



# Scott-Broadwood (SB)

## Notes from Formal Consultation Meeting

22nd March 2017, 7:30pm at Ashcombe School

---

Michael Hall (MH) - Deputy Director for Guildford Diocese & Chair of Meeting

Susan Muat (SM) - Headteacher at SB

Alex Cliff (AC) - Chair of Governors at SB

Wendy Reed (WR) - Vice Chair of Governors at SB

Claire Hope (CR) - Bursar at SB

Oliver Gill (OG) - School Commissioning Officer for South East Surrey

MH opened the meeting by introducing the above and thanking everyone for attending. Reverend Liz Richardson led a short prayer and a minute's silence in remembrance of all those affected by the incident in London.

AC introduced herself and Wendy and explained her previous success in taking Powell Corderoy from Requires Improvement to Good. She explained the process that had been followed by Governors leading up to the formal consultation process and explained that Governor's needed to look at mid- to long-term solutions that offered sustainability for the school. She added that during this process, although there had been a number of well-thought-out short-term solutions presented by the Parent Action Group (PAG) there had not been any proposals put forward for the long-term sustainability of a two-base solution.

CH explained how heartbreaking staff and Governors found the proposals they were making and explained how this is a situation facing many schools in the present financial climate. The impact of reduced funding has resulted in the school paring down costs as much as possible. Consequently, bursar hours were reduced and while over the past two years, we have had children with statements and funding for adults to support them, this year, we have none. This leaves the school with fewer adults to cope with the challenge of operating over two bases and staff are stretched to the limit. Fewer children than expected joined Reception in Ockley in September and the figures from Surrey show that there is a surplus of school spaces in the area. Therefore, the the vision, the ethos and the values and how to provide the best education to our pupils. The two proposals deliver the same standard of education, facilities and staff to our pupils, the only difference is whether it is delivered over one base or two. The one base solution leaves us with a £10k surplus, the two base solution leaves us with a £99k deficit. Governors have chosen to follow the most financially viable solution, hence this consultation process.

OG explained the forecast figures for the PAN numbers looking forward and highlighted the surplus places found in the South Mole Valley quadrant. He explained how most areas look to run a 5% surplus to allow for transfers, in-year movement of pupils and some element of parental choice. South Mole Valley are, on average, running a surplus of 25%, much higher and something that will need to be considered going forward. He responded to a question from the previous informal meeting.

### **Q: Would there be surplus coming up from West Sussex?**

OG answered that West Sussex was aiming to provide for all pupils in their county as local provision was expanding.

He expanded on the formal process being followed, explaining there was a requirement for a four-week consultation process, but that ours was longer as we were taking into account the Easter holidays in the middle of the process. He explained the final date of the formal consultation was 24th April. He also explained that due to Scott-Broadwood School being a Diocesan school the

proposal had to be made by Governors and then the decision would be made by the local council. He reminded people that it was important for the Local Authority to remain impartial in the process. The Leader would be making their decision on 29th May. He added that any building works that were needed following the decision would be separate to this process.

SM shared her vision for Scott-Broadwood: a school which is a small, nurturing environment that is aiming to be outstanding. In order for this to be achieved there needs to be capacity to improve to work towards this.

### **What stays the same?**

- The Christian ethos and values of the school remain the same and they link to the British values we uphold.
- High expectations of pupils from staff.
- The commitment of the staff and the Governors of the school who frequently go beyond what is expected of them to support the learning and progress of the children.
- Partnership with parents will stay the same with parents being encouraged and invited to come in at the start of the school day to help settle children in class.
- Will still be a small, village school.
- Children will be at the centre of all decisions and improvements.
- A prospective parent who had chosen to come to Ockley asked to visit Capel base and commented that it was clear to see that the same ethos was carried throughout the school.

### **What will change?**

#### Outcome for pupils:

- a greater ability to help them develop the holistic child
- expertise is more easily shared and experienced by all children
- challenge for the more able can be increased
- staff time will be used more productively
- one-to-one support will be available on-site much more easily

#### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment:

- not splitting resources across two bases will lead to higher quality and wider range of resources available for children and staff to access and use
- permanently available specialist skills will improve the teaching and learning
- varied learning groups will be possible offering greater flexibility to target specific groups of pupils
- support for new staff
- monitoring progress across the key stages and planning for next steps will be easier
- TA interventions will no longer be split between two sites

#### Personal development/behaviour and welfare:

- still a small, nurturing environment that it is known and acknowledged to be in the wider local community
- larger cohort of children within the school - this helps with greater socialisation as children need to learn to mix well
- this will help with the transition to bigger schools as they move on in education
- there is greater choice of friendship groups with bigger numbers
- familiarity of staff and children will increase leading to staff knowing all their children in depth and being able to offer the support they need as individuals
- managing behaviour is easier as all staff are on one base and there can be one clear message for all
- ELSA will be more available for all as she is currently based at Capel

#### Capacity to drive improvement:

- With many roles to fulfil it will be easier for the Head as she will be in one place and will be far more able to drive improvements
- CPD is easier to arrange and allow time for

- The greater capacity of time will allow for more focus on marketing, PR and communication
- Leadership in all its manifestations including Governors, SLT, Subject leaders, training, collaboration, peer-to-peer support, meetings with external agencies is all more achievable on one base
- staff welfare will be hugely improved
- the learning environment itself can be improved as resources are not being stretched across two bases

#### Why Capel?:

- there are already three separate classroom areas
- another classroom at Ockley would cost a great deal and there are concerns about getting planning permission for it
- Ockley has a beautiful outside space beyond the immediate grounds of the school and it will be much missed but the immediate outside space for children is greater at Capel
- There is a larger canteen/hall
- There are ample toilet facilities for the number of children in the school at Capel already
- There is greater capacity for reallocation of space at Capel
- wrap-around care is provided by Capel Pre-school
- There is easy access to the church, just across the road, whereas accessing St Margaret's from the Ockley base meant a coach being organised, however SM has already explored maintaining a contact with St Margaret's church as an important part of our local community and one for the children to know and visit

#### To recap:

We will have the capacity to be the best that we can be.

MH explained there was more detail given here in support of the consultation document. He reminded people that if a question could not be answered here tonight that they would be answered following the meeting. He then opened the meeting to questions from the floor.

#### **Q - In the event the Ockley site closes, how many students will be directly affected by the closure?**

(SM/CH) There are seven children due to be in Ockley after the Easter holidays. We held a meeting with parents of Beech class this morning to discuss the best way forward for the class. We discussed the children and their needs and the parents delivered a majority vote to move their children to Capel after Easter. It is likely that 5 children (1 child in Y1 and 4 in Y2) will move over to Capel.

(AC) No-one anticipated this situation, but as a result of children leaving to go elsewhere, we were forced to reconsider the arrangements. We outlined the situation to the parents this morning and asked them to vote on the best way forward.

(MH) Groups can become too small for genuine interaction to be occurring.

**An Ockley parent commented:** If parents had heard the vision for the school before Christmas that some parents may have moved their children to Capel rather than found alternative places for them in other schools. They felt they had asked Governors for information and had not received any.

(MH) Governors get to a point where they have to make a decision. They don't want to set a hare running by talking about concerns too early until they are certain of their position. That was part of the reason for the informal process being followed prior to the formal consultation.

**Comment:** The school was identified as having severe financial difficulties in 2013, but the community only found out about it at the informal consultation meeting in February. Regulations state that Governors need to be open and to act with integrity and objectivity.

**Q: In the 4 years since 2013 why has this not been shared with key stake holders?**

(MH) A Governor who is not present has already spoken of actions taken by Governors at that time.

(CH) Explained that the coming financial year had taken a big hit as the school had now reached the end of a three-year agreement with the Capel PCC and the Ockley Trustees who both agreed to provide £4000 each per year for a three-year term.

**Q: The trustees have not been asked to provide this money, but have said they are able to do so. Why have they not been asked?**

(SM) Her understanding is that it was on the basis that the funding was matched by Capel PCC and they are not in a position to be able to do that so the Ockley Trustees have not been asked.

**Q: So are you going to ignore the £4000.**

Peter Bradley (current Governor and Ex-Chair of Governors): In 2013 the Governors were faced with putting in a deficit budget. There were urgent meetings in Autumn 2013 where it was understood there were dwindling numbers of children in the area. The Governors tried to set up a three-year support programme to keep both bases open and wanted to do all that we could to keep both bases open. What also made a difference and helped was a change in staffing and changes in the admin team that helped make savings. Lots of work was done to save money. Governors wrote to all the businesses in the local area of Capel and Ockley to ask for their help. They received a very disappointing response. Some Governors gave their own money to help preserve the school across both bases. They realised that things would not improve greatly if numbers did not improve.

**Q: What happened to advertising?**

(CH) A website costs £2500 to develop, due to the precarious financial situation, the school has not felt in a position to commit this money as it doesn't directly contribute to pupils' outcomes, and, as previously stated, there is no spare capacity in the staff which is needed to work with the developer.

**Q: Why has it not come to the village as a community so we could come forward with solutions?**

PB - As a community it is difficult if Ockley and Capel parents do not send their children to the school.

**Q: In the 4 years you have not been to the community. Legislation states that you have to. It is not your school. You have excluded the community. I would like your views as to why it is a surprise?**

PB - The material gap can not be solved by £500 from businesses. As soon as word is out that there are concerns over finances then people start to leave or not to come. Governors have done their utmost to make it work.

**Q: Can the lights be kept on for a year to see what will happen?**

(MH) The news from government today says that there needs to be a unit of over 250 children for the finance to work. Finances are such that schools need to come together to share facilities to survive tight budgetary times. Split site funding is no longer guaranteed in the National Funding Formula.. Surrey has been very supportive by maintaining this funding for longer than other counties. The National Funding Formula will be the same for all and schools will have to get on with it.

(SM) A response to this would be difficult at this time. She highlighted the strain that is currently felt by the staff due to the requirements of OFSTED, Governors and parents. She expressed the feeling that some staff would not be staying if both bases remained open.

**Comment:** I am surprised that West Sussex doesn't have more demand for places. I am amazed that there is not some sort of opportunity there. I can see it perfectly. But you as a school have a responsibility to the community. I would like to see some sort of bus service. Why are we not thinking of Horsham? We are resigned to the fact that it will close. I can't believe we will not have a

Rose Queen. I am saddened that the community will be let down, it won't have a central hub. The school keeps ideas being passed from one to another. In a way one can view this as grieving for the death of Ockley as a village. It will die without children. We have lost the Post Office, shops and the church will go. It will be the death knoll.

(MH) Welcomed the comment. The economics were that there needed to be sufficient children for there to be sufficient income. MH asked OG to explain more

(OG) Every local authority is looking to meet the demand it has for places including West Sussex. It is legally required to do so. If it is oversubscribed they can be sued. They need to make provision within their boundaries. It doesn't matter if there is a school metres over the border.

(MH) Linked to that we don't want young children travelling long distances to schools normally. There was a comment that there may be an opportunity for others to run it as a school.

**Comment:** Representative of Ockley Parish Council commented that they had a presentation on the situation and from his understanding the financial position was that the £418,000 was predicated on 67 children being in the school in September and on the census day. In October 2017 it is likely to be more like 45 children. This would affect the income for the following year. It would be closer to £135,000 and the following year closer to £116,000.

(CH) It is down to children on chairs on the October census day. This is a fragility of an infant school as it is only 3 years worth of children rather than an all-through primary school.

(AC) We have a huge journey ahead of us.

**Q: Why has there not been more marketing?**

(AC) Speaking from experience at another school last year was a low birth rate year despite fantastic marketing. Marketing isn't the reason why we are in this situation but it will help us get out of it - we must and we will market the school.

(CH) A one-site school means there is greater flexibility to deal with future challenges. If we are talking about deficit in 18/19, we will be in the same situation as all other infant schools. Other infant schools in the area are making drastic changes to the way they will run.

(MH) Confirms this. If you look at the percentage of budget that goes on staffing we know there are too many schools where staffing takes over 90% of the budget as staff gain experience and move up the pay scale and become more experienced. Some schools are as high as 96% expenditure on staffing. Schools that are doing well are looking at 81%-82% of their budget.

A parent with a child at Capel asked to make a comment: I am in Broadbridge Heath and I send my child to Capel. I wanted to say thanks for all your hard work.

**Representative of Ockley Preschool commented that several parents had joined this year and they felt let down. They understood parking was a real issue at Capel?**

(MH) parking at lots of primary schools is a concern and is not specific to Capel.

**Q: Can you guarantee the survival of the school on one-site?**

No, this is not a guarantee that any school can make.

**Q: Are you saying amalgamation does not solve this?**

(CH) Yes. We need you all to support us to get the numbers through the door. I know that some of you have chosen to take your children elsewhere during this process, but I would hope that you feel that the education your children received at Scott-Broadwood was good and worth talking about positively to other parents. We need everyone's help to get children on chairs because that is what will make the difference to us.

(AC) We have turned a corner and Susan's vision is amazing.

(SM) You asked can we guarantee survival? No. Some people have asked so why go through this? We want to try to preserve the option of a village school in our area.

(MH) Please appreciate the honesty of the responses you are getting tonight. It would be easy for people to go away from here and say the school is closing in a couple of years; that is not true and not the message to be shared.

Helen Clack - Mrs Muat shared her vision and I was stirred by it. It made me think about what is the right thing. I understand the grieving of Ockley community, I have seen other schools go through similar processes.

This has renewed my faith. We have to listen to that. As to what happens to the site, we will have to go through this process. I understand that it feels like it is becoming a dormitory village and also know about many events leading up to this. A community can come together with children. We must provide the best opportunities for children. The most important part of a child's education is the beginning of education. If they are taught well now they can survive later on. How we manage with a base in Ockley is what we have to think about later.

(MH) Use of site: The Diocese have already demonstrated their commitment to this. The Local Authority cannot provide any money for this process as it must remain impartial, but the Diocese has already incurred costs of over £1000 with legal people in this process. It is not looking to resolve any further queries with regard to the site until the decision is made. We want to look creatively at that with Ockley community. I can't come with promises. The Church of England is based on parishes. A parish school is part of that. There are currently only 6000 church schools. There used to be over 10,000.

SB has managed since 1995 and this is thanks to the Governors working hard.

**Q: With regard to the budget for teachers, I am not well informed in the world of education. Is there a possibility for non-salaried teachers? I might be able to do something. Can you use someone who is not qualified?**

(MH) In the independent sector yes you can. In state schools you have to have qualified teachers.

(AC) I just want to speak in support of our teachers. Our qualified teachers are the jewel in our crown.

**Comment from a current parent. It was alluded to the stress the teachers have been under and I want to thank them for their efforts in keeping a calm teaching environment.**

Teachers received a round of applause

(MH) It has been a torrid time in particular for Mrs Muat who has been spending endless hours and probably endless sleepless nights as a result of this process.

Mrs Muat received round of applause.

**Q: Going back to the transport arrangements - if they are outside the distance is it calculated as the crow flies?**

(OG) Yes

Helen Clack expressed a hope that if it was 1.98 miles there would be some leeway. Is there not a rule if there is not a walking route between?

(SM) Yes, there is not a safe route. We would be happy to work with parents to help put that forward.

(MH) Draws the meeting to a close and thanks everyone for their contributions. He asks people to take a sheet as they leave to respond whether for, against or neutral. Thanks for being here and for the passionate commitment we have seen. The meeting closed at 9:11pm.