

## ALMONDBURY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

### STAFF CONSULTATION MEETING NOTES – Thursday 11 April 2019, 3:30pm

Present: 3 Local Authority officers  
4 Trade union representatives  
Approximately 55 members of staff

An overview of the proposals was presented by the local authority (LA), and then the meeting was opened to questions.

- As part of the planning for the proposals, the LA will have started to build a new staffing structure for September. What will this look like?  
*Staffing structures are for schools to shape, this is not something the LA have decided. It hangs on the Cabinet decision, and the LA will work with school leaders after this decision. Thoughts are ongoing about the possibilities, but it is dependent on many factors that will come out from the consultation.*
- So our jobs are safe for 18 months?  
*It is never possible to give absolute guarantees, but the proposals are not planned to begin until at least 2020.*
- The school is already leaking pupils, as parents understandably are wanting stability. What will the LA do to protect us? Are there any policies to resist allowing pupils to leave the school?  
*We have arranged one-to-one sessions with parents to help explain and clarify the situation, to try to mitigate a 'knee-jerk' reaction by parents. However, parents are entitled to complete an in-year common application form (ICAF) under the School Admissions Code.*
- At the sessions held last week, LA officers stated there was a 'hold' on ICAFs, and the school is advising prospective parents that we are not accepting applications for the school. Can you advise who in the LA have told our office staff to not accept ICAFs?  
*There appears to be a lack of clarity, and the LA will look into this – the situation is that any parent has the legal right to complete an ICAF for a place at another school, ie to leave Almondbury Community School; and they have the legal right to complete an ICAF for a place at the school. We would want to ensure any prospective parent is fully informed of the proposals for the school before they make their decision, but they are still able to request a place at Almondbury Community School.*
- How is redundancy calculated – on what is it based?  
*It is based on what you currently earn, for example if someone currently works 2 days a week, redundancy would be based on that, rather than any previous full time employment at the school.*

- How many year 7 pupils are expected this September? There are many rumours about the school's situation, including that there may not be any year 7 pupils joining.  
*The school can check that online through existing admissions systems, but we are happy to feed that information to the school if preferred. It would not legally be possible to prevent pupils from joining year 7 in September.*
- The school has a higher than national average of SEN pupils, pupils with speech and communication difficulties, and vulnerable pupils. All struggle with change, and reports from several parents (as well as in school) are that behaviour in many of these pupils has dramatically worsened due to the proposals.  
*We have listened to parents and school leaders about the impact on individual pupils. Any transition would need to be planned to minimise the impact.*
- I was told last week by an LA officer that staff at this school had been to 'HR counselling' and that we are all 'fine in our jobs.' Why was this said when it is clearly untrue?  
*Regarding the incident last year that made the national news, health care professionals were asked to come in to offer support to the school. HR have been available in school recently to support staff. The LA apologises if anything was said that was misleading, this would not have been the intention of any officer.*
- We are all here for the children, and several of us want to stay for the children. But will we be expected to work to the end and 'fall off the cliff'? Will serious discussions with staff begin?  
*If a decision means the proposals move forward, we would absolutely want to work with staff and collaborate.  
Trade unions: What staff have already gone through is incredibly traumatic. Imperative we ensure staff are looked after. We need to start the conversations about structures and how things may look. It is admittedly difficult until a decision is made, but we absolutely want to protect staff.*
- Who would fill the gaps if staff leave?  
*The LA has examples of working with staff at Birkdale High School and middle schools in Cleckheaton, to ensure those schools were fully functioning until the point they closed, and that staff were supported.*
- Schools live or die by reputation. The LA should have looked at building up the reputation of this school. The new leaders have begun implementing change, and improvements are already evident. Why not allow this to play out?  
*There is a timescale imposed by legislation. There was an Ofsted inspection, resulting in a category. When this happens, the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) would normally issue an academy order, and due diligence is carried out in order to secure a sponsor to run the new academy. However, due to the budget issues the school faces and lack of pupil numbers, the school is not considered viable. The RSC have not issued an academy order at this stage as they recognise the difficult position.*

*Trade unions: A lot of these decisions are from the RSC, not Kirklees. The school is stuck with the RSC looking for a structural solution – and they can decide to close the school completely. This is a real risk.*

- It was agreed for All Hallows' Primary CE(VA) School to become an all-through primary, thus taking junior school pupils from us. Twelve years ago, it was agreed for King James's School to increase its PAN which again, took pupils from this school. We just wish someone from the LA would acknowledge what these decisions have meant for this school.  
*The All Hallows' decision was not made by the LA, Kirklees was against those proposals. Regarding King James's, it is difficult to say after so much time and changes of policy and officers whether it was the correct decision at the time.*
- Newsome High is in the same category as this school – what is the difference?  
*Newsome came out at a higher level within the same category, due to strengths in leadership. The school also has a viable budget and provides a breadth of curriculum not currently possible in Almondbury Community School. The school is in the process of becoming an academy.*
- If Newsome High does not find a sponsor, could pupils end up moving from here to another school that could itself close?  
*That is not considered a risk, they have over 500 pupils on roll which is a significant factor in viability.*
- Does consultation include surrounding primary schools, eg Dalton/Moldgreen?  
*The Almondbury area has been targeted the most specifically, but families with pupils in Reception to year 5 in surrounding primaries have been informed of the public drop-in that is to take place tomorrow (Friday 12 April) at the Children's Centre. Year 6 pupils have had a letter offering a one-to-one appointment.*
- At what point is change so significant that we have to make staffing changes?  
*There is lots of unpredictability. Restructures are covered by law. Everything will be done in a fair way. Unfortunately, there is much that it is just too soon to have answers. The LA does want to work with staff should the proposals move forward.*
- If staff reduced hours temporarily to assist budgets, or if some staff were asked to cover lower-graded jobs, what would happen as regards redundancy?  
*This would depend on when and why staff were asked to do so, and whether or not it was to do with the reorganisation. The LA would to be fair with staff.*