

# Strood Academy

## Single Site Consultation Report

### INTRODUCTION

#### The Background

During the early stages of development of this Academy a significant number of parents were opposed to the notion of a coeducational school. In order to reassure them the Schools Minister at the time committed to operating dual provision until the new building opened in September 2012. Medway Council, the co-sponsor of the Academy, also gave supporting assurances that single sex education would continue in the shorter term. The transition proposal derived from this position was that in:

2009/10, there would be a coeducational sixth form (Years 12 and 13) and a coeducational Year 7 based on the Chapter School site;

2010/11, coeducation for Years 7,8,12 and 13

2011/12, coeducation for Years 7,8,9,12 and 13 would be based on the Chapter School site

2012/13, all year groups would be coeducational in the new school building.

The Academy has now been running since September 2009, in that time further investigations have been made in to the potential educational and financial benefits associated with early amalgamation. A decision was made by the Academy SLT to undertake a consultation on the early amalgamation of the Academy sites. This report details the process and findings of that consultation.

#### The Consultation Process

A series of meetings were held with all relevant stakeholder groups:

##### **Union representatives and staff members.**

The union session involved a brief explanation of the proposals including an explanation of the decision making process behind the change, this was followed by an opportunity for the union representatives to ask any questions / voice any concerns.

The staff session consisted of a brief presentation on the proposals followed by an opportunity for staff to ask questions / voice any opinions or concerns.

## **Parents**

Three meetings were arranged for parents:

- Parents of students who currently attend the Cliffe Road Site.
- Parents of Students who currently attend the Carnation road site and are in Years 8, 9 and 10.
- Parents of students who currently attend the Carnation road site and are in Years 7, 11 and the sixth form.

At these sessions parents received a presentation followed by a question and answer session. Parents were issued with a brief summary of proposals in pamphlet form, with a questionnaire to record their views.

## **Students**

Students were presented the proposals through assemblies and were then encouraged to complete an online questionnaire during their tutor group time. Additionally a meeting of the School Council discussed the issues arising from the consultation and Mr Hart, the Principal answered questions raised.

The questionnaire was available to fill in online via the Academy website. Here interested parties could also download an electronic version of the consultation pamphlet.

The Academy consultation period conducted by Appleyards and covered by this report ran from 8<sup>th</sup> January 2010 to 25<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

## CONSULTATION MEETINGS ANALYSIS

There were 6 meetings held as part of the consultation process on proposals for The Strood Academy to provide information and gather views. This section of the report summaries the content and overall views expressed. The meetings include:

1. A series of three meetings for parents and carers at The Strood Academy.
2. A meeting with representatives of the student council at The Strood Academy
3. A meeting with Union Representatives from The Strood Academy
4. A meeting with staff at The Strood Academy.

All meetings contained an overview of the Single Site Proposal decision making process and a description of the potential benefits which may result from the proposed amalgamation. Every meeting allowed for a question and answer session.

Summary of Predecessor School Closure Meetings / Academy proposals consultation

### Parents Meetings

**Consultee:** Cliffe Road Site Parents (All Years)

**Date and time of meeting:** 6pm Monday 11th January 2010

**Number of Consultees:** 6 parents and 1 pupil

#### Summary

Parents at the Cliffe Road site were broadly supportive of the proposals. Understandably there was interest in the potential impact for students currently attending this site. However the audience seemed receptive to the proposals and raised no significant objections.

**Consultee:** Carnation Road Parents (Years 8,9 and 10)

**Date and time of meeting:** 7:30pm Monday 11th January 2010

**Number of Consultees:** 29 parents and 5 students and 1 infant.

**Summary:** Parents represented at this meeting at the Carnation road site were strongly opposed to the proposal for co-educational classes for Year 10 students, they felt that there had been a promise for single sex teaching given to them during the last consultation process and that this proposal will break that promise. However the audiences' suggestion of a single site single sex system for the Year 10 cohort was largely supported by the audience members. The audience was also concerned with the perceived behavioural issues apparent

at the Cliffe Road site and did not wish for the integration of the two groups to result in a degradation of educational experience for the whole school. Additionally there was a concern that the site will become too overcrowded again resulting in a reduction of educational experience. Parents also noted that the students most affected by this change were in the minority and may not be fairly represented by the consultation process.

The meeting ended with a reassurance from the audience that if their proposals for a single site single sex school for the affected year group (current Year 10), they would support the proposal.

**Consultee:** Parent Consultation Meeting, Carnation Road Site (Years 7, 11, 12 and 13)

**Date and time of meeting:** 7:30pm Tuesday 12th 2010

**Number of Consultees:** 4 parents 1 Pupil

**Summary:** Parents were understandably concerned what implications the proposed change may have for their children. However they were reassured by Mr Hart and had faith in his leadership. The meeting was good natured and friendly. The parents noted their support for the Academy leadership and the future of the proposal.

## Union Meeting

An information session for union representatives was held on prior to the staff meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January. Mr Hart presented the proposals to the Union representatives and outlined future plans. The union representatives accepted the proposals and did not raise any significant objections.

## Staff Meeting

**Consultee:** Staff Consultation Meeting, Carnation Road Site

**Date and time of meeting:** 16:00pm Friday 15th January 2010

**Number of Consultees:** 11 staff.

**Summary:** This meeting was good natured and informal, staff were concerned over any potential job losses. There were no objections to the proposal raised at this meeting.

## Student Council Meeting

**Consultee:** Strood Academy School Council.

**Date and time of meeting:** 2pm Monday 26th January 2010

**Number of Consultees:** 28 students.

### **Summary:**

The proposal was generally well received; students were concerned about the impact of the amalgamation of the two sites on discipline but were reassured by the answers given. There was a discussion about the plans for the new buildings and the transition period. Overcrowding was also raised and plans to mitigate this were explained.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposal is to amalgamate the two sites of Strood Academy into a single site in September 2010. The Strood Academy opened in September 2009 as a dual site Academy with the intention to become a single site Academy in September 2012 when the new school building is due to be completed.

Following investigations into the perceived benefits both educationally and financially for the Academy, the SLT and governors made the decision to commission a consultation on an early amalgamation of sites.

The Academy consultation period conducted by Appleyards and covered by this report ran from 8<sup>th</sup> January 2010 to 25<sup>th</sup> January 2010. The objective of this consultation was to gather views of stakeholders regarding the Sponsor's proposals for the amalgamation of the two sites. The consultation document provided the opportunity to respond by paper or through the Academy's website [www.stroodacademy.org](http://www.stroodacademy.org)

### Response to the consultation

- In total 456 questionnaire responses were returned to Appleyards, 55% of responses were from students and 37% were from parents/carers. 7% were from staff at Strood Academy. 44% of respondents supported the educational reasons for moving to a single site. 56% of respondents did not support the educational reasons for moving to a single site.
- 50% of respondents supported the financial reasons for the move to a single site.
- 62% of respondents supported returning study areas to their designated purpose.
- Only 35% of respondents were in favour of the proposal overall.
- Educational Reasons
  - 85% of Staff supported the educational reasons for the move, with 15% not in support.
  - 49% of students supported the educational reasons for the move, with 51% not in support.
  - 28% of parent supported the educational reasons for the move, with 72% not in support.
- Financial Reasons
  - 85% of staff supported the financial reasons for the move, with 15% not in support.
  - 57% of students supported the financial reasons for the move, with 43% not in support.
  - 32% of parents supported the financial reasons for the move, with 68% not in support.
- Overall Support for the proposal.
  - 74% of staff were in favour or somewhat in favour of the proposals with 26% not very much or not at all in favour of the proposals.
  - 39% of students were in favour or somewhat in favour of the proposals with 54% not very much or not at all in favour of the proposals. 6% of respondents did not know.

- 22% of parents were in favour or somewhat in favour of the proposals with 77% not very much or not at all in favour of the proposals. 1% of respondents did not know.
- When asked if they supported the proposals to return study areas, the library and common areas to student use, 66% of students and 97% of staff were in favour. 51% of parents did not support returning these areas to student use.
- At a conservative estimate approximately 12.5% of parents responded to the questionnaire, 18.7% of the student group and 17% of staff.
- It is pertinent to note that given the negative parent response, it is unclear what proportion of parents responded to the questionnaire prior to the agreement regarding single sex provision being guaranteed to all current Year 10 students in their examination subjects.
- The overwhelming majority of staff were in favour of the proposals, students were divided on some aspects of the proposals but overall they gave a negative reaction. The majority of parents recorded were strongly opposed to the proposals.
- Parents meetings were held with a total of 42 parents. The Cliffe Road parents meeting and the Carnation Road parents meeting for Years 7, 11, 12 and 13 were in support of the proposal. The Carnation Road Year 8, 9 and 10 meeting were in support of the proposal subject to Year 10 remaining taught in a single sex cohort. This commitment was subsequently given by Strood Academy. Considering the size of the Academy, meeting attendance was low.

### **Action Following 11<sup>th</sup> January Consultation Meeting With Parents At Carnation Road Site.**

The consultation meeting held at the Carnation Road site on the 11<sup>th</sup> of January, highlighted parents' significant concerns and objections regarding the possibility of any co-educational provision on a single site for Year 10 girls. Parents were strongly opposed to their daughters being educated in co-educational classes. Some parents stated that the choice they had consciously made for their child was further being eroded, and this proposal was contrary to the assurances which had been given to them by Lord Adonis and the Local Authority responsible for the predecessor schools. During the meeting a compromise solution was suggested where by the school was amalgamated to a single site but those children most affected, (those students currently in Year 10), would be educated in single sex classes. Thus helping to ensure continuity in their learning environment and hopefully minimise disruption.

After careful consideration and investigation the senior leadership team and governors of the Strood Academy decided to accept this proposal and publish reassurance to parents during the consultation period. A letter was sent home to parents assuring that current Year 10 students will continue to be taught in single sex groups for their examination subjects as they progress into Year 11.