

Putting the Learner First

Northumberland schools
reorganisation newsletter

No.10 March 2006

Update on Proposed Reorganisation of Cramlington Partnership

In January, we wrote to you about the extended Stage 2 (Step Two) discussions relating specifically to the proposed minor changes to the preferred model for reorganisation in the Cramlington Partnership.

Having received and analysed the feedback from this short consultation, our aim was to present the findings to the County Council Executive on 20th February 2006 and to request permission to issue Statutory Notices and begin the six week period within which representations may be made. These representations will be considered by the School Organisation Committee when meeting to consider the proposals*.

In December we reminded you that the County Council was facing a legal challenge from 'Parents for Legal Action Limited' (PFLA) on a number of issues leading up to the April 2005 decision by the full council to move towards a primary/secondary structure of education and that there was to be a 'Judicial Review' carried out by a High Court judge to consider the challenges made by PFLA. The Judicial Review hearing took place on 10th and 13th February 2006 in London.

Originally, the County Council faced two grounds of challenge from PFLA, but they submitted three more grounds of challenge late in the proceedings. Two of those new grounds were withdrawn by PFLA at the hearing. As a result, the Judge was unable to make a decision at the end of the hearing or soon afterwards. Instead, the third ground is being considered by the Judge after written submissions by both parties and therefore it may be several more weeks before a judgement is given. In the light of this, it was

decided that it would not be sensible to go ahead with the Executive meeting on 20th February and it was postponed. Until a judgement is made on the Judicial Review, the County Council Executive are unable to commit the significant funds needed to be able to carry out the detailed designs for the refurbishment or rebuilding of the schools in the Cramlington Partnership. This means that the proposed reorganisation of Cramlington Partnership will not be achievable by September 2007.

Therefore, with great reluctance, a report will be submitted to the County Council Executive meeting on March 13th 2006 which recommends that the proposed reorganisation of the Cramlington Partnership be delayed until September 2008. The decision to make this recommendation has been made with the best interests of the pupils and staff in the Cramlington Partnership in mind. The decision made by the County Council Executive at their meeting on March 13th will be available on the County Council website as soon as possible. If the recommendation to delay any proposed reorganisation is agreed, many of you will be concerned by it, particularly those of you who have children in schools proposed for closure, and over the next few weeks we will be doing our best to answer any questions and queries that you may have (see the addresses for contact at the end of this newsletter).

However, you can be assured that, if a decision is made in favour of reorganisation, officers in County Hall, headteachers and staff will use the extra time as an opportunity to work for the smoothest and most successful transition possible for pupils and staff.

Other news

Partnership Implementation Manager -

At the Stage 2 (Step Three) Consultation meetings, we shared with you our intention to appoint a Partnership Implementation Manager to work closely with schools to

support them in delivering a successful transition through reorganisation for staff and pupils. We can now confirm that Steve Prior has now joined the Putting the Learner First team as Partnership Implementation Manager. Steve has a teaching background with his most recent post being Headteacher of a school in Zimbabwe, and recently qualified with an MBA from Durham University.

Steve's role in the Cramlington Partnership will focus on:

- Supporting Headteachers and Chairs of Governors in the local management of the transition to the proposed new structure
- Acting as the key link between the Cramlington Partnership and the Putting the Learner First team in County Hall
- Establishing, facilitating and coordinating the activity of the Partnership Transition Board**, with the result that standards are maintained and improved during transition

Steve has already been out and about meeting with Headteachers in Cramlington and we welcome him into what will be a challenging and pivotal role.

Programme Director –

As we previously informed you, Jackie Strong has now left the role of Programme Director for Putting the Learner First but is happily still involved with Northumberland County Council as Chair of the Education Partnership Board, whose role is to oversee the implementation of the OFSTED Recovery Plan.

As Executive Director of Children's Services, Trevor Doughty will continue to have ultimate responsibility for the Putting the Learner First Programme. However I will take on the strategic management of the programme and look forward to being involved with the proposed reorganisation going forward.

***School Organisation Committee (SOC)** – The independent decision-making body which convenes for the purpose of voting on the School Organisation Plan and on statutory proposals.

**** Partnership Transition Board** - The primary purpose of this group will be to ensure the effective transition of pupils if a decision is made in favour of reorganisation. Apart from specific issues affecting pupils such as admissions etc., other issues considered, influenced and monitored by Members of the Board will include management of closing schools, staff transition, buildings and funding of transition.

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