

**Minutes of Public Meeting at Howard Community Primary School
Held on Monday, 5th February 2018, at 6pm
Howard Community Primary School, Bury St Edmunds**

Meeting participants: approximately 65 parents, staff and community members

Chair: Toby Slater-Robins, Chair of Governors, Howard Community Primary School

Panellists: Aminat Alli (Department for Education), Sue Brown (National Leader in Education), Dawn Carman-Jones (Governor, Howard Community Primary School), Nichola Connor (Headteacher, Meadow Primary School), Steven Fanthorpe (Interim Headteacher, Howard Community Primary School), Christine Fogg (Suffolk Local Authority), Jonathan Lewis (Deputy Director Regional Schools Commissioner's Office) Helena Marsh (Executive Principal, Chilford Hundred Education Trust), Stuart Tinsley (Finance Director, Chilford Hundred Education Trust), Chloe Worboyes (Department for Education).

Notes: Magda Syposz (Clerk, Chilford Hundred Education Trust)

Toby Slater-Robins, Chair of Governors at Howard Community Primary School, welcomed everyone to the meeting. He said that the Department for Education (DfE) had recently selected Chilford Hundred Education Trusts (CHET) as the preferred academy sponsor for Howard Community Primary School. This meeting was part of the listening period before the decision is finalised. This was an opportunity for parents, staff and the wider community to ask questions and put forward their views with regard to the way forward for Howard Community Primary School (HCPS). He acknowledged that the governing body were responsible for the school during its inadequate Ofsted report in July 2016. He stressed his and the governing body's commitment to do better for the children. He added that considerable work has been put in by staff and governors and every effort to improve the school will continue.

Jonathan Lewis, Deputy Director Regional Schools Commissioner's Office, explained the RSC office's role when Ofsted rates a school inadequate. Resources are put into the school to improve the provision. The Regional Schools Commissioner looks for academy trusts to sponsor the struggling school and offer support in all areas. The Department for Education to ensure that improvements are taking place monitors the Trust/school closely. In this case, there was considerable interest in supporting HCPS. Five trusts were interviewed by the Regional Schools Commissioner (part of the Department for Education) and judged on the basis of their capacity to provide support, track record of supporting struggling schools, match for the community, and success within the trust's current schools. The Department for Education decided that the preferred sponsor for HCPS would be Chilford Hundred Education Trust. This decision was based particularly on the trust's capacity to support and track record of support to struggling schools. The aim of the current listening period was for the Regional Schools Commissioner to hear any views of parents, staff and wider community regarding CHET's sponsorship of HCPS. Any comments can returned to the Department for Education up to 19th February by email or paper comments can be returned to the school reception until 9th February. All comments will be collated and submitted to the Headteachers' Board, which meets on 22nd February. The Headteachers' Board will be asked to advise on the decision for HCPS to academise with CHET multi-academy trust as its sponsor and for HCPS to join CHET.

Helena Marsh, Executive Principal of Chilford Hundred Education Trust, introduced CHET. She said that CHET is interested in sponsoring HCPS because they believe they can help to improve standards. CHET is a small trust based in Cambridgeshire; it comprises two primary schools and a village college and is opening a new primary school in Red Lodge, Suffolk, in September. CHET's philosophy is to focus on the whole child and to provide the best possible education. She stressed that whilst CHET is not local they know about education and are keen to have good relationships with parents, staff and the community. CHET has already begun to work with HCPS and has been working in Suffolk through its teaching schools alliance, CASSA. CHET would be keen to hear what is working well already. The Trust believes in local governance

and local leadership. The Executive Principal believes that a sense of clarity and cohesion is needed for the school with strong coordinated leadership. It takes time to grow leaders and CHET has the capacity to put a support package in place. The aim would be for a substantive headteacher to be put in place from September, and in the meantime to work with the interim headteacher, who she hopes will stay until September, to make improvements. CHET would also be looking to recruit a permanent Local Governing Body. She stressed that there are a number of ways parents can support the school and acknowledged the work of the Parent Teacher Association, parent help and the need to mechanisms for parents to have a voice. She hoped that HCPS-CHET relationship would be reciprocal and, in time, that HCPS staff could help other schools.

The Chair invited questions and comments.

1. *Q from parent: Would this school be part of a two tier system?*

A from Helena Marsh: Yes. Howard Community Primary School would remain as a primary school for children from Reception to Year 6. It would continue to follow the national curriculum.

2. *Q: What would be the process if CHET is not confirmed as the sponsor and another trust gets the school?*

A from Jonathan Lewis: The next step in the process is for the Headteachers' Board to advise the Regional School Commissioner on the appointment of CHET as the academy sponsor for Howard school. If the decision taken were not to confirm the appointment, then RSC office would reconsider and look to an alternative sponsorship arrangement. If the decision were to confirm the appointment of CHET, then this would be with a view of HCPS joining CHET as soon as possible. The Headteachers' Board meets on 22 February and a final decision is expected shortly thereafter.

3. *Q from parent: When children finish the school where would they go? What would their options be if the school becomes part of CHET?*

A from Helena Marsh: Ultimately, the choice of a secondary school is a parental choice. If secondary schools are full, oversubscription criteria may have preferential treatment for their Trust schools. CHET would work with every school to ease the transition for each child. For example, Linton Village College, the secondary school within CHET, has children from 42 primary schools – the Trust recognises the importance of effective liaison between schools. Parents and children are encouraged to go to open evenings to make an informed choice.

4. *Q from parent: Continuation and consistency are important. How will CHET ensure that what children are learning at HCPS will not be repeated at key stage 3?*

A from Nichola Connor: The year 6 and year 7 teachers can work closely together to ensure smooth transition. For example, Meadow Primary teachers work with secondary schools where the children in year 6 have started in February until the children settle in their new schools. This includes joint moderation, sharing ideas, and ongoing communication. The national curriculum informs what is taught in key stage 2 and in key stage 3.

5. *Q from parent: My child is behind where they should be. Why should I not move them to a different school?*

A from Helena Marsh: Ultimately, whether to move a child or not is a parental decision. CHET has considerable experience supporting children who need additional help, including special educational needs, and would work with parents and staff to ensure the best provision for each child.

6. *Q from parent: how quickly would extra support for the Howard school happen from the decisions of the Department for Education? The school used to be very good and now all the good aspects are gone. What can parents do to help?*

A from Helena Marsh: The school to school support would happen as soon as possible. A team would need to put together a coherent action plan to make sure that changes are not for changes' sake but make real improvements. There is no magic formula, but little changes can be made which make an impact. CHET would continue to engage with parents, as appropriate.

A from Jonathan Lewis: The school does not become an academy overnight. The process usually takes 3-4 months. School to school support goes in immediately.

A from Sue Brown: Key changes would include assessment and methods of tracking pupil progress.

7. *Q from parent: Would there be breakfast club and after school care? This school does not cater for working parents. For example, after school club finishes and 4.30 and meetings are called with a couple days' notice.*

A from Helena Marsh: Wrap around care would need to be looked at with parents. CHET would be keen to hear what would work in terms of clubs and after school provision. It has to be financially viable, but other schools within CHET have after school care which works for working parents.

8. *Q from parent: what does it mean to be an academy?*

A from Helena Marsh: To be an academy means that the school would no longer be local authority controlled. The money would come from central government and not via local authority and the school is held accountable to the Regional Schools Commissioner rather than by the Local Authority. Academies continue to work with local authorities on admissions, transport policies, and support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). On a day to day level, parents and children should not see a difference, other than improvements to standards.

A from Jonathan Lewis: The Regional Schools Commissioner would continue to monitor school improvement provided by the trust to the school.

9. *Q: What was the tipping point for the Department for Education's decision to allocate the Howard school to CHET?*

A from Jonathan Lewis: The Department looked at the trusts' vision, capacity to support, community engagement, teaching and learning, financial management and governance structure. DfE is of the opinion that CHET is the best match for HCPS.

10. *Q from parent: All the clubs seem to be from year 2. Could CHET please ensure that there will be an offer for year 1 and clubs will be in venues that are appropriate?*

A from Nichola Connor: CHET would consult with parents on needs. Sometimes clubs are age appropriate, so not all age groups will have access to all clubs. There would be something on offer for every age group.

11. Q from parent: would SEND support actually be in place? What about ensuring there is no bullying?

A from Helena Marsh: CHET's utmost priority is keeping children safe, including safe from bullying. In terms of SEND, CHET has considerable experience working with families, staff and others, as appropriate, to support children with special needs. For example, Linton Village College works with a local special school which is located next door to develop joint provision for some pupils. The Teaching Schools Alliance has expertise working with schools to further develop additional support in schools.

12. Q from parent: How would you rate the school now? Has it moved on since the last Ofsted report?

A from Helena Marsh: CHET has been working to understand where the school is, and it is clear that progress has been made in some areas, with the governing body and Interim Head taking steps to improve the school. More direction and coherence needs to be put into place to have greater impact – sometimes understanding the root cause of issues can take time before the improvements are seen.

A from Toby Slater-Robins: A key is to understand where the school was, where it is, and where it is going. Governors and leadership now have this understanding, which is a vital step.

13. Q from parent: How can CHET guarantee that the new Headteacher will stay?

A from Helena Marsh: The appointments for Headteachers so far were interim. There is no guarantee that a permanent headteacher will stay, but a lot can be done to appoint a headteacher that is right for the school. This includes a robust recruitment process, with advertising effectively. One way the community can help is by letting people know what is good about the school. The Headteacher will be part of an effective structure; improving the school will be a team effort.

14. Q: How does this meeting relate with the meeting planned for Friday 9th February?

A from Toby Slater-Robins: The meeting on Friday is not organised by the school and neither the school, CHET, nor the Department for Education are involved in it. Any views following that meeting would need to be made to the Regional Schools Commissioner.

A from Jonathan Lewis: The Regional Schools Commissioner would welcome all views to help the Department of Education finalise their decision. However, whilst all views would be considered, this is not a vote. The final decision lies with the Secretary of State for Education.

The Chair of Governors of the Howard Community Primary School thanked the panellists as well as all the participants for their contributions to the meeting. He invited written comments to be submitted to him, care of the school office, by this Friday, 9th February, or by email to the Department for Education by 19th February. *The meeting finished at 7.20pm*