

Summary of consultation event held at Hameldon Community College on Wednesday 11 October 2017

Prior to the event taking place, 11 appointments had been pre-booked. At the event, 29 appointments took place, with 43 interested parties in attendance. The majority of attendees were either parents of pupils at the school or staff and some of the attendees spoke to more than one officer at the consultation event. In relation to the number of parents who attended, they were from nine families. A breakdown of the attendees is as follows:

Staff at Hameldon Community College	14
Grandparent of a pupil at Hameldon Community College	1
Parent of pupil/s at Hameldon Community College	14
- Number of families	9
Governor of Hameldon Community College	3
Former pupil of Hameldon Community College	4
Member of the local community	1
Governor of a local primary school	1
Union Representative	3
Representative from the National Deaf Children's Society	1
Local Councillor	1

Local authority staff in attendance were as follows: Head of Service for School Improvement; Senior Advisor for Secondary and Post 16; Head of Service for Learning and Skills; Skills and Employability Lead; Head of Service for Asset Management; School Planning Manager; School Provision Planning Manager; School Financial Services Manager; Admissions Manager; Pupil Placement and Fair Access Co-ordinator; Service Marketing and Compliance Officer; Team Manager East from the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) service; Inclusion Teacher from the SEND service; Senior SEND Officer from the SEND service; and Integrated Assessment and Monitoring Manager East from the SEND service.

At the appointments, people were asked whether they would be in support of the school closing or not. Of those who provided a response, 16 were against the school being closed and three were in support of this.

The comments captured at the event have been summarised in a number of headings as set out below.

Current management arrangements of the school

One governor and two members of staff commented about the number of permanent exclusions made under the new management arrangements, with one member of staff saying that these can be for minor incidents and are affecting vulnerable pupils.

A number of comments were made about the lack of an open evening and the way the school is being marketed and promoted. One governor questioned why there had not been an open evening. An open afternoon took place with people needing to book

appointments, which was not appropriate for those who work and couldn't attend. The governor stated that this is a concern of both staff and governors and was not a decision by the executive board. They also stated that a Headteacher from another school was present at the Year 7 parents evening which took place in July, which was also raised by a member of staff, and that all these factors are contributing to a bias of opinion on the future of the school. A governor commented that the Year 7 parents evening was undertaken with a negative approach. The member of the community also queried why there had been no open evening and why one was not advertised. Three members of staff were concerned that no open evening took place.

Three members of staff and one governor stated that the marketing of the school has been poor and that no promotion or publicity of the school is taking place. Another member of staff stated that the school has never advertised its successes. They also mentioned that the website is no longer being updated. This was also mentioned by another member of staff. Two members of staff and a union representative commented that the school isn't being given as an option for new pupils and there was no information on Hameldon Community College in the 2017 admissions booklet. One member of staff said that another local school had already been in touch about what was going to happen to the equipment at Hameldon Community College. Another member of staff said that they had not been able to undertake any transition work with local primary schools.

One governor and a member of staff raised concerns about the approach the school has taken in relation to the consultation process. The member of the community felt that misinformation is being given to parents about the future of the school.

Two members of staff and the local councillor raised concerns about the current leadership and management of the school and their willingness to discuss the issue. Two union representatives stated there has been a breakdown of trust and a lack of communication with all staff. Another union representative said that their union had asked for an informal discussion about the future of the school with the Headteacher but this was declined and that a further meeting request had also not been accepted.

Two members of staff were concerned that there is no permanent Headteacher and the member of the community asked why other Headteachers who have been put in to support the school have left.

A member of staff commented that staff feel that the current senior leadership team are working against the school. No lesson observations have taken place and the additional duties of staff who are off sick are not being covered. Two members of staff had tried to raise concerns with the current leadership team but this was unsuccessful.

One member of staff was interviewed earlier in the year and was told that the school was not closing and subsequently received a letter to say that her contract would end in August. This was since extended. She had left a permanent post to work at the school and she felt that the school should've been up front with her about the situation.

Two parents said that their children were not being given any homework to do by the school. One felt that the school is disorganised and that there are disruptive pupils and another said they have concerns over communication with the Acting Headteacher.

Impact of pupils moving schools

One member of staff and a governor raised concerns about the financial impact on parents and disadvantaged families if the local school was closed and pupils had to travel to a school further away. The member of the community raised a concern that travel will be an issue for pupils even if help is provided. They also queried whether there will be an increase in traffic crossings on routes to other schools if pupils have to move from Hameldon Community College.

One member of staff stated that there is a need for a direct bus from the school to the Padiham area and that children will not want to travel to a new school.

With regard to moving schools, a parent queried why Sir John Thursby Community College is full and why Burnley High School does not currently have a Year 10 or 11.

Future use of the site

Fifteen comments were made in relation to the need for a school to remain on the site, with one member of staff saying 'there must be a school on this site'. One governor and three members of staff suggested that the school should be renamed, rebranded and reopened, rather than there being no school on the site. The governor of a local primary school said he would like Hameldon Community College to be retained, despite being aware of the budget deficit, the falling pupil numbers and the standards.

Two governors and the local councillor suggested that the school should become a vocational school/facility and local businesses may be able to help support this. One governor said that a practical skills education facility is needed in the area but that the studio school model won't work. They went on to say that pupils won't change schools at age 13 or 14 unless everyone is making similar choices. If there was a more vocational facility/technical option from age 11, it would be popular in the area. One governor questioned whether the focus of a new school could be to help vulnerable young people, based around providing support rather than focusing on GCSE achievement. Another governor made similar comments in that qualifying for university is not the end goal for every pupil. The school should provide a focus on the skills pupils need to come back to their community and contribute. Two members of staff also thought the building could be used to provide educational provision for vulnerable pupils and those with additional needs. One member of staff said that education is more than just GCSEs, it is helping them to be prepared for life. One member of staff said it could be successful if the right changes were made with the right Headteacher.

Five people made reference to linking with other schools in the area. A governor asked whether pupils from a school in Rossendale could be transported to Hameldon Community College. One member of staff asked whether pupils from Cherry Fold Community Primary School could come to the school. They also suggested that pupils from oversubscribed schools come to Hameldon Community College. Another member of staff said that all the local schools should work together to make Hameldon Community College the school of choice. The grandparent suggested combining the new school proposed in Stoneyholme with this school site and have half for the new school and half for this school. A parent said that other local schools should come together to support Hameldon Community College.

Other suggestions for the use of the site were made. One governor suggested a through school and they also suggested that the diocese could take on the school as there is no Church of England school in the area. A member of staff thought that the school could be arranged in key stages and then colleges could support the key stage 4 pupils and help to broaden the curriculum.

Three people queried what will happen to the building if the school closes. This was raised by a member of staff, a parent and the member of the community. One parent asked what would happen if the school didn't close.

Three people raised a concern about the cost of the building. The member of the community asked whether this would become an additional cost to the taxpayer and the governor of a local primary school asked who will pay the bill for the school. A former pupil said that they couldn't understand the PFI concept of renting a building and the public use charges. They said that whoever decided schools should have the PFI obligation is accountable for schools having financial difficulties. She went on to say that the new building felt cramped in comparison to the Ivy Bank site, particularly externally. She thought that if the school had been full, there would've been capacity issues within the building.

Impact on existing pupils, including vulnerable pupils

The grandparent and a parent raised concerns about the possible impact on their granddaughter's and son's GCSEs and whether they can finish them at Hameldon Community College or if they would have to change schools. The parent was very concerned about this as their son has dyslexia and speech and language difficulties and he did not speak until he was five, so they are concerned about the impact on him. The grandparent was also concerned about the school having teachers who are qualified to teach GCSEs.

Eight people raised concerns about what will happen to the pupils currently at the school. The member of the community asked where these pupils will go. A parent asked what will happen to the pupils in Year 10 and she was reassured that there will be provision for these pupils. Another parent asked how the closure would affect current Year 10 pupils and asked whether they can be kept together. She believes her son would not cope with a move to another school. She also asked that if the Year 10 pupils remain on site, the current teachers and support staff be retained to teach them. The local councillor has concerns for students in the school and the quality of teaching they are receiving. Four members of staff and a union representative asked what will happen to the current pupils, with two members of staff raising additional concerns about vulnerable pupils, especially as a high percentage of low ability pupils come to the school. One member of staff asked what will happen to pupils in Years 8 and 9, as it is not just about those in Year 10.

A union representative and two members of staff were concerned about the curriculum offer at the school.

One member of staff thought that pupils were being actively 'poached' and were being encouraged to move to another local school.

A governor said that the views of pupils are important and they need support to do better. The governor said that the school has a significant number of pupils with additional support needs but that funding is not available to support this. They also believed that the single biggest issue for the school was the numbers on roll.

Four parents raised concerns about the impact on their child. One said her son is not motivated and this school was right for him when he started in Year 7. She is now worried about him starting in Year 9 as the next three years are important. She registered an appeal for a place at another school but withdrew it as her son was anxious but she now wants to pursue this. One parent is concerned about a possible closure as her son struggles and she believes he is 'not getting a fair crack of the whip'. He is making progress which is down to the staff and the structured support he gets. Her son is in Year 9 and does not want to go to another school as he will not settle and she is worried he will fail. She said the school has provided a good education for both her sons. One parent said that their daughter's levels have dropped since Year 9 and they asked what can be done to shore up her results. The final parents who commented have a daughter in Year 8. They chose the school as it is local and she has settled well and she walks to school. They are wondering whether they should they move her now whilst places are available and are considering a transfer to another Burnley school, as a group of pupils are causing trouble. They asked whether there are places at other local schools, such as Burnley High School. They just want their child to be happy.

Specialist facilities/provision

One member of staff said that the special education resource facility (SERF) provision would be better suited elsewhere as pupil numbers have fallen but that this provision shouldn't be lost. A member of staff who works in the SERF said that they want this facility to flourish and be secure for deaf young people in the future. They believe that parents want the SERF provision but not necessarily the school and they want successful SERF provision to be available.

One parent stated that their child has been accessing the specialist provision since Year 7 and that she has flourished in the school. Another parent said that they chose the school for the specialist provision for hearing impaired young people and that fewer pupils is better for the children to learn. They were offered a school place in Nelson but preferred Hameldon Community College.

The National Deaf Children's Society stated that they would be keen for the specialist provision to grow. They also want any transitions for young people to be positive.

Staffing Issues

Two members of cleaning staff said that a lot live nearby and want to know what is going to happen to the school. They said that the school needs to have good staff, teachers and caretakers. A union representative and two members of staff were all seeking information on what will happen to the staff.

One governor said that some staff are displaying challenging behaviour.

Two members of staff and two parents mentioned staff retention and that staff are already leaving the school. One parent was concerned about the quality of teaching as good teachers are leaving. Another parent said their daughter has had to drop a GCSE as there is no teacher and they are worried that this will happen with other subjects.

One member of staff said the recruitment of teachers is also an issue, particularly in maths. She said that staff join the school and then leave for promotions elsewhere. She also queried why supply teachers are being used when there is a budget deficit and suggested having staff on short term contracts instead.

Three members of staff mentioned the appointment of a new Headteacher. One said no attempt had been made to do this and one said that an outstanding Headteacher is required to lead the school. Another member of staff thought that employing a new Headteacher and new teachers would encourage new pupils to attend. She felt it was a false economy to be using supply staff when it would be cheaper to employ full time staff. The member of the community said that there are historic staffing issues from when the school was merged.

The National Deaf Children's Society said that they would oppose a voluntary redundancy offer for specialist staff and that they would be keen for these staff to be transferred to an alternative facility. They were concerned about the loss of specialist staff, commenting that there is a national shortage of specialist staff.

General comments, including the consultation process

Nine people made comments about the consultation process. A member of staff said that the consultation document was not written for parents and that it was aimed at the wrong audience. Another member of staff said that the consultation document was not user-friendly. The local councillor noted that the consultation booklet states that Lancashire County Council and school governors will consider the ideas received through the consultation. One member of staff asked how far staff views are considered, whether the consultation actually has any impact on the decision being made and whether anyone listens to their views. She asked why this is happening now and why nothing had been done sooner, before the pupil numbers started to reduce. She feels the consultation is affecting pupil numbers as some are already moving schools and some teachers won't want to work at the school. She felt that the decision has been made already. One parent said the vibe around the school is that it is closing and they asked when a decision will be made. Another parent was seeking clarity around the process and what will happen. The local councillor asked whether other local schools been involved in the consultation process. The member of the community said that the consultation process leads to parents withdrawing their children from the school and that the public perception is that this is already a foregone conclusion. She believed that the consultation event is not representative as it only represents those people who have attended. One governor questioned the timing of the process. The National Deaf Children's Society thanked Lancashire County Council for a transparent and robust consultation and said that they will put in a formal consultation response.

One member of staff made a comment about the results of the school and said maths outcomes had been improved as pupils taught offsite weren't included. Another member of staff commented about pupils being educated offsite. One member of staff said that the current curriculum offer is not right for the school or the catchment area.

One member of staff had concerns over the quality of the previous leadership of the school. They thought the Acting Headteacher has had a positive impact on behaviour. Another member of staff said that the problems have been building up over the past 13 years, Headteachers haven't been supported and permanent staff have not been employed. She also had concerns over the quality of the previous leadership of the school. She felt the previous leadership of the school should be held accountable for the current situation and the fact that a significant number of staff have left the school.

One member of staff asked what support had been provided by the local authority. The member of the community said that the school was let down by the local authority when they merged. One governor said there has been a lack of real support from the local authority and there should've been earlier action rather than leaving it to the school.

Three people made comments about the school environment. A member of staff believes that families like the support and nurture environment at the school. The member of the community said that the school is seen to have a very caring attitude. A governor commented that the school has a reputation for being a caring, supportive school and its pupils can't travel elsewhere.

A number of general comments were received at the event. A member of staff said that her granddaughters want to apply next year as they live nearby. Three former pupils were interested in what factors have led to the school being in this position. They have fond memories of the school but recollect there being lots of changes in staffing and some disrupted learning. They were very positive about the teachers and the support they offered pupils to help them succeed. One parent said that the reputation of the school has been ruined and that they have taken all the troublesome pupils. One parent said the situation was sad as the building and facilities are superb. They have a child starting high school in the future so they need to consider this situation. One parent had concerns about the behaviour of other pupils. The National Deaf Children's Society requested that an equality impact assessment takes place and that the local authority looks at all the risks. They offered to be a critical friend in the process and requested that the approach is child-centred. The member of the community stated that all the press coverage has been negative. The governor from a local primary school thought that the governing body needed to be reconstituted. Another governor said that the status quo position cannot continue due to standards and pupil numbers. They asked about the proposals to improve the school and what support the school had received. They said that a formal action plan targeting areas for improvement was needed. They stated that the school had been located in the wrong place when it was established and it should've been where the new free school is. They believe that other schools have not stuck to their catchment areas and parents are unable to access places elsewhere. They suggested that financial benchmarking needs to be undertaken. The governor went on to comment about press coverage saying that all the articles make reference to a 'troubled school', which has not helped public perceptions, and that there have been attacks on the Acting Headteacher in the press. Positive publicity has been impossible due to the press coverage. They said that the quality of staff attracted by 'Teach First' was great but this is no longer operating as there is no permanent Headteacher in place. They believe that additional training is needed for existing staff. They also said that the school was particularly good at enthusing girls.

A union representative made a Freedom of Information request around the communication between the school and parents.

Impact on the local community

Both the member of the community and the governor of a local primary school raised concerns about the possible impact on the local community if a decision were taken to close the school as facilities and provision will be taken away from a deprived area. The community member commented that if you lose community facilities, you risk losing the community. The governor of a local primary school was concerned about the affect such a decision would have on the education and aspirations of the local area.