



Decision Report on Consultation on Trust Status

May 2015



Sir John Hunt



Introduction

The Federated Governing Body of Wood View Learning Community is the governing body of the following schools:-

- Whitleigh Community Primary School of Lancaster Gardens, Whitleigh, Plymouth, Devon, PL5 4AA;
- Sir John Hunt Community Sports College of Lancaster Gardens, Whitleigh, Plymouth, Devon, PL5 4AA; and,
- Woodlands Special School incorporating Wood View Short Break Service, off Tamerton Foliot Road, Plymouth, Devon, PL6 5ES;

The Federated Governing Body of Wood View Learning Community prepared a consultation document in accordance with section 19(3) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and Schedule 1 of the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.

The Federated Governing Body of Wood View Learning Community proposed to:

- change the schools' categories from community schools to foundation schools; and,
- acquire a foundation trust otherwise than under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, to be known as The Plymouth North West Learning Trust (the "Trust").

As part of these changes, it is also proposed that Woodlands Special School and Short Break Service would leave the federation and form a stand-alone governing body in accordance with the School Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations 2012.

If the decision was taken to proceed, the intended implementation date was 1 June 2015.

The Consultation

In accordance with the Regulations, the Federated Governing Body undertook a formal consultation with its stakeholders on the proposals. This formal consultation gave stakeholders the opportunity to object or comment on the proposals before a final decision was taken by the Federated Governing Body on Wednesday 13 May 2015.

The consultation opened on Monday 13 April 2015 and closed on Monday 11 May 2015 at noon.

The Consultation period was designed to start after the Easter school holidays.

Welcoming Comments and objections

The Federated Governing Body welcomed comments on our proposal and whilst the consultation document included a large range of frequently asked questions the Body also invited any further questions.

There were a number of ways stakeholders could make their views known or have their questions answered:

- By post to the clerk to governors
- By e mail to the clerk to governors
- By post to the chair of governors
- By e mail to the chair of governors
- By attending meetings of parents
- By attending meetings of staff
- By attending meetings with union officials

Responses had to be received by noon on MONDAY 11 MAY 2015 when the consultation closed.

How The Federated Governing Body consulted

Consulting the public

The Statutory Notice was placed on the schools' websites and displayed near and on the school entrances. The Notice was also published in the Herald newspaper. Paper copies of the Consultation document were available from the school receptions.

Consultation with the Local Authority

The Governing Body commenced consideration of Trust status in response to 2 reports undertaken by the Local Authority and one external review commissioned in part by the Local Authority during the period of 2009 – 2011. The Governing Body also took into consideration an Option Appraisal completed by the Authority in June 2014.

When the Governing Body unanimously resolved to look into Trust status in January 2015 it engaged Browne Jacobson, solicitors, to act for them. Contact with the Authority to engage in dialogue commenced in January 2015. On 15 March 2015 the Governing Body advised the Local Authority that they would be meeting to decide formally whether to consult on 25 March 2015. On 26 March 2015 the Governing Body wrote to the Local Authority to advise that the unanimous decision had been made to consult and also to advise that Woodlands School had served notice on the governing body that it wished to defederate.

A copy of the consultation document was handed to an officer of the Local Authority on 16 May 2015.

The LA did not chose to exercise their right to refer the proposal to the Schools Adjudicator for decision on the basis that they considered it would have a negative impact on standards.

The Local Authority made no formal response to the consultation.

Consultation with staff

We held staff consultation meetings with our staff and their trade unions on:

- Sir John Hunt Community Sports College - Tuesday 14 April 2015 at 3.30pm in the Main Hall
- Woodlands Special School - Wednesday 15 April 2015 at 3.30pm in the Main Hall
- Whitleigh Primary School - Wednesday 15 April 2015 at 3.30pm in the Year 5 classroom

All staff who attended were given a presentation on the consultation and were directed to where they could read more information. Questions were invited.

The points that came out of these meetings were:-

- Would staff be able to access the benefits they currently have through PCC i.e. Bike scheme and childcare vouchers
- Would their terms and conditions change

Consultation with unions

Personal letters were sent to the following unions inviting them to attend a meeting of representatives from trade unions on Thursday 16 April 2015 at 3.30pm at Wood View conference suite.

NUT, NAHT, ASCL, NASUWT, VOICE (PAT), ATL, UNISON, UNITE, GMB

In attendance were

- the Headteachers of Whitleigh Primary and Woodlands School and the Principal of Sir John Hunt Community Sports College.
- Governors
- HR professionals – from Plymouth City Council and PAPH
- 2 unions

The points that came out of these meetings were:-

- Would the funding for any of the schools or partners be at risk or change?
- Was there confidence that the new governing bodies have enough members.

Consultation with parents

The consultation document was particularly detailed to allow parents to engage in the process. The governing body tried to address concerns that they might have over change of uniform or school name and we tried to explain the process of change to Trust status and the benefits.

Drop in meetings were offered on 22 April 2015 and the Chair offered her e mail for any queries or concerns.

Woodlands held two parent meetings – one in the morning and one at the end of the day and 1 parent attended.

Consideration

The governing body met on Wednesday 13 May 2015 at 5.30pm. All but three governors were in attendance.

The following options were available:-

- Approve the proposals without modification
- Modify the proposals in the light of suggestions made during consultation and, if the changes are significant, re-consult on the changes
- Reject the proposals and decide to remain as a community schools without any changes

Governors gave a full and detailed consideration of all the responses to the consultation. The views of those affected by the proposal were given careful consideration, rather than the number of responses expressing a particular view. Further consideration was given to the feedback from the staff meetings and from the union meetings.

Governors also reviewed the list of statutory considerations from the meeting held on 25 March.

34 responses were received to the Trust proposal. 32 were in support, one was against and one was marked undecided.

The vast majority of the responses were from staff and views expressed related largely to the benefits that the children and young people would gain from working with trust partners.

It will give us more opportunity to work with partners that could bring to the table offers for our young people

The structure will allow a greater focus on the particular needs of Woodlands whilst maintaining the collaborative and cooperative working across the Wood View campus.

It is in the best interests of all pupils and staff

I think it brings excellent long term opportunities for the schools

The one vote against the proposal cited that the respondent could not clearly see the advantages of Trust status and was concerned that terms and conditions for staff could change after the protected period.

Decision

A vote was taken and it was unanimously resolved that the proposals to convert to foundation status and form the trust be adopted without modification on 1 June 2015.

A second vote was taken and it was unanimously resolved that Woodlands School should be allowed to leave the federation. This would take place on 1 June 2015.

A final vote recorded the decision for the new 2 school federation to be named the Whitleigh Primary and Sir John Hunt Federation.

It was also noted that whilst the Local Authority had, separately from the consultation process, suggested that the decision be postponed in order that they could address the PFI process in relation to land arrangements, it was agreed that it was possible and preferable that the process should not be delayed. The Governors expressed the wish to work with the Local Authority going forward to address the outstanding arrangements.

Conclusion

Governors play a vital strategic function in schools by:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding the headteachers/principal to account for the educational performance of the schools and their pupils, and the performance management of staff; and
- Overseeing the financial performance of the schools and making sure money is well spent.

We thank you all for playing a part in this consultation.

It is intended that the Plymouth North West Learning Trust will be an inclusive partnership that generates learning opportunities and aspirations for all.

The aim of the Trust is to:

- deliver high quality learning experiences
- raise aspirations and academic achievement
- increase equality of life opportunities
- harness our partnership resources and beyond

What is best for the children and young people of our schools is the single driver for governors. We are excited that a new chapter is opening from 1 June 2015 for the schools and our students, staff and parents. We have a lot of work to do in the coming days and weeks and we will look forward to keeping the school community updated.