

### **Deepdale Infant School Consultation 7<sup>th</sup> May 2014**

Councillor De Molfetta – LCC Councillor

Officers – Trish MacCarthy (School Adviser) and Ben Terry (Provision Planning Manager)

**Public Meeting** – Prior to the meeting Cllr De Molfetta had been trying to get agreement for a public meeting about the consultation proposals. This has been agreed by Cllr Tomlinson.

At the start of the meeting Cllr De Molfetta explained that he is supportive of the proposal, and his requests for a public meeting are not to raise opposition to the proposals. He explained that he felt that the consultation booklet was not the best way to engage with the local community. He felt that a public meeting would give the community ownership of the proposal.

The Councillor explained that he had been approached by 10 to 15 parents about the need for a public meeting. He explained that the local councillor, Councillor Ismail Bax was also keen to have a public meeting. He added that the public meeting should be promoted via the local mosques.

Cllr De Molfetta indicated that he believed the public meeting should be held in the infant school hall or at a local church. The school hall at St Gregorys Primary was also referred to by the School Adviser, who is also a School Adviser at St Gregorys. The Cllr indicated that he would be uncomfortable having the event at the junior school (It appeared that the councillor had a personal issue with the Chair of Governors at the junior school, Mr David Foster, and he did refer to some past previous negative experiences).

The Provision Planning Manager explained that the public meeting would need to be held after the elections. Week commencing 2<sup>nd</sup> June was discussed. Cllr De Molfetta suggested that Friday be avoided and that an ideal starting time for the event would be 18:00 to avoid prayer times.

**Other Discussions** – Cllr De Molfetta said he had serious concerns about the deterioration of the junior school. Leadership concerns were a particular concern. The School Adviser explained some of the leadership issues at the school, such as the head leaving and several associate heads being in post. Cllr De Molfetta felt that the proposals would help to improve leadership and performance issues.

***Agree or Disagree? Strongly Agree***

Salma Vali - Parent with pupil in Y2 at the school

Officer - Maxine Smith (Provision Planning Officer) and Steph Rhodes (Provision Planning Manager)

The parent is hoping the junior school closure goes ahead and the proposed expansion of the infant school is agreed, as this would be perfect timing as her son moves into Year 3 in September, and she was concerned with the poor Ofsted rating. The parent asked was the junior school to be closed because of the bad Ofsted report. The Provision Planning Officer explained that the School Advisor has been working closely with the school since it moved into special measures and was attempting to bring standards up but the governing body of junior school approached the infants school about merging.

The parent asked who the headteacher would be at the new school. Maxine informed her that Miss Mirza would be the head but would be assisted by a leadership team. Maxine then explained the consultation process.

The parent expressed her agreement to the proposed school expansion and thinks it is a good idea.

***Agree or Disagree? Agree***

Mr Yakub - Parent and Governor at Infant School

Officers - Trish MacCarthy (School Adviser) and Ben Terry (Provision Planning Manager)

Mr Yakub stated that he was supportive of the proposals. He believed that the proposals would benefit pupils from both schools and help secure the future of local community education provision.

Mr Yakub stated that he did accept that the changes would lead to some "teething problems" but felt that these could be overcome.

Mr Yakub stated that he was not supportive of any form of academy conversion, as he questioned the accountability of academies and he liked local support. He said converting the junior school to academy would create a risk for the infant school. He explained that in the future the academy could decide to have its own infant provision, which would challenge the position of the infant school.

Mr Yakub advised that the consultation booklet was not the best way of engaging with the local community. He was very keen to have a public meeting. He felt that this would give the community ownership of the proposals. Mr Yakub felt that the junior school would be the best location for the public meeting. An alternative suggestion offered was using facilities at Preston Muslim Girls School. (David Foster, Chair of Governors at the junior school is deputy head at Preston Muslim Girls).

Mr Yakub suggested the public meeting should be promoted via the local mosques. He added that he could facilitate contact with the mosques and ensure appropriate announcements were made.

A meeting time of 18:00 for approx 1 hour was suggested. The preferred date for Mr Yakub would be Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June or Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> June.

***Agree or Disagree? Strongly Agree***

**Ben Terry (Provision Planning Manager, Trish McCarthy (School Adviser)**

**Councillor Ismail Bax – local councillor (Preston City) for Deepdale ward, 3.30pm appointment**

Following introductions BT worked through Cllr Bax's questions which he had provided prior to the event:

1. Governors: Will the current ones at the Junior School continue or will the two sets of governors be merged as one unit and who will lead the new team? – BT explained the junior governing body would cease to exist on closure. However, the current infant governing body would no longer be large enough on expansion and so would need to be reviewed and reconstituted so that it was bigger and had a wider skill set. It is possible that some of the junior governors may be invited to join new primary governing body. TM observed that there were already 4 shared members.

2. Head Teacher: Who will head the new school? Will it be the Head of the current Primary [sic] School; and will she have additional support in place to help her manage? – TM confirmed that the Head of current **Infant** School would take up the Headship of the new Primary but that she would be supported by a strong leadership team comprising 3 Deputies and 2 assistant heads to work across the new enlarged school; mirroring successful arrangements already in place in the infants. Also the intensive support the Juniors has been receiving from Trish's team to raise standards will continue.
3. Reasons for proposal: Why is LCC proposing this merger? Is it to save money rather than raise standards? – BT & TM explained that the proposal came from the Juniors Governing Body approaching the Infants' to ask for closer working and support in order to raise standards. LCC got drawn in to discussions and from this the proposal to close the Juniors and extend the Infants to create a Primary was arrived at and is supported by all parties. The proposal is therefore school led but they have asked for our help in managing the process.
4. Other options: Have LCC considered outsourcing the management of the School to another organisation? Have outside bodies expressed an interest in managing this school? - TM confirmed that other options were of course discussed including just closing the Juniors or Academy conversion but neither of these options were supported by Governors or parents.

In addition BT clarified the decision making process and associated timescales and reiterated that if the proposal is accepted LCC is committed to making it one unified school and all necessary support will be put in place to facilitate this.

Cllr Bax confirmed that he is happy in principle with the 'one school' proposal but with the caveat that the HT needs to be appropriately supported to manage a much larger school.

He also raised a concern that if ex-members of the Junior Governing Body were invited onto the new school's governing body this could cause quite a few raised eyebrows within the local community as these people were perceived as having failed and not being competent.

Cllr Bax also suggested that a public meeting/open forum was a much better way of getting information about the proposals across to the community; then follow up with paperwork such as the booklet. He also suggested that local mosques would be a good conduit for publicising the event, and had already spoken to them in this regard. He suggested that a supply of booklets was taken to the event and people could be encouraged to complete them on exit, once they had seen presentations about the proposals and asked any questions they may have. He felt a good time to do this would be the week commencing 2<sup>nd</sup> June and the best timing would be to start at 5.30-6pm so that it fitted in between the end of the school day and the commencement of evening prayers. He saw no reason why the event could not be held at the Junior School, in the Hall.

#### **Maxine Smith (Provision Planning Officer) and Trish McCarthy (School Adviser)**

*Mr & Mrs Wadi – parents of children currently in school, 6.45pm appointment (Mr Wadi joined us slightly later)*

Mrs Wadi raised a concern that the proposed new Primary School will be too big to be run by just one person.

MS confirmed that we do have other schools in Lancashire of this size and they are doing well. She also described the proposed leadership structure with the HT being supported by 3 Deputy Heads and that the school would continue to receive a high level of support from TM's team.

Mrs Wadi observed that playground rumours were to the effect that the decision was already made and the merger was definitely going ahead. MS stressed that this was not the case, that this was only a proposal and a number of stages had to be gone through before a final decision was made. She referred Mrs Wadi to the booklet.

Mrs Wadi also raised a concern that the merger might bring standards in the Infants down rather than raise those in the Juniors. TM gave reassurance that every effort would be made to make sure this did not happen and that performance would be monitored frequently throughout any merger process and beyond and action taken immediately if standards did not continue to improve.

Mrs Wadi also raised a general issue about differing standards between Deepdale's schools and those in surrounding, more affluent areas and that it was unfair her children could not access them. A lengthy discussion ensued regarding admissions policies in general in which both MS & TM explained the reasons behind admissions criteria and that a lot of work was being done to make sure that standards were raised at Deepdale so that it was at least as good as other schools. They stressed that LCC policy is to address standards and aim for very high Ofsted gradings in all of its schools.

TM also encouraged Mrs Wadi to speak to the HT if she felt her children were not being given appropriate and stretching enough work so that issues could be addressed.

Mr Wadi arrived and reiterated the concern raised by his wife about the danger that merging the schools could pull the Infants down rather than raise the Juniors up. He referred to the Ofsted report and stated that it observed that there were some weaknesses in the Infants School already (around levels of challenge, repetition of same work) and that he was not convinced the HT will be able to manage a much larger school. He advised that he had raised concerns about this with the Junior HT and Governors at a previous meeting but had not received any further response from them. TM offered to follow this up.

He asked whether there was a 'Plan B' if the current proposal was tried but did not succeed in raising standards in the Juniors. TM explained that failure was not an option and all necessary resources and support would be put in place to ensure that the proposed solution would work.

Mr Wadi asked about the Junior school governing body and how long they would stay on. He asked about the process in terms of governors' length of terms and whether there were regular re-elections.

MS & TM explained that the new school will need a larger governing body and so the current Infants Governing Body will be reviewed and reconstituted but that the current Junior Governing Body will be disbanded on closure of the school if this goes ahead.

He repeated his wife's concerns re being disadvantaged by where they live in terms of access to a good standard of education for their children.

He raised some concern with regard to the male-female ratio of staff and the relative lack of male teachers. TM pointed out that this was simply a reflection of national trends.

He asked about improvement targets and how they would be monitored and what action would be taken if the school was not meeting them. TM described the level and extent of monitoring which is already happening in order to bring the Juniors out of special measures as soon as possible and reassured that this would not stop in the event of the proposals going ahead.

Mr Wadi asked if the local community would be consulted again in a year's time for their opinions on whether any changes had been a success.

He also asked what plans were in place to try and improve stability through, for example, making sure teaching staff remain in place for longer as he felt a lot of the existing problems were due to a recent high turnover of staff.

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## **Deepdale junior consultation**

Mrs Pathean, parent with pupil at the school

Officers – Trish McCarthy (School Advisor) and Ben Terry (Provision Planning Manager)

Mrs Pathean is not sure if it is a good idea or not. She asked what happens if the school don't merge?

The school adviser explained the steps that had led to the current proposals. She explained that the governing body of junior school had approached the infant school about merging. If the proposal is not successful then it will be back to the drawing board. The options would be:

- 1) Consider closure

- 2) Academy
- 3) Continue with current operations, based on an improvement plan.

Mrs Pathean asked about Leadership. The school adviser explained the current structure, and explained about future leadership plans, e.g. 3 deputy heads, one of which will be the deputy from the junior school. Mrs Pathean then asked if staff will have to move between schools. She was advised that the staff structure will be reviewed by the head and governing body. But the intention is not to re-invent the wheel. There will be minimum staff disruption. Temporary staff is a concern for the parent and she enquired whether this would be improved with the new arrangements. The school adviser advised that temporary staffing is a concern and a risk for the school. The current special measures limit recruitment and it is hoped that the new arrangements would improve this situation, providing more stability for the junior aged pupils.

***Agree or Disagree? Neither agree or disagree at this stage but will submit a response***

Aisha Piperdi, parent with pupils at the school in year 5 and reception.

Officers – Maxine Smith (Provision Planning Officer) and Paul Brain (Provision Planning Manager)

Ofsted report – when the school has merged which Ofsted would be valid – the one from the junior school or the one for the infants school?

The junior school would effectively be closed, so the Ofsted for the junior school should no longer apply. As the two school would effectively be amalgamated in to a single primary school it may be that Ofsted would want to come and do another inspection sooner than would normally apply but that would be the decision of Ofsted.

Will there be one head teacher?

Should the proposal go ahead, there will be a single head teacher who will be supported by three deputy head teachers. The deputy head teacher from the junior school will be one of the three deputy head teachers at the single primary school and two additional deputy head teachers will be appointed through the recruitment process.

How will the school governing body change?

As the proposal is close the junior school and extend the age range of the infant school the governing body at the junior school will no longer exist. The governing body at the infant school will remain in place but as the school will become much bigger the governing body at the single primary school would need to be reconstituted.

They feel it is a large leap between infant and juniors in terms of teaching. What would the staff continuity be?

Due to the junior school having been put in special measures, steps are already being put in place to raise the standards and ensure greater continuity in terms of staffing at the school. If the proposal goes ahead any vacancies that arise will be appointed to through a formal recruitment process to ensure the best candidates have been appointed to the vacant teaching posts.

Would there be more stability (in relation to the junior school). What are the reasons for the merger?

By having a management structure that works across the two schools, this should ensure greater stability in terms of leadership and structure. The reason for the proposal is that the junior school had an Ofsted report in September which resulted in the school going into special measures. When a school goes into special measure one thing the DfE asks the local authority and governing body to consider is closing the school.

The governing body considered all of the options available and decided that the best course of action would be to work more closely with the infant school and the best way to achieve this would be to create a single primary school. The governing body of the junior school approached the governing body of the infant school regarding this proposal and they both agreed that this would be the best way forward.

***Agree or Disagree? Agree***

Mr and Mrs Dedat, parent of pupil in year 3

Officers – Trish McCarthy (School Advisor) and Ben Terry (Provision Planning Manager)

Mrs Dedat explained that she had concerns about the quality of education that her daughter was receiving and concerns about the performance of the junior school. Mrs Dedat provided some examples of concerns, such as children really struggling with homework. The school adviser explained about the special measures and the work being done by the school and LCC to improve performance, and explained about the monitoring and reporting provided by HMI. Mrs Dedat explained she was not convinced of improvements. The school adviser explained that the proposal is intended to assist the improvements needed, however, the consultation event is not really about discussing specific performance concerns, it is about the proposals to close the junior school/expand the infant school. The adviser suggested that a meeting with the head teacher would be beneficial. Mrs Dedat agreed to do this.

The Provision Planning Manager explained how the proposals had come about and how the governing body of the junior school had approached the infant school to consider some form of merger.

Mrs Dedat asked about the leadership structure. The school adviser provided what information she could but explained that the staff structure would need to be decided by the head and governing body.

Mrs Dedat explained that she had no objections to having one school, her concern related to the quality of the education, based on her concerns about the junior school. She explained that she would not want the school to convert to an academy, as she felt that local support, as provided by LCC, was important.

Mrs Dedat added that she saw the change as a way of improving the quality of education and leadership for junior school pupils.

***Agree or Disagree? Agree***

Zaid and Saleha Patel - parents with a child in Year 2 (infants) and Year 4 (juniors).

Officers – Kaarina McCooley (Provision Planning Officer) Trish McCarthy (School Advisor)

If the school will become a primary school and keeps the same staff – then how will it improve? How will the standards be improved? They asked what actions had been taken to improve the teaching and to raise the standards at the school and how this will continue. The school adviser explained what support has been put

in to support the school to raise standards and how support would continue. Mr and Mrs Patel concluded that they were in support of the proposal.

***Agree or Disagree? Agree***

Mr Latif Patel – Parent and member of governing body

Officers – Trish McCarthy (School Advisor) and Ben Terry (Provision Planning Manager)

Mr Patel explained that he was supportive of the proposal but did have some queries about the process and the logistics. Mr Patel enquired about how the school buildings would be joined up and would any financial capital support be available to facilitate the joining up of the 2 building, so that it felt like one school. The Provision Planning Manager explained that a small amount of capital would be made available but this would be limited. There was reference made to when Lynn Mappin had indicated that a shared staff room would be provided. Mr Patel asked about what else could be expected. He was advised that as we are only at an informal consultation stage no plans have been made at this stage. Mr Patel then went on to ask about other funding, more significant to make improvements to the school. He was advised about the constraints of funding and that he and other governors had been made aware of these constraints at a earlier meeting between LCC and both governing bodies.

Mr Patel explained that in terms of the current junior school, he was concerned about what problems had not been identified earlier. He felt that leadership was a serious concern.

Mr Patel viewed the proposals as a way to improve standards and leadership for junior school pupils.

***Agree or Disagree? Agree***

Mrs N Patel – parent with a pupil at the school in Year 3. On PTA for junior school.

Officers Maxine Smith (Provision Planning Officer) and Kaarina McCooey (Provision Planning Officer)

Mrs Patel thought at first the junior school was closing and there would be no provision but then realised this was not the case. She feels it is a much needed fresh start for the junior school. She commented on the leadership of the school and that it has not had a permanent head at the school for some time. She is very supportive of Miss Mirza becoming the head teacher of the new primary school but would like to see some guarantee that Miss Mirza would agree to stay for 3 years to give the school stability. She asked if the same staff would be kept at both schools. She wanted to know that if some staff left the junior school would some staff from the infant school come over so that there is consistency and continuity for the pupils. She wanted to know why the final decision being made in October and not September which is the start of term. She concluded that she is supportive of the proposal.

***Agree or Disagree? Agree***

Mr & Mrs Dawjee – Parent of pupil in year 3 at junior school

Officers – Maxine Smith (Provision Planning officer) and Paul Brain (Provision Planning Manager)

Is it going to go ahead? Is it a foregone conclusion?

This is a consultation to get views from parents and interested parties on how they feel about the proposal. Once this consultation ends a report will go to the decision maker, Cllr Tomlinson who will make a fully informed decision on whether or not to proceed with this proposal.

The proposal is not a foregone conclusion and it very much depends on the responses we receive from the parents and other interested parties.

Have we done any extending the age range before?

LCC is very experienced in extending schools and there are a number of schools in Lancashire where we have extended the age range and we have a number of school in Lancashire that are as large as the single primary school would be if the proposal went ahead.

Has the head got the experience to take over a larger school? Has the head got experience or does she need additional support – is there support and mentors for the school?

Should the proposal go ahead, there will be a single head teacher who will be supported by three deputy head teachers. The deputy head teacher from the junior school will be one of the three deputy head teachers at the single primary school and two additional deputy head teachers will be appointed through the recruitment process.

The head teacher will be fully supported by the school advisor and her team in order to ensure that a good level of education is delivered across both infant and junior pupils.

Has a risk analysis been done? i.e. if a head teacher is off, will the deputies be able to pick up the running of the school?

Part of the process for this proposal is ensuring that the right staff are appointed to the right roles and ensuring that the head teacher has a good management team who will all contribute to improving the standards of the school

If the proposal didn't go ahead, what would happen to the junior school?

If the proposal does not go ahead the infant and junior schools will remain separate, but steps are already in place to get the junior school out of special measures. The HMI is due the visit the school gain in June and we are expecting this to be a positive visit. LCC has a track record of getting school that are in special measure to a 'good' Ofsted rating within 18 months and it is hoped that this will be the case for the junior school.

If the proposal doesn't go ahead there is also the possibility that the junior school may become an academy as this is the preference for the DfE for school that are in special measure.

How will people (staff and parents) liaise with the head teacher?

The head teachers at both the infant and the junior school are available to discuss issues with parents and if you would like to discuss any concerns you have about the schools with the head teacher please arrange to make an appointment with the head teacher who will be happy to discuss this with you.

How are we trying to ensure the staff stay at the school?

We can't stop staff from leaving if that is their wish. Staff are given regular appraisals to discuss their aspirations and any issues they may have in relation to their employment and any concerns they have can be resolved via this route.

Does the head teacher want to take on the junior school?

The head teacher at the infant school is fully supportive of this proposal.

Will the decision be made public?

All reports and decisions are made public and can be accessed via our school reviews website (details provided)

Why is the implementation happening mid-year?

Due to the timescales involved and the statutory process we have to follow, we were unable to have an implementation date for September 2014 and had to have an implementation date of January 2015 to ensure that all of the process can be followed should the proposal go ahead.

Will there be a recruitment process?

Yes, any vacant positions will be filled via a formal recruitment process.

Uniform – will they have a fork out for a new uniform with the new school?

It has not yet been decided if there will be a new uniform, but concerns about the cost will be fed back to the school advisor for consideration should the proposal go ahead. Any decisions regarding uniform etc would be made by the head teacher and the governing body.

Is there a probation period for teachers?

Unsure if there is a probation period but teachers are closely monitored to ensure that teaching standards are met and if they were not performing to these standards steps would be put in place to resolve such problems.

Mr Dawjee would like to suggest that a risk analysis is undertaken so problems can be mitigated against. Mr Dawjee feels that the downfall of the junior school is due to the staff leaving and that the School needs to move on and have stability.

***Agree or Disagree? Agree***