

**Secondary School Review – West Gateshead
Consultation meeting**



Meeting: Governors' Consultation

Date/Time: Tuesday 6 July at 5.00pm

Venue: Hookergate Comprehensive School

Present: Cllr M Graham	Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Communities: East, Economic Development
Margaret Whellans	Group Director Learning & Children
David Mitchell	Director Learning and Schools
Peter Crabtree	Headteacher Hookergate School
Steve Williamson	Headteacher Ryton School
Tim Nelson	School Inspector
Sandra Hewson	Senior HR Adviser
Dilys Cowper	Financial Support Services Manager
Anita Dowson	Note taker

Attendance: 11

Margaret Whellans opened the meeting and thanked those present for attending and explained the purpose of the meeting.

Introductions were made by representatives from the Local Authority.

David Mitchell gave an overview on progress since informal consultation in 2009 and highlighted issues regarding recent announcements by Government indicating that BSF projects in Gateshead have been suspended.

The following questions and comments were raised by members of the Governing Body at Hookergate Comprehensive School: -

- Governing Body felt the situation regarding the BSF Programme being stopped is very disappointing and agree that the vision of a new school is the only way forward and that Hookergate is unable to stay open. Only the children are suffering because of the current situation.
- How will all the children fit into Ryton School, will they be accommodated in temporary accommodation?
- Whatever happens regarding the new school the closure can only happen by incurring costs and financial support will be needed. Governing Body agree that financial support will be needed even for interim measures.

- When is the Council likely to be able to give the Governing Body information regarding financial support, both revenue and capital?
- Discussion has been held with parents and there is a worry that if Hookergate closes there will be insufficient space for children at Ryton and they will end up being sent to Kingsmeadow. There is a feeling among parents that this situation has been plotted from outset of the process.
- Governors need reassurance regarding the vision for a new school. Parents will want answers.
- Can the authority assure parents that there will be a place for every child at Ryton and will their places be guaranteed?
- Ryton has been oversubscribed and has turned people away. Could this happen again and what would happen if it did? Will all pupils at Chopwell get into the new school?
- Recent appeals at Highfield ended in one child not getting into the school who only lives 250 yards away from the school and another child getting into the school who lives 700 yards away from the school. Assurances need to be given regarding the new catchment area.
- What about Whickham being closer to Rowlands Gill.
- Transport is a key factor.
- Need to know that the amalgamation will still go ahead in order to ease parents' concerns regarding where their children will go in the future.
- Some parents are losing trust in the school's Governing body. There is a feeling that the Governing Body know more than they are saying they know.
- Will people still want to send their children to Hookergate if they are then going to be transferred.
- Children will experience 2 years in a small school environment and then have to move.
- The news of the BSF Programme being stopped received on 5 July will cause unease among parents. Will parents not just send their children to Ryton rather than have them at Hookergate for two years?
- In terms of planning and hold up on funding will there now be a decision not to rebrand Ryton if there isn't a new school being built?

- Discussions have been held with parents of Y7 pupils. Many parents were reciting issues experienced when Blaydon and Hookergate were amalgamated. Governing Body have tried to give reassurance that there is a well thought out transition plan in place. Need to keep giving parents assurances that there will be a new identity regardless of whether there will be a new school or not.
- What plans are being made for building on the Ryton site whether the money comes through or not within the next 4 or 5 years. There has to be enough provision for the coming few years. What provision will be made before the new school is built? Need to ensure that children have enough resources.
- Is there no chance of keeping Hookergate open for a further few years as a middle school rather than finding money for doing new building?
- Need to give consideration to fact that the money may never come. Ryton has to be medium sustainable. Need to have a short medium and long term plan in place regardless of whether the money is received.
- Will Hookergate Governing Body continue to work with Ryton Governors or will they just become redundant when Hookergate closes?
- Hookergate Governors want to see transition through to the end to ensure it continues particularly as they are parents too.
- GB requested reviewing the notes of the meeting.
- The Governing Body confirmed they are committed to the vision for a new school. They do have concerns regarding the finance and an interim plan. A request was made to have something in writing to explain how it will work out and some numbers. This information is needed in black and white.
- The Governing Body confirmed that they very strongly and whole heartedly want the new school. They want the best for the students and teachers and want to raise standards. Many parents don't care about the vision they care about getting better than what they get now and receiving the same treatment or better. Things need to be better, parents care about their children in school. Totally committed to concept of 1 school; 1 name; 1 uniform, don't want it to be a feeling of Hookergate taking over Ryton's patch.
- Closure of Hookergate will make big savings this money should be invested in the transition process.

- Pupils transferring to Ryton will take money per pupil with them.
- Governing Body would request half of savings made to support the transition process and to deliver the curriculum. Will need subsidised and proper staffing levels will needed maintained to ensure curriculum delivery.
- BBC website information has stopped against Hookergate is this the proposed new school project rather than the school closure which has been stopped?
- If it is a long time before the new school goes ahead will staffing arrangements be made at Hookergate to keep it open?
- Need to get positive message across to pupils.
- A request was made of Steve Williamson to move quickly on the naming and uniform it has to be an “us” not a “them and us”.

The meeting of Hookergate School Governing Body closed at 6.10pm.