

Information Regarding the Gomer Junior Academy Consultation Process

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Paul Lane, our Chair of Governors and Alix Horne, Vice Chair, reiterated at all consultation meetings that there would be no change to the ethos of Gomer Junior School; if anything it would be enhanced. Gomer Junior strives to provide the best for its community and safeguard it against uncertain government policy. The formal consultation process will end on 29 September 2016 and all opinions shared and questions asked will be considered when making the decision. At the first meeting, a Gomer Infant parent and governor thanked the panel for the honest and rigorous process being provided. At the second, a new parent to Gomer Junior School thanked the Governors for their time and effort and recognised the need for a local solution that meet the direct needs of the community.

As outlined on the materials, please do e mail Paul Lane if you have any questions you would like answered and/or have feedback to share.

Thank you for your time.

Abbreviations:

CiC – Children in Care

CPD – Continued Professional Development

DFE – Department for Education

EP – Educational Psychologist

EHCP – educational health care plan

GFM – Gosport and Fareham Multi-Academy Trusty

HCC – Hampshire County Council

GFM – Gosport and Fareham Multi Academy Trust

TUPE – Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)

T&L – Teaching and Learning

Questions and Answers Arising From Academy Consultation Meetings Held w/b 5 September 2016 and w/b/ 12 September 2016

Q: Staff may be nervous of the change due to: fear over lack of security regarding future pay and conditions /extra workload on curriculum development/worry regarding gaining a future post. Can you guarantee job security, pay and conditions for all staff?

A: Questions linking to the above have been put forward by the staff and answered to their satisfaction.

Q: What weaknesses exist within the current structure of Gomer Junior School and your relationship with Hampshire LEA?

A: There are no short term weaknesses with the current structure of Gomer Junior school due to the good systems put in place by the school's leadership team and sound governing body. We have strengths within our teaching and support staff team. However, we are a small setting and to meet the natural career progression for some, we are at risk of losing high calibre staff. Additionally, Gomer Junior school is classified a 'low priority' school by HCC. Therefore, we are not afforded school improvement or CPD opportunities that other schools receive. Hampshire County Council

does have breadth in services, but in our opinion weaknesses in offering capacity of services e.g. EP, and specific school improvement which we buy elsewhere. Recently, our Head Teacher was asked to support another local school for three days a week for at least one term. With such short notice Gomer Junior would not have time to back-fill my position making our school potentially vulnerable. Additionally, the expectation of HCC for me to provide long term change in such a short space of time is ambitious. The Governors and I recognise that you need a consistent team approach to bring about long term change.

Q: Have you sought assistance from Hampshire LEA to resolve any weaknesses within the school?

A: We do not have short term weaknesses in the school to seek assistance for. The concerns held by Gomer Junior about the capacity of HCC provision for Gomer Junior and the Gosport and Fareham area (please note that although HCC collectively performs well, Gosport and Fareham does not) have been brought to the attention of Cllr Edgar, The Area Manager, Director and Deputy Director of Education, well before this process and during.

Q: What will be the benefits to teaching and learning?

A: The closer alignment of the schools will, longer term, enable us to look at a continuum curriculum model enabling enhanced transition for our older children. This is currently being developed with our gSTEM learning. The model will give us greater flexibility, working together with common aims while retaining a sense of autonomy and uniqueness. Additionally, working collaboratively we will be able to have the opportunity to establish succession planning programmes and, in doing so, retain good staff who might otherwise move on.

Q: As a qualified teacher I am very concerned that Academy schools are not required to employ qualified teachers. The period spent on a teacher training programme provides skills which are not taught on other courses. Will you guarantee that the pupils of Gomer School will continue to be taught by qualified teachers? If not, would you let any unqualified Tom, Dick or Harry conduct open heart surgery on your child? The brains of children are as crucial as their bodies!

A: We already use an HLTA and Cover Supervisor for some T&L using the HCC job profile. These colleagues work very well in the school and have sound relationships with our children. They have a full CPD programme available to them. As a high performing school, we will continue to employ high calibre staff to ensure that T&L is of a very good standard. We ensure that colleagues employed to teach, the vast majority of which have QTS, understand our ethos and can ensure pupil progress. Regardless of our school status, we would not jeopardise our current standing.

Q: Have you visited other similar models?

A: The uniqueness of the GFM comprising of a high performing Secondary School, SEMH provision, Junior School and possible Free School for extension of services does not exist. This is a leading edge development. Therefore, there are no other similar GFMS to visit. The governors have not visited local MATs because they do not want to be part of an Academy Chain which the vast majority are with the exception of standalone Academies.

Q: What are the weaknesses to becoming an Academy within a GFM?

A: An OFSTED Inspector has been commissioned to complete a due diligence exercise, visiting Gomer on 19 September, across the three schools to help identify weaknesses. Additionally, a Gomer Junior Governor is assessing areas of potential weakness. Identified weaknesses will be assessed and the governors will seek to ensure they can be mitigated if we are to proceed. Initial consideration has been given to the following weaknesses: Staff retention, capacity to grow and funding. These three weaknesses have been mitigated against. Once the work of the Ofsted Inspector and school governor has been completed these can be published.

Q: What will happen when we grow?

A: It is early days but we will be expected to grow by the DFE. We will 'grow' slowly to ensure that we have the resources and systems to manage the capacity of the GFM.

Q: If the school fails and slips into special measures won't you all be taken over by an Academy chain?

A: If the Department of Education deems us or any member of the GFM inadequate, the individual school will singly be removed from the GFM and placed in another GFM. As a HCC school, if we were placed in Special Measures now we would atomically be made an academy. Therefore, there is no greater risk for us or anyone else involved in the GFM.

Please note, the GFM is looking to open a Free School. This is to be based over three sites offering a range of provision to children within the GFM and services to the surrounding area. Gomer Junior pupils can access these services and they will still remain a Gomer Junior pupil.

Q: Have you identified which land and property use exclusively or with others and who owns it?

A: Yes. This is being over-seen by HCC.

Q: Are all staff and parent/carers aware that once if the academy struggles financially or academically there is no back up from the LA and it may lead to the closure of the academy.

A: We cannot confirm that all parents have taken on this information. However, we are not currently facing a deficit and good systems that will be in place will prevent this situation from happening.

Q: A Free school is very different from an Academy, how are you going to achieve this?

A: No new schools can be created or built unless they are Free Schools or an Academy. All Free schools receive funding from the Education Funding Agency (EFA), which is part of the Department for Education. We have submitted our application and have a hearing on 29 September 2016. Further information on free schools can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/free-schools>

Q: What does this free school mean for Gomer?

A: Much needed 'early help' – we would be in the position to help train staff and provide specialist support. The area of specialist provision and this would help build on capacity. All children at Gomer

Junior will be mainstream. They will be able to access resources from the Free School that will support them staying in mainstream at KS2 and beyond. It is important to note that some children, who may not be classified as SEN, require therapeutic services e.g counselling. Our LAPS Teams offers significant pastoral support. The Free School will be of further specialist support.

Q: What will the Free School offer those children in main stream?

A: Funding is not always available until an EHCP is awarded and children without one may miss out on support needed. The Free School will therefore provide better provision for all.

Q: Please clarify where the Free school would sit in the GFM.

A: The Free School will have an autonomous standing within the GFM, as will Gomer Junior School.

Q: Where is the money coming from for this free school?

A: All 'free schools' receive funding from the Education Funding Agency (EFA), which is part of the Department for Education. We will submit our application by 29 September 2016. Head of Lord Wilson is leading on this. Further informing on free schools can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/free-schools> We will share the application in due course.

Q: What is the future of the Lennox Centre?

A: The GFM and Free School will not supplant provisions such as the Lennox Centre. The GFM seeks to work with settings, in the local area, to ensure that provision is broad and accessible enough to meet the needs of our children. The GFM can only help with this by adding to the capacity (Lennox we believe are already stretched) and further help by providing highly specialised therapies.

Q: Who will assess the children that require and need therapeutic services?

A: The Free School will have its own assessment criteria, produced by professional. There will also have the capacity to outreach our services to other local schools. Currently the waiting time is lengthy and this will help to speed up the process ensuring the children, staff and school receive the help they need much more efficiently.

Q: Will we have preferential access to services provided by the Free School?

A: Many. We will easily access services of the Free School. Our children can only benefit from more capacity as well as the local area. There will continue to be a referral system but that will not be dependent on an EHCP plan. We are going to benefit from being in a position to address needs earlier.

Q: How many cases or causes do we have at Gomer to use this service of extra provision?

A: Gomer Junior pupils have many pastoral and learning needs that may not be apparent to parents and carers. As a 'good' School we are often approached by the local authority to admit looked after and children in care who have to be placed in a 'good' school. We also have a reasonable percentage of children from military families due to our demographic. Additionally, it is not unusual for any mainstream school to see an increase in need for mental health and social care provision. Our Pastoral support is very important at Gomer as it is extremely effective at addressing the needs of

our children so this will only be enhanced by providing better opportunities to do the job effectively. Specialist provision will further meet the needs of our community.

Q: Will Brune Park School join the GFM?

A: Bay House has been invited by the DFE to conduct a process of due diligence on Brune Park with consideration to the GFM sponsoring the school. All three potential founder schools of the GFM, Bay House, Lord Wilson and Gomer Junior are involved in this process. If this process highlights that the GFM is able to support Brune Park, they will be a sponsored member of the GFM.

Q: If Gomer Junior joins the GFM and Brune Park is sponsored by the GFM, will be child potentially have to go to Brune Park for secondary education?

A: No. Children will continue to go to their catchment school. If you are currently living in the Brune Park catchment you will not currently take priority for a Bay House place, over children living in the Bay House catchment.

Q: What are the implications of the GFM sponsoring Brune Park to Gomer Junior?

A: Due diligence is currently being undertaken to decide if the GFM will sponsor Brune Park. This process will enable the GFM to decide if this is in the best interests of all schools involved. As a Junior School, Gomer will not be taking a lead in the support of Brune Park.

Q: How will you be able to guarantee that if there are any major issues (such as those encountered by Selsy Academy with their recent fire) this will not affect the provision of education for Gomer pupils on the current site?

A: We do not have a full account of the Academy you refer. However, any school, be it state maintained, community or Academy could be affected by an incident such as a fire. As an Academy, Gomer would maintain policies to ensure risks are minimalised. HCC pride themselves on supporting any such setting in such an incident due to Children's Services duty of care to any Hampshire child, regardless of their school setting. Central funding can be applied for in the event an Academy needs attention to its building structure. It is interesting to note, that if any school burns down, it is unlikely to be rebuilt by HCC due to the cost. This was outlined during the HCC Fire Safety training.

Q: Are all staff and parent/carers aware that once Gomer has changed to an academy it cannot revert back to a maintained school.

A: We cannot confirm that all parents have taken on this information.

Q: How will becoming an academy add extra value to the lives and learning of our children?

A: Please see below. An addition resources for 'early intervention'. Please see Free School Application. <http://thewavefreeschool.org.uk/vision/>

Q: I would be interested to know what you consider to be the 3 most important things you will be able to achieve only if you become part of the MAT.

A: In no particular order:

1. Security for our school in a time when the educational landscape is rapidly changing.
2. A 'local solution' for our town providing a different offer to HCC.
3. A continuum curriculum that better supports pupils who may leave during their time with us and better support those who join us from different settings.
4. Financial gains (to benefit outcomes for our learners) including procurement, services and systems.

Q: How will the governing body deal with the views of staff and parent/carers?

A: All views shared during the consultation meeting will be tabled at the Governing meeting on 5 October 2016.