

Balfour infant and Junior School Public Meeting Notes

Meeting date 11th May 2010 at 19.00hrs

Attendees Gil Sweetenham, Gillian Churchill, Hilary Ferries -BHCC
Derek Betts Tony Jones Balfour Junior School
Judith Kemp Balfour Infant School
Approx 60 members of the public

DB Chair of Governors of Balfour Junior School gave introduction.

GS gave a short presentation. GS outlined the process and why the LA was making the proposal.

The floor was then opened to questions

What will happen once the two head teachers leave in July 2010? An interim head teacher will be appointed until a new head teacher or head teachers are appointed. The Local Authority (LA) will support the governing bodies in whatever they decide. The advertisement for the permanent head teacher (or head teachers) cannot take place until after the conclusion of this process on 11th October 2010. TJ, head teacher of the junior school has volunteered to stay on as head teacher of the junior school until December 2010.

Do you think there will be a good response to the advertisement for a primary head teacher for such a large school? We would expect the job to be very attractive to candidates looking for a new headship as it is a fantastic opportunity for anyone wishing to expand their experience and enhance their career.

How do these proposals affect the application process for 2011? If the proposal goes ahead then pupils in Year 2 will transfer directly in to Year 3 without the need for applying for a place. If the proposal does not go ahead parents will need to make the application for a place in the usual manner.

How will the small learning communities currently existing in the infant school be continued in the merged school? It is not anticipated that there will be any change to the community of learners that currently exist. However these could be enhanced by the additional facilities offered by a larger school.

Will extra curricular activities be encouraged as at present? This will be a matter for the new head teacher(s). An important part of the appointment process will be to ensure that the successful candidate(s) agree with the ethos of the school.

What will happen to the staff at the two schools if the proposal goes ahead? All staff will initially transfer to the new school. During the first year of operation the Governing body and head teacher will consider the staffing structure to determine whether there are any changes that need to be implemented. This is something that is done in all schools each year. There will be no redundancies as a direct result of this proposal.

Have the staff body been involved in this proposal? The staff are aware of the proposals and will be fully consulted as the process continues.

Will there be an increase in the number of reception places offered by the school as a result of these proposals? No

Will there still be an infant section and a junior section? It is not possible to answer this question as the future management of the school is a matter for the new head teacher and Governing body. However the governors are responsible for appointing the new head teacher and would be most likely to appoint someone who agreed with their ethos.

Is this being proposed to save the LA money? The funding for schools follows pupils and therefore there is no saving for the authority as a result of this proposal.

At the present time both the head teachers know every one of their pupils. This is lovely for the parents and the pupils alike. How will it be possible for this to happen in a larger school? If this is a priority for the new head teacher they will make this happen.

In what way is this a fantastic opportunity for the pupils? There is the opportunity for greater expertise across all year groups, younger children respond positively to having older peers around and the older children relish the opportunity to look after the younger pupils.

Currently the school both have strong head teachers, as they are both leaving the schools are both facing change, is this the right time to consider further changing the schools, would it be better to wait until the schools both have new head teachers before considering amalgamating the schools? The Council has had a policy of supporting the amalgamation of infant and junior schools where appropriate since 2000. One of the trigger points for consideration is when a head teacher leaves. In the case of this proposal both head

teachers are leaving and the governors indicated that they wished to consider amalgamation. If we were to appoint head teachers to both schools and then consider amalgamation it would be necessary to either wait until one of the newly appointed heads was to leave or make one of them redundant as a result of the process.

How many other 4 FE primary schools are there in Brighton? There are no other 4 FE primary schools in Brighton. There are examples of schools of this size in the country, the majority of these schools are performing well and some are rated as outstanding by Ofsted.

Are infant teaching skills transferable to junior schools and / or vice versa? It is believed that there are transferable skills. Both schools have teachers who are equally able to teach in both settings. In addition the schools have specialist teachers with some flexibility time wise (such as music teachers etc) who would be able to offer their specialism to the other school thus enriching the curriculum for both age groups.

Are there any guarantees that if the schools were merged that there would be separate assemblies and dining facilities for the two different age groups as at present? There can be no guarantees about this as this would be down to the new head teacher and governing body. However the governing body is clear on the ethos and aspiration of the school and since it is responsible for the appointment of the head teacher they are unlikely to appoint a head teacher who does not subscribe to this view. In addition because of the way the schools are currently provided for in terms of their buildings, separate assemblies and dining is likely to continue.

If this proposal does not succeed will the schools have to be federated? A LA cannot require schools to federate. However if schools wish this to happen they could take this step themselves.

If the proposal is successful will the school uniform change? This is another questions that can only really be answered by the new head teacher, however generally if uniforms change schools will allow the two uniforms to run side by side until all uniforms have been replaced in the usual cycle of renewing uniforms rather than insisting on all uniforms changing an one day.

There have been a number of questions tonight that could not be answered because they are down to the new head teacher? Will these questions be answered before the final decision is made on these proposals? No, the appointment of the new head teacher(s) cannot take place until a decision is made on these proposals.

Meeting closed at 20.15hrs

