

Appendix B: Notes of the Everton drop in session 2 November 2016

Nabeel Mardi (NMa), Chair of Governors ELS, chaired the meeting.

NMa opened the meeting at 16:40 by welcoming everybody.

He gave a short health and safety brief and reminded those present that children were on site at an After School Club and Crèche.

He introduced the representatives of CBC, the full Governing Body of ELS and welcomed the Head Teachers of Moggerhanger Lower School; Robert Peel Lower School; St Swithuns Lower School; John Donne Lower School and Sandy Upper School.

Marg Smith (MS) was introduced. MS is a recently retired highly experienced KS2 teacher, who has been helping the Head Teacher (HT ELS) and Governing Board (GB ELS) anticipate, identify and resolve potential issues with the future provision of a complete KS2 curriculum.

David Tall, Clerk to ELS GB, took notes.

NMa explained that as a maintained school (legal status) the process for age range extension differs for ELS from what was being undertaken by each of the other schools' present at the meeting. Until January 2016 the guidelines, provided by the Department for Education, had been similar across all school (legal bodies), in that Governing bodies could propose changes of up to 2 years and determine these changes themselves.

The guide for "maintained schools" was withdrawn (Jan. 2016) and the subsequent updated guideline released in April 2016, excluded "maintained" schools from this process. The new guidelines required the "Local Authority (LA) to undertake the decision for maintained schools only.

NMa explained that the GB of ELS had been working closely with the LA since January 2016 and ensured kept them informed of the interest of the Governing body. Having undertaken the views of parents at various stages over the past 9 months the Governing body made a formal request to the LA in June 2016 for a change to the age range for ELS.

NMa explained that each of the other schools present were undertaking their own consultation and that we were all working in a co-ordinated effort across the Sandy cluster, however their own results would be known sooner. NMa asked HR to say a few words.

HR explained that the other schools are Voluntary Aided, Voluntary Controlled or Foundations and as such are able to propose and determine a change of age range 3 up to two years, via a single-stage consultation process, without CBC consent. CBC is only a consultee

HR advised that this preliminary consultation (Stage 1), including tonight's meeting, was being held by CBC to gather the views of parents and other stakeholders for the proposed change of age range which will then help to compile the full report, which will include the evidence gathered here tonight, for the Council's Executive to consider on the 6th of December 2016. Based on the responses to the Stage 1 of the consultation (the current stage), and subject to positive support, the Executive will then recommend proceeding to the next stage. At this stage the Council will publish a formal statutory notice in January 2017 which would last for 4 weeks. (this is a statutory part of the process, as required by the Department for Education).

VW confirmed that the statutory notice would be published on the council website, public libraries and sent to other stakeholder that as defined by the Department for Education in accordance with the law.

HR explained that the Council's Executive will then make a final decision on the proposal in April 2017. *HOWEVER*, if the Executive agrees in December that there is sufficient support for the proposal, they could agree an earlier delegated decision by the Executive Member for Education and Skills, following completion of Stage 2 of the consultation (February/March 2017).

If the final decision is favourable it will allow ELS to receive Y5 pupils in September 2017. It was emphasised that no decision had yet been taken and that the team at the council were preparing the report for submission to the Executive for consideration.

NMa then invited questions from the floor.

Q1 (Parent) Have there been many responses to date? I personally wish to support the proposal, but am interested to hear about other people's views.

Response 1 **ARus** responded that having spoken to Sue Barrow at the council they had confirmed receipt of 13 formally logged responses. Overwhelmingly supportive.

NMa highlighted that the preliminary study undertaken by the Governing body of the school during the summer term the school received a 50% response rate from parents with over 80% in favour of the school extending its age range.

HR stated that it was important that as many responses as possible are sent in so that any decision is as informed as possible.

NMa said if anybody needed yet to complete the consultation, forms are available tonight.

Q2. (Parent) Is the consultation available on school website and in word format?

Response 2: **ARus** Yes in both pdf and "word" format.

Q3. Parent When does the decision have to be taken for September 2017 Y5 entry?

Response 3. ARus by the 4th April 2017.

NMa said that it was recognised that this was beyond the date for middle school application for places but explained that it was possible for parents to decline such places and to keep the children at ELS for a Y5 place at ELS if age extension approved. He reported that 3 parents had already stated their intention to remain. A parent observed that her child did not want to leave ELS – ever!!

HR: if and when a decision is made to extend the age range we just ask you to formally inform the admissions team of your final decision.

Q4. Parent What happens after Y6?

Response 4. **NMa** explained that due to the unique geographical location of Everton Lower school on the boundary of Central Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire parents have a choice. The school did not only cater for children within the Central Bedfordshire Authority but across both. As such parents will be able to apply for places in either Local Authority but will need to be aware of the admissions policy of each school. As an example 70 children residing in Potton, which geographically are in Central Bedfordshire are currently educated at Cambridgeshire secondary schools including Comberton and Bassingbourn. The remainder attend either Stratton Upper (Biggleswade) or Sandy Upper school for secondary education. For those living in Everton we are aware of a split between children attending Cambridgeshire schools and Sandy Upper School.

NMa reminded that Sandy Upper was also seeking an age range extension of 2 years and as such children may be able to go straight to there, if the Governing body approved the age range extension for 2018.

Q5. Parent: Please confirm that we can select a secondary school or middle school.

Response 5. **NMa** said that was the case, but we are seeking to minimise the number of transitions to ensure greater stability for ELS children and noting that a two tier system is in place in most places in England and that these schools have better results in KS2 SATs.

Q6. Parent: Does the school have the facilities to provide a full KS2 curriculum?

Response6. **ARus** explained that the Primary education curriculum is designed to be delivered within a single class environment and ELS has carefully reviewed all aspects of the education curriculum including science and can confirm all of this will be provided within the current facilities. **ARus** also confirmed that Sandy Upper for example would make any specialist equipment available and this also includes the use of their facilities. **ARus** went on to explain that these would be on pupil enrichment days and not every week.

Q7. Many middle schools have a laboratory, what about ELS?

Response 6. MS said that she had taught science to Y5 / Y6 for many years. She said the curriculum is classroom based, and although some middle schools do have a laboratory this is normally for the use of Y7 and Y8 pupils. There is no need for a lab for Y5 / Y6 children. MS has noticed that there tends to be less hands on activities such as cooking and science and a greater shift to design activities, further reducing any need for a dedicated lab.

NMa stated that the Governing body with support from the HT had explored the exact requirements of delivering science for years 5 and years 6 and have concluded that this is not only possible but that the school would also be able to work towards achieving the Primary Science Quality Mark. The Governing body was confident that should approval be given it will be able to deliver all aspects of the curriculum.

Q8. What about sporting facilities and provision?

Response 8. **NMa** The school had sufficient grounds for the provision of different sporting activities including the use of the recreational ground across from the school.

DG reminded the parents of the fact that our school also had its own swimming pool.

NMa explained that the school received grant from Sport UK and that this was used to contract professional coaches to deliver a variety of sports and train the teachers in delivering a full sport curriculum.

ARus stated that the additional local cooperation with Sandy Upper broadened the provision even further, such as dance and music. Meanwhile, with the help of the PTA, we are trying to fund the provision of a swimming pool roof for all round use by us and other schools and groups.

NMa highlighted one of the biggest challenges faced by the school is lack of numbers of pupils for activities such as sport at "After School Clubs". Parents are urged to encourage their children to participate in these.

ARus reminded parents that the school participated in competitions organised by the Bedfordshire Sports' Partnership.

A parent observed how vital such links were and how proud ELS children were of their achievements at these events.

DG said that the GB is very pleased to receive such positive comments.

HR said such enrichment helped to learn through play.

Q9. Will going to Sandy be time consuming and anyway how will the children travel?

Response 9. **ARus** stated that these enrichment activities will be outside core curriculum provision. Sandy Upper has kindly offered to assist using their 2 mini buses and that the school had a fully qualified bus driver among the staff.

Q10. Does the school not need a new classroom to accommodate Y5 / Y6?

Response 10. **NMa** The school already had 5 classrooms. The school had sufficient room to accommodate the 20 additional children (10 pupils per year). NMa said that the Governing Body had carefully considered the space and guidelines provided by the Department for Education and would not be seeking/ proposing an age – range extension had that not been the case.

DG Asked if parents had seen the newly refurbished room and invited those present to look around the newly refurbished area.

Q11. Parent How will we manage the transition from a small school to a large secondary school?

Response11. **NMa** explained that moving from a small Village to a larger secondary could be a potential shock if not managed properly. The school already works very well with other schools to manage transition and are looking at other Primary schools around the country to assess, and implement best practice. The presence of Sandy Upper HT at this consultation is evidence of their interest in working with ELS to ensure a smooth transition for children.

ARus remarked that any transition process is so much better than it had been in the past. And taster days would be setup for children in co-ordination with Sandy Upper.

DG observed that Primary Schools and Secondary Schools with the one transition and better for the children.

Q12. Parent I chose ELS because I wanted the children to have the benefits that offers.

Response 12. **ARus** stated that even with 20 additional children (10 per year) over 2 years, ELS will still be a small school.

Q13. Will Evertots remain?

Response13. **NMa** Providing numbers remain viable, yes.

ARus stated that indeed the decision to move to full PS may encourage parents to consider an all through provision until Y7.

Q14. Will there be separate Assemblies?

Response14. **ARus** Yes.

NMa then said the school already manages separation of play times and meal times between pre-school and reception, KS1/ lowerKS2.

ARus stated that parents will continue to be invited to appropriate celebrations but limited to each key stage.

Q15. What about a dining room?

Response 15. **NMa** to our knowledge no funding is currently available from the Local Authority.

VW confirmed limited capital expenditure was available from the LA.

NMa explained that a staggered system would come in to play, as is already done in other Primary schools.

Q16. There was another question about science lab provision

Response 16. **MS** repeated her previous answer about not necessary to deliver KS2 curriculum.

Q17. How will the school handle the practicalities of having older, more body conscious / aware children in the school especially when it comes to changing for sports?

Response 17. **AR** There are separate changing rooms available and these will be put in to full use across the year.

Q18. Are there enough loos?

Response 18. **AR** Yes. There are enough toilets and they are an appropriate size. The wash basins are rather low for larger children so this would be a refurbishment programme to plan for the future to have some taller ones put in.

Q19. Will class sizes change?

Response 19. **ARus** The Planned Admission Number (PAN) is set at 10 new pupils / year. Children will never therefore be in a larger class than 20.

NMa the plans is to keep combined years for Years1/2, Years3/4 and for the new additional years 5/6. Only reception class will remain a single year.

Q20. Will the school be hiring an additional teacher? If so will the teacher be an NQT?

Response20. **NMa** The Governing have budgeted for an additional teacher and will seek to ensure the most appropriate person teaches Y5 / Y6. It is for the Head Teacher to decide how Staff are deployed across the school. We shall recruit the very best teacher available, as the quality of teaching and learning is a very high priority for the HT, Staff and the Governing Body.

Q21. Parent Will a “late” decision impact on recruiting timetable?

Response 21. **NMa** the Governing body has prepared a full plan in preparation for a positive decision from the LA. Once we receive the green light we will proceed with our recruitment plan.

AR Teachers only have to give a half terms notice. We are prepared to launch recruiting process immediately once the decision is known to be positive.

Q22. HR Have the children been consulted? Their views are important to CBC.

Response 22. **NMa** Not directly, although this was raised by parents at a recent assembly. We would welcome CBC to visit the school during the school day to gather views. The school will consult with the children and provide feedback to all.

Q23. Parent What negative worries have other parents had at other schools?

Response 23. **HR** said that the curriculum is often raised. Transition is another issue.

Q24. Has the local community been involved in the consultation?

Response 24 **VW** Yes. There are a number of statutory groups who have to be consulted. To date overwhelmingly supportive.

Q25. Will the decision of the other schools impact on CBC’s decision for ELS?

Response 25. **HR** It will be a consideration, noting that CBC wants to see the broadest collaboration and cooperation, between schools and opportunities for all children to flourish.

Q26. Can any decision be appealed?

Response 26. **NMa** Yes but will invariably impact on any start date. We should be prepared for a NO as we cannot predict the outcome but we can prepare and we are prepared.

Q27. What about potential impact on new house build in Potton?

Response 27. **VW** Not happening immediately. CBC has, since being responsible from 2009, an excellent record of providing the correct number of school places at the right time. The expansion of Biggleswade and successful school place provision is an excellent example of planning and judgement.

Q28 Is it possible to receive any information in a more user friendly way? Parents are busy people who may not have time to cut through a lot of jargon.

Response 28 **ARus** We will do whatever we can to help everybody’s understanding of a complicated and challenging process. The Chair of Governors has and continues to be willing to hold surgeries or individual meetings if that will help.

The Parent Ambassadors, Lisa Gorringer and Samantha Dawson who were present at the meeting, are able to assist as well, as are Parent Governors. They will all ensure everything of concern is brought to the GB and correctly recorded.

Q29. What about parking / delivery of children?

Response 29. **ARus** The school has already trialled and adopted different system this year, which is working well. That process will be monitored as numbers increase.

Q30. Can parents visit other schools?

Response: 31. **HT** of Sandy Upper has extended an open invitation for parents to visit.

NMa asked if attendees had any further questions and then invited parents to visit the newly built area, to complete the consultation forms and stay for a chat.

He thanked everybody for attending.

The meeting closed at 1745.