

Blatchington Mill School and Sixth Form Public Meeting Notes

Meeting date 13 November 2017

Attendees Richard Barker, Gillian Churchill and Rachel Carter from the LA
Ashley Harrold Head teacher, Ruth King Deputy head teacher and
Peter Sowrey Chair of Governors of Blatchington Mill School and Sixth
Form
No members of the public
8 members of school staff and 1 union representative

RB introduced the LA staff and outlined the process and why the LA was making this proposal. He also stated that this is a genuine consultation, no decision has yet been made and that the final decision will be made by elected members not by officers. All responses to the consultation will be seen by members before the decision is made. The decision is made on balance bearing in mind the responses to the consultation and the impact on the school and pupils of low numbers in the school sixth form.

The floor was opened to questions.

The timing of the proposal seems a little strange given that the decision not to admit pupils to the sixth form in 2018 has already been made.

AH said that the school had to make the decision about whether to admit students into the sixth form in advance of the proposal being decided. The leadership team felt that it would be better to announce that they would not to take students into the sixth form in September 2018 rather than having to tell those students that chose this option at a later date that there would be no provision for them. In the event that the decision is not to close the sixth form students will be able to apply in future in the usual way.

If, at the end of the consultation period it is decided that the proposal will not proceed there will be no year 12 students in the school.

AH responded to this by saying that the reality was that there are actually very few Blatchington Mill pupils in the sixth form, just 80 across both years. This means that there has had to be a reduction in the number of courses offered which in turns makes the offer to students even less attractive.

There are some students in Hove Park Sixth form who take all three courses at Blatchington Mill School. This falsely skews the apparent numbers of Blatchington Mill pupils looking for a school sixth form.

AH said that he was unaware of this and will take this matter up with the head teacher at Hove Park School. PS added that the governors had been looking at the viability of the school sixth form, in terms of financial sustainability and outcomes for students, for a number of years and that even if there are some students incorrectly registered it is unlikely that this would be sufficient to change the view of the governing body.

The consultation document suggests that the sixth from provision will be called Hove Park six, is this correct?

Ah said that the naming of the sixth form of Hove Park School would be a matter for them and their governors. His responsibility and that of the governors of Blatchington Mill School was to make the correct decision for the future of this school. Obviously there would be every effort made to reach a consensus decision with Hove Park School whereby it could be seen that the sixth form offer at Hove Park Schools was for the wider Hove area.

What recommendations were made as a result of the Sussex Area Review?

RC said that the review prompted discussions about the viability of school sixth form size in the city as did the Local Area Review. Both reviews identified that a sixth form needed at least 200 students to be viable. The review went on to recommend that sixth forms collaborate to ensure that there is no duplication in a locality. The proximity of the two schools would suggest that this model should work well for Hove students.

It seems a shame that there is a proposal to close the sixth form at Blatchington Mill School.

AH explained that it is intended that the sixth form at Hove Park School would be a shared provision. Unfortunately the only legal mechanism available is to change the age range of the school which means that the school will be unable to offer sixth form courses in the future. The school will work closely with Hove Park School and hope to influence the direction of their provision. However it has to be recognised that the final decisions will rest with the leadership and governing body of Hove Park School.

What consideration has been given to the staff who predominantly teach sixth form students and wish to remain as sixth form teachers?

AH confirmed that it is anticipated that there will be no need for redundancies as a result of this proposal. He could not guarantee however that staff would be able continue only teaching their specialist subjects although it was hoped that this might be the case. RB confirmed that the LA would not be able to insist that other schools offered sixth form jobs to teachers at Blatchington Mill School who wished only to teach sixth form students.

It must be made clear that if there are any changes to the terms and conditions for teachers as a result of this proposal further consultation with staff would be necessary.

AH said that he understood this.

What is the timetable for implementing this proposal?

If the proposal is successful the intention is that it will be implemented in September 2019. This will mean that all pupils currently in the sixth form will be able to complete their courses at the school.

When are Hove Park School intending to make their decision regarding their sixth form provision?

Hove Park Governors have a meeting this evening and it is anticipated that they will make their decision at that meeting.

Blatchington Mills School has benefitted from considerable accessibility works. Has any consideration been given to sixth form students with Special Educational Needs and Disability?

The LA has a responsibility to make reasonable adjustments to school buildings to ensure that the right provision is available to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils / students.

Are there any examples of 11 to 16 schools working collaboratively with 11 to 18 schools?

It was agreed that the school would look to see if there are examples of this type of collaborative working. RK said that even if none could be found it should be remembered that Blatchington Mill may become an 11 to 16 school but it will still have 11 to 18 experience for years to come.

It is likely that one of the main causes for concerns as a result of this proposal is likely to be the impact on staff. It might be a good idea to put the implications down on paper and confirm the schools belief that there will be no redundancies as a result of this proposal as this may provide some reassurance to staff who feel they may be affected.

