

Minutes of Parents Consultation Meeting re Foundation Status

Tuesday 22nd January @ 6.30pm held at The Voyager School

GOVERNORS:

Malcolm Groves, Maggie Kirkbride, Catherine Cavanagh, Sabrina Haberman-Lawson, Helen Thorn

IN ATTENDANCE:

See attached register.

Introduction to the meeting

Hugh Howe welcomed parents and governors to the meeting and formally introduced Mr Malcolm Groves, Chair of Governors. Hugh explained that the purpose of this meeting was to draw parents' attention to the informal consultation paper and ask that any comments be submitted in writing by Monday 11th February. Governors will then consider responses at the next Governors meeting on 19th February and a decision will be made by them as to whether to proceed with a formal notice to change status. The informal consultation documents had been sent to parents via students and also made available to download from the school website.

Our feeder primary schools, other Peterborough secondary schools, unions and staff will all be informally consulted and invited to submit written comments by 11th February. If governors decide to proceed in February, a formal statutory notice will be issued in April and another 4 week consultation period will commence. The final decision as to whether to adopt Foundation Status will be made by Governors at a meeting in May. If they agree to proceed Foundation Status will become effective from September 2008.

Malcolm Groves explained the three main changes that would arise from The Voyager School becoming a Foundation School: -

- The school and not the local authority would take on the ownership of school land and buildings (after the 30 year PFI contract had finished).
- The school would become the direct employer of staff
- The school would have greater ownership of the admissions/appeal process.

Hugh asked for questions.

- Governors would have a lot of power if we became a Foundation School. How would this affect our relationship with the local authority? **Foundation Status does not mean an 'anti' local authority stance. We would however have greater ownership and governors would have greater accountability.**
- What does 'taking ownership' of the buildings and assets mean? **The school was built by a private company, Bouygues, and is serviced by a company called Ecovert. This arrangement will continue for 30 years under the terms of the PFI contract. At the end of the 30 year term, under Foundation Status, the buildings and land will be signed over to The Voyager School and not the local authority. The obligation to pay for PFI services in the interim remains the same and cannot be changed.**
- Would Foundation Status give more flexibility on the use of school land and buildings? **The existing building is governed by the terms of the PFI agreement. Governors have agreed with the local authority and Bouygues,**

the amount of use the school would need for the next 30 years. This would not change with Foundation Status. We would have greater flexibility with any future buildings and land outside the agreement. (Brookside and possibly a swimming pool in the future.)

- Would it not have been possible to start as a Foundation School in the first place? **It would have been possible but the temporary governing body felt that some groundwork was needed initially and that a decision of this calibre should be made by a permanent governing body.**
- Would the governing body become a 'business manager'? **Yes in terms of the oversight/strategic direction of the school. We would still work with the local authority to ensure all our students have a right to a good education. For example the admissions/appeals procedures would be the responsibility of the governing body. Presently the local authority sets the timetable for appeals, briefs and clerks the meetings. Under Foundation Status, The Voyager School governing body would be responsible for this infrastructure. The local authority would still remain as a co-ordinating authority for admissions.**
- Do governors have the knowledge and expertise to manage the responsibilities that go with Foundation Status? **Yes. There is sufficient knowledge and expertise within the current governing body. Governors would continue to buy in specialist services (e.g. personnel) to enable effective management of the school.**
- Does Foundation Status mean that the school would become more selective? **The way we would manage admissions would need to reflect the core values of the school. For example, we could have opted to admit 10% of our students on our specialist status. Governors chose not to. If governors want to make The Voyager more selective there is a clear set of procedures which they need to work through – consultation being one of these. These parents' forum meetings are one way for governors to maintain transparency. Governors do not wish the school to be selective but we would always have some people feeling disadvantaged by whatever admissions criteria are applied. The admissions criteria have already been set for September 2008. If governors proceed with Foundation Status we would need to look at the admissions criteria for September 2009. Whilst the issue of admissions is emotive, the local authority would still be the co-ordinating authority, for example, the secondary schools booklet is distributed to all Year 6 pupils by the local authority. Each secondary school lists its admissions criteria.**
- Foundation Status offers the governing body the opportunity to go outside the local authority and outsource services. Would there be provision to maintain the same quality the local authority currently provides? **Outsourcing is not a particular concern. We already outsource both to private companies and the local authority. We must still operate within statutory government guidelines. It is the clear intention of government to encourage specialist schools to take on Foundation Status and for local authority roles to change.**
- Would Foundation Status affect class sizes? **No**
- How many other Peterborough Schools have Foundation Status? **Of the 11**

secondary schools in Peterborough, 4 currently have Foundation Status, 4 are Community Schools (including Voyager), 2 of these Community Schools are involved with Phase 2 of the secondary school's review and, their status may change as a result. There is 1 Academy and 2 Voluntary Aided Faith Schools.

- **What are the negatives of becoming a Foundation School? No negatives have been identified. However we do need to ensure we have a strong governing body giving access to a sufficient range of expertise, and plan for that. We currently have student associate governors, politicians, parents and businessmen on our governing body which lends itself to a wide range of expertise and options.**

- **From a Head Teacher's point of view, are you looking forward to Foundation Status? There would more for us to do. I have no strong steer towards Foundation but I believe we should make sure The Voyager School is positioned well in terms of the range of schools in the City. If we decide not to take Foundation Status, and all other schools did, we could find ourselves in a difficult position.**

Hugh Howe closed the meeting at 7.30pm and reiterated the importance of any written comments being received by Monday 11th February 2008.

**Signed as a true record..... Malcolm Groves
(Chair of Governors)**

Date.....