiring.

Michael Nix added that a protocol had been agreed between the Council and the unions for the appointment of staff in situations such as this and that the Governing Bodies were recommended to adopt this protocol.

Lesley Walker said that the governing bodies and senior leadership teams were discussing with other schools that have amalgamated and were taking advice from the local authority.

#### **What are the funding implications of the amalgamation? Will the school benefit from the savings of only having one head? Will there be cuts later on?**

Michael Nix explained that there would be some transitional funding to cover the differences between the funding for two schools and for one school – principally arising from the fact that there would only be one 'lump sum' element from the funding formula. All schools were funded on the same formula, but a larger schools should have some benefits of scale.

Emma Lake said that she would be looking to the authority to provide some capital investment to secure a 'single school' environment, for example creating a larger staff room and a clear entrance and reception area.

### **How will the Head Teacher be appointed? Will the post need to be advertised?**

Michael Nix explained that as the Infant School's age range was being extended, Emma Lake would continue in post as the Head Teacher. Both governing bodies had agreed that she should be the Interim Head Teacher of the Junior School for the Autumn Term 2015.

### **When will children be told?**

Emma Lake said the plan was to tell the children in the Autumn Term. They would be involved in planning for the primary school too, discussing things like uniform, logo and how they would like the school to be.

### **Will there be issues around managing a greater number of staff? And will Emma Lake continue to be Executive Head of Benfield School as well? If so, how will time be divided across the two schools?**

Emma Lake said that team working across the leadership team, pooling expertise and resources, was key to her approach. Lesley Walker confirmed that this applied to the governing bodies too, and that both schools and governing bodies were already working as a team.

Emma Lake confirmed that she would be continuing as Executive Head of Benfield as well, but that now that arrangements there were well embedded she would expect to spend much more time at Hangleton than at Benfield.

### **Did all governors want to proceed with the amalgamation?**

Lesley Walker confirmed that support was unanimous across both governing bodies.

### **Does the staff agree with the proposal?**

Teachers and support staff present said that the proposal was positive and exciting. There would be more opportunities for professional development. Junior School staff were heartened by the commitment of both schools to working together.

Lesley Walker informed the meeting that the joint committee was setting up a group to focus on staff morale and staff development.

### **Will staff stay in similar roles?**

Emma Lake said that change would not be immediate, but staff were already saying they'd love to work in infant/junior to develop their careers.

### **Will SENCO arrangements and counselling provision continue?**

Emma Lake confirmed that they would. She explained that they already shared a SENCO across both schools and the counsellor works in both schools too. There was the possibility of developing an SEN centre in the larger school.

What are the reasons for not going ahead?

- MN: Buildings, different cultures, whether the schools are up for it as they clearly are here.

## **How do you measure if the amalgamation has been successful? What will be needed to make the new school outstanding?**

Emma Lake said that ultimately Ofsted will judge the school. However, as Head Teacher she would be looking for evidence of working together; focussing on important things, not trivial things; always reviewing progress and what it means for children. She would be looking to draw the best from both schools: the Junior School too had outstanding features.

Lesley Walker said that the governors when faced with new developments always come back to the question: How is this good for the children? Kate Matthews said the governors would also be reflecting on staff morale – what does change mean for staff?

Lesley Walker reminded the meeting that governing body minutes are published once approved, including joint committee minutes.

## **Was consultation paper sent to new reception parents?**

Emma Lake said that the paper would be given out at the new parents evening on 19<sup>th</sup> June, and Michael Nix confirmed that copies had been provided to local pre-school settings.

## **What would happen with transfer at 7+?**

Michael Nix explained that there would no longer be any need for parents of Hangleton Infant School to apply for places at another school at 7+. It was expected that most if not all children would want to continue in the primary school until they transferred to secondary school.

At the end of the meeting, Michael Nix and Emma Lake thanked everyone for attending and for their contributions. Michael Nix explained that a note of the meeting would be included in the papers for the Children and Young People Committee, meeting on 21 July 2014.