

PROPOSAL TO MERGE MONKS' DYKE TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE AND TENNYSON HIGH SCHOOL

PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING AT TENNYSON HIGH SCHOOL at 6.00pm on 12 DECEMBER 2011

PANEL MEMBERS: Paul Holmes (LCC)
Tim Mudge (Chair of federated governing body)
Dr Chris Rolph (Executive Headteacher)

Tim Mudge introduced the evening and re-affirmed the governing body's unanimous commitment to maintaining secondary education provision in Mablethorpe and to provide the best solution for the children and young people of Mablethorpe.

Dr Rolph summarised the background leading up to the current proposal.

Paul Holmes explained that this meeting is part of the consultation process on the proposal to merge the two schools but which technically is to close Tennyson High School and expand Monks' Dyke Technology College to form one enlarged school over two sites. He introduced the members of the panel and confirmed that there were also officers from LCC and CfBT present to assist in answering any issues raised. The purpose of this meeting is to give members of the public opportunity to find out more about the proposal and express their views and Paul also stressed the importance of returning a response form to enable all issues raised to be taken into consideration in the decision making process.

Approximately 25 people in total attended the meeting including Local Authority officers, parents and other members of the public.

The following is a record of the questions and answers at the meeting.

- Q** I appreciate issues of falling rolls, particularly at Monks' Dyke, with the financial implications – surely the common sense approach would be to incorporate the two schools into one building and not maintain two sites.
- A** If this was looked at purely as an exercise in numbers then this might be the answer. But we are talking about young people not numbers. The LA preference is to maintain education in Mablethorpe and the governing body support this. A town of this size needs a secondary school. The model proposed allows for staff and for pupil movement on certain days. The governing body appreciates there are financial challenges but is committed to providing secondary education in Mablethorpe.
- Q** I agree we don't want children to travel unreasonably but this proposal must be financially viable. Will keeping two sites be financially viable?
- A** The governing body is not complacent and appreciates it will be a challenge but will make every effort to ensure the merged school is a success. LCC also believes it is important to maintain secondary education in Mablethorpe and will work with the governing body to try to ensure that one school over two sites will work successfully.

Q Can you guarantee that in a couple of years the site in Mablethorpe will not close down anyway. Will the merge become a closure?

A In some parts of the county schools have had to close. We will do everything in our power with the governing body to ensure that the two sites remain. There is a decline in secondary rolls. We have to get the balance right and maintain enough provision for the future. There is however no absolute guarantee but we will do our best.

Q In the past in other areas parents have agreed to a merger as they were promised a “super new school” which then hasn’t materialised and people have had to be taught in portakabins. Will this happen here?

A There is no promise of a “super new school”. There is no capital available to deliver this. We aim to maintain both sites with the current buildings. There is no “behind the scenes” plan.

Q I am concerned about transportation costs. Will pupils have to pay?

A LCC policy will apply. The policy is to provide transport to the nearest appropriate school if this is over 3 miles, or less than 3 miles if not a safe walking distance. If pupils have to travel between sites, this will be free for those aged 11-16 years. In addition under the proposal subsidised transport will be provided for the first time for students travelling from Mablethorpe to Louth.

Q But what if you live in Louth and a subject such as Maths is at the Mablethorpe site?

A All core curriculum subjects for Years 7-11 will be offered at both sites. We will aim to minimise travel. Subjects at A level will be offered according to demand – as is the current practice.

Q Money is an important issue – will there be a bursar or will the governing body supervise?

A The new staffing structure has not been produced but the bursar’s role is an important one and I’m sure that there will be at least one financial manager for the merged school.

Q Will the uniform change?

A Yes. It is important that we build an identity for the new school so that pupils feel that they are a part of one school whichever site they are at. A new uniform will help here, but despite whatever rumours are around, no decisions have been made. As part of this new identity the governing body is also looking at a new name for the merged school.

Q The majority of 6th form provision will be in Louth – transport is subsidised but not free. As the Educational Maintenance Allowance has also been withdrawn will this put young people off going into 6th form?

A Across the whole county this has had an impact. But the merger should not exacerbate this. In fact the merger proposal should help as previously there was no entitlement to subsidised transport for 6th form students from Mablethorpe to Louth.

Q If the merger proposal does not go ahead I understand that the school could not continue – so do we have a choice?

A Projections indicate that as a standalone school Tennyson would be under severe pressure, but I must emphasise that this is a positive choice to merge.

Q Are we looking at staff reductions?

A There will be staff reductions if the proposed merger goes ahead although the new staff structure has not been consulted on yet. However, equally, there would have to be staff reductions if the merger does not go ahead.

Q Will the uniform changes be on a rolling programme or would parents be expected to buy the new uniform from day one of the new school?

A It would unreasonable to insist an immediate change – but equally we cannot allow some pupils to continue in the old uniform for 4-5 years. We will be reasonable about this. We are having conversations with LCC about the possibility of support for parents with the new uniform. This is the type of issue that will be discussed by the transition board. This is an opportunity to look at the uniform at both sites and address any issues.

Q What will be the impact on staff?

A Some will be assimilated into their posts – some may have to go through a selection process. If so this will be open and fair and based on skills and knowledge.

Q Will staff keep their pensions?

A Yes.

Q Will staff pay be affected?

A Some may be affected – but this would happen without the merger too as the school would have to re-organise due to falling rolls and financial pressures.

Q What will happen where two different examination boards are being used for same subjects?

A Every pupil will be able to complete the course of study with their existing examination board. Choice of examination boards will eventually be brought into line across both sites as they will comprise one school (and this is happening anyway). This is only a temporary issue and will present no significant long term issues.

Q Will the type of courses offered be affected by the merger eg BTECs or GCSEs?

A We will do as we have always done – ie offer the courses that are right for the children. The proposed merger will benefit the children as it will enable the offer of a wider curriculum across both sites.

The meeting closed at 6.45pm

PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING AT MONKS' DYKE TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE at 7.30pm on 12 DECEMBER 2011

PANEL MEMBERS: Paul Holmes (LCC)
Tim Mudge (Chair of federated governing body)
Dr Chris Rolph (Executive Headteacher)

Tim Mudge introduced the evening and re-affirmed the governing body's unanimous commitment to maintaining secondary education provision in Mablethorpe and to provide the best solution for the children and young people of Mablethorpe.

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Approximately 20 people in total attended the meeting including Local Authority officers, parents and other members of the public.

The following is a record of the questions and answers at the meeting.

Q With regard to travelling between the two sites, did you say that pupils would stay at one site for the whole day but staff might travel backwards and forwards? This would be very disruptive for staff and pupils.

A We would do everything to minimise travel between the two sites to avoid extra travel and stress. Staff must be prepared to work at either site but we would not expect this to be backwards and forwards for one or two lessons – only for reasonable periods of time.

Q I understand that you wish to provide education in both towns and provide equal opportunities for young people and you have the support of the LA in this. There has been much talk of Academy status in the area – does this figure in your plans?

A No.

Q But what about the foreseeable future?

A It will take at least a year to establish the newly merged school. We cannot tell what will happen in the future. Our aim is to make this proposal work and have a successful school. If there is a proposal for an Academy at a later stage this will be a completely separate issue – the governing body in place at that time would have to make that decision.

- Q** The governing body has been looking at the issue facing provision of education in Louth and Mablethorpe for several years with support of LA and CfBT. The issue of an Academy has been raised by the Save Our Schools Group and brought into public domain by the media leading to some public in Louth being confused over the issue.
- A** Noted. However as the government has promoted Academies then all governing bodies must consider this option and make their own decision.
- Q** If a lot of other schools in the county transfer to Academies will the loss of money to the LA mean less funds are available for home to school transport?
- A** The LA pays for home to school transport (subject to the transport policy) both to maintained schools and Academies – this is a statutory duty. The policy is to provide transport to the nearest appropriate school if this is over 3 miles, or less than 3 miles if not a safe walking distance. The funding used is separate to normal school/academy funding.
- Q** Will there be problems for children if the 2 schools are offering subjects with different examination boards?
- A** Any pupil who has commenced a course of study with one examination board will be able to complete it. Since the hard federation the governing body has been looking at bringing examination boards into line. This will be a minor issue in the short term only and will not present any difficulties in the long term.
- Q** Please do not put letters into school bags as parents may not receive them.
- A** We will make every effort and use all appropriate means to communicate with parents and other interested parties. In addition if this proposal continues to the Representation period then the statutory notice will be published in the local press, at the school gate and within the community.
- Q** I can only assume that the very low turnout at this meeting indicates that parents are happy with this proposal.
- A** Agreed. Many of the issues that might arise have already been resolved through the existing hard federation.

The meeting closed at 8.00pm