

IMA Meeting with Mauranne Johnson, Head of WKGS, 18th July.

One School

– This was a reoccurring theme of the conversation. She said that if we are to stand any chance of success it must be 'one school' and all stakeholders must be clear about this, realise this is the case and ensure they are selling the project as such. She said she had briefly looked into the press relating to a North Kent coast selective school and felt that the current 'spin' was all about a 'new' or separate school. She felt this would need to change if we were to be successful, and key stake holders need to buy into this message. She said she still gets calls from the DFEE, 2 years after opening, to query things such as staffing/ admissions and ensure the satellite site is not being ran as a 'separate' school.

This has implications for the following areas:

Staffing, Students & Curriculum:

There are no 'permanent' teaching staff at the satellite site. (or, for that matter the main site) One member of SLT rotates a day at the satellite site. (This number would have to grow as the annexe grows) She was very clear that she was not allowed under any circumstance to have a de-facto 'Head of School or senior deputy etc. to oversee/ run/ be in charge of the satellite site. There could be no split in the leadership team. All teaching staff taught at both sites (with one/ two exceptions) This has led to an increase in split teachers for teaching groups. She as Headteacher spends 2 days at the satellite site per week on average. School day is identical in both schools.

All satellite students have one day every two weeks at the main site. This is a normal school day with timetabled lessons etc. as normal based around their curriculum. Students make their own way to and from the school as they would normally. One possible way around limited GCSE option choices might be to increase main site days for annexe students.

The curriculum has to be the same across both sites; I asked about GCSE options as they must be a pressure on small numbers etc for certain subjects at the smaller site – how could they possibly offer all GCSE options on an equitable basis as 'one school'. The current yr.8 (2017-18) will select GCSE options in yr. 9 – she didn't really have an answer to this and I got the impression she hadn't given it much thought as she was retiring this summer! Maybe there would be timetabling options for the 'one day' on the main site to complete a less popular GCSE option. Pastoral/ SEN/ G+T provision remains the same across both sites.

Admissions:

Complicated – KCC helped to frame this – essentially priority given to certain 'districts/ postcodes' and then based on distance to the main Tonbridge site – regardless of whether an applicant wants Tonbridge or Sevenoaks; Certain postcodes given a 'quota' in attempt to match up numbers with two different sites. In two rounds so far has worked out fairly well. Only when parents accept a place are they then asked for a preference for which site. This is then allocated on a set of criteria (distance to annexe/ main site being the primary factor)

Staffing and Contracts:

All contracts changed from 2 years ago for new staff to say must teach at both sites; with a few exceptions all current staff teach on both staff – existing staff were fairly positive/ on board, no significant staffing issues with staff working at two sites. No split site teaching days – staff spend a

whole day at one site, possibly having to travel back for meetings etc. after school, although she said they were looking at technology to reduce this – video conferencing.

Sixth form provision; original plan has not specifically mentioned Sixth form provision at the satellite. She said this would be a key decision for the incoming head. She thought it would be offered, and maybe in a different guise to the main site (which seemed to contradict 'one school' ethos) but she seemed to think this wouldn't be an issue post 16.

Financial management:

Governors have been prepared to run at a financial in year loss for first 5 years, largely due to the need to create some capacity in staffing. A proportion of each individual school budget is allocated to the annexe as appropriate. Indications are the budget will become aligned in year 4, ie no operational loss.

The bid process:

Talked of the importance of bringing own staff with you: Was the first people the school spoke to; then parents and then wider community. Wrote to all local schools in both areas. Completed public consultations as normal.

Consultancy:

She is setting up as a consultant after retiring and offered her services if we were to pursue a SSEF bid!