

DRAFT Notes of the meetings with parents on March 8th at 6.00pm and March 9th at 9.00am to consult about the proposed conversion of Beecholme Primary school to a sponsored academy with Chipstead Valley Academy Trust as the sponsor.

Attendees on 8th March

- Diane Moody - Chair of Governors
- Darra McFadyen - Interim Headteacher
- Hannah Roberts - Parent Governor
- Jane Kellock - School Business Manager (Associate Governor)
- Jane McSherry - Assistant Director – Merton
- Mark Rosewell - Executive Head – Chipstead Valley Academy Trust
- Stephen Smith - Project managing the conversion

14 parents attended

Attendees on the 9th March

- Diane Moody - Chair of Governors
- Darra McFadyen- Interim Headteacher
- Hannah Roberts - Parent Governor
- Zamir Cajee - Parent Governor
- Jane Kellock –School Business Manager (Associate Governor)
- Jane McSherry - Assistant Director – Merton
- Mark Rosewell - Executive Head – Chipstead Valley Academy Trust
- Stephen Smith - Project managing the conversion

35 parents attended.

The format of the meetings was broadly the same.

Diane Moody, Chair of Governors, welcomed everybody to the meetings and provided the latest update. At the last meeting held for parents in January, the school was not able to provide information about an approved academy sponsor partner. DfE has now approved the school's preferred sponsor partner as a way forward and this is to be Chipstead Valley Academy Trust.

The school has now entered into a period of consultation with parents and staff and the meetings form part of that consultation. The purpose of the consultation is to hear the views and suggestions from parents and to provide an opportunity to ask questions and seek further information. The process is not a negotiation but the governing body is interested in parents' views and what they have to say. The school is working in partnership with the local authority and the trust with the aim of achieving the best possible outcome for the school going forward.

Mark Rosewell, Executive Head, was invited to give a presentation about Chipstead Valley Academy Trust.

Mr. Rosewell gave brief details of himself and his family. He then spoke about Chipstead Valley Primary School. It is a 2 form entry school but because it is an outstanding school and very popular,

Croydon Council approached the school and asked it to consider whether it would expand so that it could respond to the demand for school places in the area. It is now undergoing a permanent expansion to a 3 form entry school. This will mean an increase in pupil numbers from 480 to 630. The school was inspected in 2013 and was rated outstanding in all areas. It has an inclusive provision for children with physical disabilities and complex medical needs from which all children in the school benefit. Chipstead Valley is also designated a National Teaching School which enables the school to develop and recruit excellent teachers. The school has responsibility for a local nursery school which is also outstanding.

Mr Rosewell then gave a brief history of the trust.

In 2013/2014, Chipstead Valley was approached by Croydon Local Authority to ask if it would support and take responsibility for a local school in difficulty (Special Measures) The school agreed, but in order to do this it had to become an academy (Converter) and form a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) This enabled Chipstead to 'sponsor' an additional school (Wattenden Primary School) which became New Valley Primary School – a 'sponsored' academy which joined the Chipstead Valley Academy Trust.

Wattenden Primary School was not very popular with parents. New Valley has significantly improved since it became an academy and it has been supported by the trust.

Throughout 2015 the Trust began to think about the idea of supporting a third school

Where are we now?

Mr Rosewell explained that late last year, Chipstead was approached by representatives from Merton LA to gauge the trust's interest in becoming a sponsor of Beecholme Primary. Chipstead is a relatively 'small' trust and Mr Rosewell had been involved in working in partnership on leadership development with Merton. Chipstead Valley wants to work in partnership with Merton.

Having learned about Beecholme and its circumstances, the trust agreed to be put forward for consideration by the Department for Education as the 'preferred' sponsor

Chipstead recently found out that that DfE had named the trust as the preferred sponsor. There there are now a number of stages in the process, leading up to what Chipstead hope will be a start for the new school in September 2016.

The trust would not be responsible for the school until September 2016. Mrs McFadyen is acting as Interim Head and Mr Rosewell's view is that she had brilliantly stepped in to enable a smooth transition. Mr Rosewell had visited the school and introduced himself to the staff and the pupils.

What can the parents expect?

Mr Rosewell explained that a new Head of School would be appointed working under his overall direction as Executive Head Teacher. He would be at the school regularly. There would be high quality teaching with systems for rigorous monitoring. There would be engaging lessons which would motivate the children. There would be no teaching that was less than good. At present the teachers at Chipstead Valley and New Valley plan together. The trust would want to continue with the curriculum and teaching and learning at Beecholme where it is at least 'good' and it raised

standards but would look for opportunities to share the good practice and collaboration through joint planning across the trust where it would lead to an improved curriculum and raised standards. There would be regular homework and help for parents so that they could support their children. Mr Rosewell was aware that it was a challenge to pitch the amount of homework at the right level for all children and in line with what all parents would like. Some parents are of the opinion that schools give too much homework and some give too little. The trust has successfully managed this by developing homework that all children are expected to complete and then for there to be additional homework to respond to parents who wanted their children to do more. He stressed that homework sometimes involved reading and practising basic skills and parents reading to their children. There would be a clear focus on English and Mathematics but this would not be to the detriment of other exciting opportunities to learn about other topics.

Mr Rosewell stressed that the trust would aim for an outstanding learning environment (over time) It would not be possible to achieve this in the first few days. He was, however, confident that an outstanding learning environment would be achieved. Mr Rosewell stressed that he would want to address some aspects of the physical learning environment in the school.

There would be good behaviour but Mr Rosewell pointed out that he was impressed with the children's behaviour when he visited the school. He believed in an emphasis on physical activity and exercise and spoke of how Chipstead had areas where the children could use equipment suitable for their age and size in a safe environment. Mr. Rosewell showed parents photographs of the exercise areas. The school's partnership with the PTA had raised money for these areas. Mr. Rosewell wanted to build on the work of the PTA at Beecholme.

Mr Rosewell emphasised that the academy will have enthusiastic and caring staff determined that all children would succeed. He stressed that the partnership with parents was crucial and the fact that so many parents had attended the meetings indicated that the parents wanted to be part of that partnership. The partnership with parents would involve the school and the trust listening to the views of parents. He would want to involve parents in a joint session to discuss the vision for the school in 2020. This would involve the parents, staff and governors. He considered the partnership with Merton as being of vital importance. To conclude, Mr Rosewell said that there would be an unrelenting focus on improvement.

Frequently Asked Questions

Mr Rosewell then informed parents of some frequently asked questions after which he invited parents to ask their own questions.

Will the school change its name?

Wattenden Primary School changed its name to 'New Valley' because the school was not very popular with parents and the number on roll was well below its capacity, particularly in the early years phase of the school. Parents were consulted and it was felt that the school needed a lift and a new identity and a change in name would help.

Beecholme appears to be a popular school with parents and therefore the situation is different. The trust has no particular view either way but the trust would consult parents at a later stage about this.

The school would not have 'academy' in its name. Even though Chipstead Valley Primary School is an academy the school name has been retained. New Valley is also known as 'New Valley Primary School' without reference to 'academy'

Will there be a new uniform and, if so, who will pay?

New Valley had a new uniform. Parents were consulted and as with the name change it was felt that the new uniform would give the school a much needed lift and a new identity. Pupils wear shirts, ties and jumpers as they do at Chipstead Valley. Parents will be consulted about this at a later stage but in good time before the end of the summer term. It is not likely that the children in the early years phase would be expected to wear uniform even if, after consultation, it was introduced. If a new uniform is to be introduced then in line with what happened at New Valley, the parents are likely to be provided with one each of a shirt, jumper and tie. Grey trousers or skirts continued to be worn at New Valley so there was no additional expense for parents. A book bag and PE bag were also provided.

What about funding?

The level of funding for an academy is almost the same as it is for a maintained school. Academies receive their annual funding allocations direct from the Education Funding Agency (EFA) rather than through Merton. Some account is taken of funding that is necessary to buy services that are no longer automatically provided by the LA. This is allocated to academies based on the number of pupils they are responsible for.

What happens to the governing body and will there still be parent governors?

As of 31st August the school will technically close and then reopen on 1st September as an academy. Strategic leadership for the trust is provided by the trust directors of which there are seven plus the Executive Head. Each academy in the trust has its own local governing body answerable to the directors. Each local governing body will have parent governors. Parents will be elected to the local governing body as they are now for the school. More details will be provided for parents about this arrangement.

Are children in academies still eligible for universal free school meals?

There is no change to the eligibility of children for universal free school meals.

When will the next Ofsted inspection take place?

Ofsted inspections take place during the third year after opening.

Will you succeed?

Absolutely - Mr Rosewell brought his presentation to an end by stressing that when he visited the school the children were brilliant. He had also observed some good practice. The children were enthusiastic and willing to work and with the positive support of parents in evidence at the meetings he had every confidence that the school would improve in the future with the support of Chipstead Valley Academy Trust.

Further questions and comments from the parents over the course of the two consultation meetings for parents

Comment: One parent expressed that the Ofsted judgement had been a shock but they were now very reassured by what they had heard from Mr Rosewell and about the trust.

Comment: In relation to the question about uniform, one parent expressed that they were 'all for a tie'

Question: One parent asked about the number of parent governors and another asked whether the parents would have a say in those elected to be parent governors?

Answer: Information about the number of parent governors would be communicated to parents. If there are more nominations than the number of parent governors on the local governing body then elections would be held. All parents would receive details about the process for nominating parent governors and the election if it was necessary to hold one. The result of any election would be communicated.

Comment and Question: One parent expressed a view that there was innovative practice and activities in the school and asked whether these were likely to continue when the school became an academy? One example given was the opportunity for parents to be present in the classrooms for the first ten minutes of each day.

Answer: There has not yet been an opportunity for Mr. Rosewell to be sufficiently informed about the many aspects of the school's present practice and why and how it has emerged. There will be the opportunity to review this at a later and more appropriate time to evaluate the benefits for all of the pupils. Mr. Rosewell said that he couldn't say categorically whether anything would change at this stage but he would of course will be consulting and listening to the staff and the parents in due course. After doing so, he would have to balance the impact and benefits of the school's present practice particularly on learning and standards alongside the impact of other potential practice and activities. The funding of the school's practice and activities would also have to be considered to ensure that the school's resources were targeted at the school's improvement priorities. All of these factors would also have to be considered in the light of the Ofsted judgement which was inadequate. Mr Rosewell stressed that he was a strong supporter of after school clubs and activities and although he cannot insist upon staff running these he would encourage as many clubs and activities as possible. At Chipstead there are clubs and activities before school starts and after school. He acknowledged that there would be a limit to the number of activities that can be provided by the staff and it may well be that there are after school clubs and activities at present that require some additional subsidy from the school or parents. Where this is the case, from September, the school would also have to consider whether any costs for parents or the school which were necessary to subsidise an activity may prohibit some children from accessing and benefiting from such an activity.

Question: One parent asked if the trust had any plans to expand Beecholme?

Answer: The trust did not have any plans in the foreseeable future to expand the school.

Question: One parent asked if the children at Chipstead Valley experienced music?

Answer: Mr Rosewell confirmed that they did and there was a school orchestra. Another asked if there was enough space at Beecholme to develop music? Mr Rosewell said that he would find space. Potentially more challenging was finding someone to run the music.

Comment: A parent commented that in her experience, the Merton Music Service had been a good resource.

Question: One parent asked about the role of the project manager.

Answer: He would be making sure that everything to do with the conversion ran smoothly, and his role was to ensure that the school's governors and leadership team were not deflected from their core purpose of improving teaching and learning.

Question: One parent asked how parents would know whether the school was improving if Ofsted inspections for academies take place in their third year after opening?

Answer: Mr Rosewell was only able to respond to the question in terms of what would happen from September. The trust has a rigorous monitoring and evaluation process to make judgements about the quality of teaching and learning. It has an excellent track record of supporting teachers to implement strategies to raise standards. This will operate from September. The trust will also invite Merton to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. Parents will be able to see for themselves the school's results each year which are published but importantly they will be able to see, find out and judge for themselves by looking at the work that their children are doing in school and at home throughout the year. Parents will also be able to observe the marking and comments of teachers and will receive feedback from parents' evenings and reports.

Parents were informed that there would be an LA and school Ofsted Action Plan that would address issues from the inspection report. The school may receive an external visit from HMI from May. Parents will be kept informed of what progress is being made and the outcome of any visit from HMI.

Question: One parent asked if the staff of the school would remain?

Answer: Staff in post at the time of the transfer would have their employment transferred to the new employer, Chipstead Valley Academy Trust. This change of employer means that there would be a transfer of staff from the current school to the academy to which the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 would apply.

Question: One parent asked if the timetable would change?

Answer: The trust would first have to consider whether the children are receiving the legal hours of education and then whether the timetabled day is organised to achieve the best possible circumstances for the school to raise standards. There are no plans to change the start and end times of the day. If ever the trust considered this to be necessary in the future there would have to be a longer consultation with parents about this. Mr Rosewell explained that his preference was for a timetabled day with a longer morning because he felt that children learned more this way but reiterated that this would not affect the start and end times of the day.

Comment: A parent requested that if there were to be meetings in the future could there be more notice given and could they be calendared.

Response: The school replied that the meetings had been arranged by the school sooner rather than later so that parents could be consulted as soon as possible and to provide them with important information and updates. The school said it would provide as much notice as possible for parents if meetings were to be arranged.

Question: One parent asked whether the children would be consulted so that they knew what the conversion meant for them?

Answer: It was confirmed by the school that the situation had been explained to the children in assembly. Mr Rosewell said that he and his team would speak to the children nearer the date of the conversion

Question: One parent asked who would appoint the Head of School?

Answer: The trust would appoint the Head of School and Mr Rosewell will want to ensure that someone of the highest calibre is chosen. He explained that the post would be advertised early so that if it was not possible to appoint the first time then there would be another opportunity to appoint for September.

Comment: One parent responded to Mr Rosewell expressing that he wanted to address some aspects of the school's physical environment which in some places needed attention. The parent supported the concern he had expressed about pools of rainwater in some of the outside areas. There was further support for this from other parents.

