



Committee: Curriculum & Pupils Committee

Date: SPRING TERM Monday 27th February 2012 at 5.30 pm

Membership: Mr Waterland (Chair); Mr Chandrakumar; Ms Ward; Mrs Macdougall; Mr White; Mrs White; Mr Flewitt; headteacher

In attendance: Mr M Hoare (Responsible Officer for Educational Standards)
Members of the School's leadership team as required

Agenda items:

Open Meeting: 7 pm in the Concert Hall 32 parents

Mr Waterland, chair of the Curriculum & Pupils Committee, welcomed parents to the meeting.

12 Feedback from Ofsted (*J Tomasevic*)

You should have had access to this on-line or a written copy provided on request. By their nature the reports tend to be bland. The scores look ok. It is easy to be swept away on a tide of euphoria about the grades we have been awarded, and we are proud of those, but it does not represent one or even three years' worth of events. It represents a long journey of 10 years. School improvement is not quick or easy but what has helped is the quality of staff we have been able to secure over the 10 years, but equally the students were magnificent during the inspection period. Any team will pick up on the culture and the vibe of the school. It was only when I read the report did I think that we had done so well. But we always look forward and even in this report there are some key challenges and I want to focus on them. The biggest is that over Post16, to bring that judgement to Outstanding. The disagreement we had with Ofsted centred on AS Levels. Many students take up 4 AS Levels but know they are going to go down to 3. In Year 12 they know which three they will go down to and apply 'discretionary effort' to the fourth. The pass rate is 96% but Ofsted were concerned that students weren't getting the grade profile on the fourth one. We thought it was not important but Ofsted said it was and we will look at how we can get greater student engagement over the 4th subject.

Many of the smaller judgements, such as community cohesion, arose from the work we do in the community but do not measure in terms of impact so now we have to measure the impact.

We will continue to develop how we communicate with stakeholders as we recognise we have more to do in that area.

The governors only got a '2' and we will address the issues but the most important judgements for me were: achievement, because that is what children take away with them, leadership and management because that is how we move the school forward, and teaching and learning because that is the child's experience³ in the classroom.

Hopefully we are going to move to a Teaching School where we train teachers.

We want to become a Great School. As good as our achievement is, we can do even better though we are ranked in the top 3% of schools nationally. The government has indicated that it is looking at the range of EBacc subjects and we are looking at that and it will be challenging to get children to do well at all 6 subjects at the same time.

We feel children can still make more progress at KS3. Tiering has worked well and Ofsted was positive about how we structure the curriculum but we still think we can do more.

Out of 100% I think we are at about 83% and we can add 10%, and we want to take you and your children on that journey with us. We believe children have that capacity and there are things we can do: we are having a big push on independent learning, investment in self, and better personal organisation. There are many things we will be talking to you about in the next months.

Mr Waterland congratulated staff and students on behalf of the governors.

Q You said Toot Hill will become a Teaching School and will link with other schools – what is in it for our children?

A We have a grant to develop an ‘alliance of schools’ to form a Teaching School. We will work with the NCSL to develop training of teachers and development of existing teachers. That should have a direct benefit on children’s experience in the classroom – what has the most impact on children is the ‘teacher with the x factor’. All the evidence suggests that reflective practitioners are the best teachers. Currently we have 40 teachers doing a Masters Degree in Education. That requires them to do inductive research in the classroom, linking to educational theory. That is having a real impact on standards in school and the key beneficiary will be the child in the classroom, and the other will be the teachers who develop confidence and progress in their career.

13 The future of education and the future of Toot Hill School (*J Tomasevic*)

The educational landscape is rapidly changing. A year ago we were talking to parents about converting to an academy. Now the role of the Local Authority is shrinking. This government and the previous government saw Local Authority School Improvement as a failed model. If a school was in trouble they would go in, provide help and support to the people who were failing, and hope that they would respond and turn the school around. But those people were failing for a range of reasons and could not manage school improvement in the first instance.

Over the last two years we have been supporting a school in the County and we are already showing strong signs of recovery in that school. The school-to-school support system is having success. The government model is that good schools help the weaker ones. Our governors are now considering becoming a multi-academy trust called TAG. We will take a number of schools into our Trust group. Some of the schools who join us will also be outstanding and will help schools who need help. Governors have asked if this takes resources away from Toot Hill and our children.

That is the pertinent question. What we found by expanding our horizons, especially for our staff, is that they can see the value of their work and that raises their self-esteem which makes them a more effective practitioner. We retain their expertise and reward them for outreach work. We get a better staff and the receiving school benefits from the support. Schools like our own will be at the centre of the whole school improvement agenda and will be a hub in the area for developing school to school support. For me that is exciting for Toot Hill, its staff and students. There will be risks centred around doing the work but we believe we have the capacity and the vision to do that work and ultimately children will benefit from a more professionally engaged staff in the classroom.

We need new buildings. We are a popular school and have had to raise our intake from 270 to 300 in September. We want to accommodate every child wherever possible and we hope to expand intake to 320, a natural limit. Governors have been working hard with the LA and DfE to see if we can raise monies to provide new buildings and improve the quality of the existing building stock. We have improved the former D&T area into a performing arts area but there are other areas we need to develop and that is a big challenge for us.

Q Is there any money to be made from the Academy links?

A Yes. It would be a significant amount.

Q I understand the professional point of view but what measures do you put in place to protect the education of the children?

A Standards will not slip in the classroom. The quality in the classroom is about recruiting the right teacher in the first place, and vigorously monitoring what goes on in the classroom to maintain standards. WE have a constant stream of information to make sure things are as they should be. It isn't in our interest to let standards slip. If achievement dips, Ofsted will come back.

Q It sounds exciting but my children say when people are out helping other schools it increases churn of absent teachers?

A The teachers out helping our partner school are out permanently – they are seconded to the other school. We exported 3 members of staff permanently to Meden for 3 years. If teachers are absent it is for other reasons, either going to examiners' courses, training, meetings with other agencies, or sickness.

Q It is a good idea but I have heard them say, we have a different teacher we haven't had homework set. I tell my children to hand in their work but they say it is not the same teacher.

A If that is the case it is not school-to-school support causing the teacher's absence. It is the natural turbulence of staff being poorly or going on training courses. It is always something we look carefully at under cost-benefit analysis. If that happens again then please contact the head of department.

Related Documentation:

Previous minutes

Policies (see above);

Admissions Consultation responses;

Draft SDP

Proposed Governor Policies by Mr Aldrich for consideration b/f from Spring Term Meeting

Signed(Mr Peter Waterland, Chair of Committee)

Date