

Consultation on the proposal to change the age ranges of Grainthorpe Primary School and Marshchapel Primary School

Grainthorpe and Marshchapel Public Consultation Meeting at Grainthorpe Primary School at 1.30pm on 9 October 2017

Panel Members: Heather Sandy (Assistant Director of Children's Services/chair)
Matthew Clayton (Education Provision Planning Manager)
Marilyn Bell (Chair of Governors)
Kate Rouse (LCC Education Support)
Vicky Johnson (Interim Executive Head)

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

Q We will have children split across two sites – will time be lost in school due to transport time?

A There is a statutory obligation for specific time to be spent in school. The beginning and the end of the school day will be set to take this into consideration and the start/end times of each schools will be staggered. Transporting pupils from one site to another on a regular basis will not form part of the school day.

Q I don't want my Reception age child travelling via bus.

A Unfortunately the rural nature of Lincolnshire does mean that many children have to travel to school via bus, taxi or car. Whilst it would be preferred that all children could walk to a local school, we must support small rural schools remaining viable, and we believe the many positives of this proposed model outweigh the negatives.

Q One of my reasons for choosing this school was because of small class sizes.

A Class sizes must remain of a viable size. All schools will structure their class organisation to ensure that they remain efficient and affordable on the available budget. If this proposal does not go ahead then it is quite possible that class sizes at both schools would have to be increased, but there would be more than two year groups in a class to make it affordable as two separate primary schools.

Q Are we able to choose Grainthorpe as a Junior School but a different school for infant age?

A Yes, parents can apply for a different school. Those that choose a different school for infant age (even if it is Marshchapel) will have to apply for a Y3 school place when their child is in Y2, and can do so to any school.

Q Could Marshchapel be a Nursery only and Grainthorpe be the Primary School?

A It is a model that could be considered, but then all Marshchapel residents would have to travel (or be transported) in all year groups to Grainthorpe. There may also be limitations on the capacity of Grainthorpe to be of sufficient size to cope with all Marschapel and Grainthorpe pupils in one primary school. This is not a model we are considering.

Q Has any consideration been given to increased traffic and encouraging healthy access to schools and additional traffic through the villages?

A The school travel plans will need to be updated to minimise the impact on traffic. There may be options that could be considered such as using the village hall as a car park for a 'park and ride' initiative, along with consideration of other mitigating options.

Q I am concerned about class numbers and size. I wanted smaller numbers in a village school.

A Too few numbers can be a barrier to children's full development. Teachers prefer two year groups or less rather than multiple or cross key stage (see also answer to previous similar question)

Q My daughter and I have high hopes for what she wants to achieve, but I don't want this proposal to have a negative impact on that.

A The LA and schools also want all children to have the best possible opportunity to achieve their full potential and we believe that this proposal offers that opportunity.

Q We will need a full coordination across both schools?

A This will happen and parents will need to be kept informed.

Q Lack of information out of Marshchapel regarding changes to the school day. How will we all be kept informed and know what is happening at each school?

A We will reflect on this with the Governing Body and look to improve this.

Q Is mixing year groups trickier at early age, such as Years 1 and 2 together?

A This proposal consolidates more children of similar ages. Smaller villages tend to have to mix several year groups. The more we can do to reduce the number of year groups in a single class the better it is for the staff and the pupils. Ideally no more than one or two year groups would be taught in a class, but sometimes this is unavoidable in small rural schools.

Q If there was sufficient demand to need more than 30 plus would class be split into 2?

A Each year all schools look at the numbers they have and decide the best way to deliver a curriculum to the children that are there with the resources available. Infant Class Size regulations mean that there should be no more than 30 pupils in a class for Reception to Year 2.

Q I have 2 children one in Year 1 and one in Year 4 and I live just outside of Marshchapel. I want to know how the logistics will work?

A A detailed transport plan will be put together for a proposal at the formal consultation and discussion will take place to identify individual parent/pupil needs at the appropriate time so that the necessary arrangements could be put in place.

Q Although I'd prefer all year groups to be at my local village school, I think this model will offer the best educational experience for my child.

A Noted.

Q I think that preventative measures now with a good model in place will ensure the future of the school in both villages.

A Noted

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Q I can't argue with the rational. Education at the heart. Practicality is the issue when split sites have staggered starts. We wanted our children to go to the same school which will be lost for a couple of years as well as the practical issue. What about breakfast clubs etc. A lot of pressure for parents with split schools. What about childcare based in the village?

A We acknowledge that it will be more of a challenge for some parents. We will be looking at transport arrangements for each individual parent and their circumstances. These are difficult decisions and we want both schools to have a viable future. There may be improved opportunities for before and after childcare.

Q Breakfast club with transport could be a good option. Nobody wants either school to close so can understand why this proposal has been made.

A Noted.

Q There used to be a three tier education system. There was a move away from this for a reason so how is this different?

A The three tier system was different in that it introduced a middle school which spanned primary and secondary. This model is still retaining a primary model with benefits of less year groups being taught in one class. There are several very successful infant/junior models across the county. This proposal prevents age 7 to 11 all being in one class with educational and social challenges and allows 7-9 and 9-11 in separate classes.

Q You mentioned staggered start/finish. Will both do the same amount of hours at each school? How will this be affected?

A Travel time will not come out of the teaching time. When organising transport arrangements there will be individual conversations to determine best arrangements to put in place. The mandatory amount of hours will be taught at each school.

Q Logistics of picking up and dropping off will be the biggest challenge. So will there be transport? One of the reasons for choosing Marshchapel is because we live within walking distance. Apart from that it sounds like a good idea, even if I have to pay for transport.

A Where appropriate to do so the Local Authority would arrange and fund transport.

Q This proposal appears to be a move away from better class sizes and still have mixed classes. Does this proposal get away from mixed?

A If we stayed as two primary schools there would have to be more mixed year groups. The proposal would protect the quality of education and the viability of the schools to avoid closure and reduce the number of year groups that have to mix in a class.

Q I am concerned about the impact on the ethos and feel of these village schools and community schools. My choice is being taken away from me.

A The option to stay as they are would be a bigger class of 3/4/5/6 in a single class, or similar size classes of 3/4 and a 5/6 in the new model. Alternative options to the proposed model would be a significant challenge in terms of the finance and a quality education. This proposal appears to best option to present the best solution to support the futures of both schools.

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