

## Round Hill Primary School – Governing Body Working Party on Collaboration Options

30/03/2016

**In Attendance:** Adrian Nash (AN)

Apologies: Jillian Swain

Richard Jones (RJ)

Li hua Sun (LS)

Jane Marshall (JM)

Joy Miller (EJM)

Duncan Hanslow (DH)

Olwen Kershaw (OK)

### Declarations of Interest

AN declared that at some point some decisions on collaboration / formal partnerships may affect staffing, which may have implications for him.

JM declared her membership of 'Hands off our schools', but this has not affected her commitment to the discussion and her ability to act in the best interest of school.

RJ has recently been co-opted as Governor at Colonel Frank Seeley School (Gedling). This doesn't impact on this discussion, but wanted all governors to be aware.

**Minutes of last meeting** were agreed

### Actions from last meeting

1. Haven't fully fleshed out the table on differences between being community maintained, trust and academy. Have gained some more understanding of Co-operative trust. Not yet clear what implications the latest Government Education White paper has on Co-Operative Trust, if any.  
**ACTION:** To continue to monitor advice from DfE, LA and Co-Op Trust.
2. Underway
3. See Appendix 2 Albany Infant, Albany Junior, Round Hill and Wadsworth Fields statements for collaboration, also minutes of meeting Tues 8<sup>th</sup> March Heads and Chairs meeting from Family of Schools. Continuing discussions are being had within the family of schools.
4. "At this point we do not recommend moving towards a model involving Federation / Trust / MAT status." Currently this remains the stated position, continue reviewing.
5. Next meeting for local schools to discuss collaboration options has moved from April 19<sup>th</sup> to May 24<sup>th</sup>. Heads from Family of Schools meeting 1<sup>st</sup> July. Chairs of Governors are invited along also, with a view to exploring common vision and values.
6. Round Hill Working Party to meet after the above meetings in July. (Sooner if needed should anything change from LA)

### Actions from FGB

Each Committee has included an item on the 'current state' of collaboration activity under their remit this term. Discussions in Committees haven't yet fully surfaced the benefits for pupils – have largely to date identified benefits for staff / strategy / finances. Also, we need to ask: what are the things we value now, that we don't want to lose for pupils?

**ACTION** all committees to have item on summer term agendas to continue discussion, particularly around benefits of collaboration for *pupils*.

AN reported some of the benefits of closer collaboration that Head Teachers had brainstormed at a recent meeting:

- Curriculum links - shared policies, eg Design & Tech, Sporting links, Language specialisms,
- Transition links – e.g. Kensuke’s Kingdom read in Yr 6 and then built on in year 7 at WHP
- Heads and Deputy Heads links over School improvement targets e.g. share expertise on EAL, teaching and learning.

Still unsure as to whether we need a formal structure to gain/secure these benefits?

In continuing to explore the Co-op trust JMa noted the helpfulness of the 6 questions that had been asked of and responses from Co-op Trust (Appendix 1). Further questions include:

- How much do they have an executive decision making place?
- How much Governorship stays with individual schools?
- Would the role of Business Manager in schools be affected by joining with Coop Trust?
- SENCO – If provided centrally what implications for school employed SENCO?

JM updated on LA position and advice currently:

Kate Foale, a county councillor and NLG, was asked for her advice from JM. Her advice was not to rush into anything and look at all options. The LA will work with all schools, regardless of governance arrangements, officers of the LA role is to encourage schools to consider different ways of working more closely together. Kate shared in her email a few examples of this happening, schools sharing CPD, exploring wider curriculum choices and sharing Headteachers or business/finance managers.

The LA will work with schools and come out and advise on collaboration either formally or less formally, supporting schools to find the right solution for them. LA officials and Kate herself are always available to offer advice.

RJ reported LA officials conveyed the same message at the recent Nottinghamshire Governors’ Conference.

There is a feeling that some of the family schools may be more eager to form a Trust (or less likely we think, given their statements in advance of the meeting) a MAT. As a school, Round Hill needs to consider the question: If we *were* invited to join local schools in a MAT / Collaborative Trust what would we say?

Discussion that followed included an observation that the meeting between Heads and Chairs in family of schools on July 1<sup>st</sup> is working towards exploring joint vision and values. This may help discover whether we have enough in common to form a formal collaboration.

**ACTION:** Output from this meeting (i.e. the July 1<sup>st</sup> Heads/Chairs) to be fed back to FGB Autumn 2016 (and potentially a summer term meeting of this working party).

If we as RH asked which schools would we feel most affinity to and want to be linked with – what would we say? Linking geographically has significant benefits for pupils. What are the values in diversity? What diversity is helpful alongside common values? Current feeling is that working with local schools has more benefits than a geographically disparate collaboration.

The **Government White Paper** had been circulated and the following was noted – there is a clear steer towards Academisation. As yet this is only a white paper, not law, we don't need at this point to change our agreed position in light of it. Attendees at the meeting considered that the paper has not generally been well received across the system, so we should take our time, to see whether changes in law and LA function follow or not.

### **Terms of Reference from Working Group of Four Local Schools**

Paper was discussed and clarified.

**ACTION:** RJ to suggest change to paper to ensure that it reflects that the group is open to all schools in the family of schools not just the four that attended the first formal meeting.

### **How do we communicate on this issue with parents and staff?**

**ACTION:** AN to update staff on current discussions and position, and to reassure that no future decision(s) affecting staff (e.g. terms and conditions of employment should we change status) would be made in isolation from them.

**ACTION:** All to agree wording of the following

Once agreed AN to post to RH Governors' blog section on website:

We held a working group meeting on March 30 to consider future collaboration arrangements: this was particularly timely, given the release of the recent Education White Paper. As governors at Round Hill we view working with other schools very positively and already work with a number of local schools. We will continue to see partnership working developed, whether we move towards a more formal structural collaboration or not. Currently there is much uncertainty around different models of Academies / Trusts / Collaboration arrangements. We are talking with the family of schools locally and will continue to review the national and local situation as it develops. If you have any views, questions, concerns or comments please do be in touch via the office.

**ACTION** Parents' Forum also to have as an agenda item, for discussion (but to note, this is NOT the start of any formal/statutory consultation process)

Governors need to be clear on current position in light of recent news reports so we can answer any questions parents may have:

Current position is: We are exploring collaboration options, but we are **not** currently recommending becoming Academy or forming or joining a Multi-Academy Trust. There are currently active discussions taking place with other schools and within our governing body.

**ACTION** Communicate this statement to all Governors once these minutes agreed.

## Appendix 1 Questions asked of Co-op Trust

1. In what way would our relationship with the local authority change? - you will remain a maintained school similar to church schools. Your budget will still come in the same way and your GB will still perform the same role. You will still be eligible for capital monies from the LA for maintenance of your property. The LA are still responsible for standards and retain all of their current duties. So essentially no change.
2. What is the role of the Trust board and what power do they have over the Trust schools? The role of the Trust board is to deliver on the strategic role that you identify as your vision through joint working. They are not responsible for standards in the schools or have any authority over the schools. The GB remain in place with the same duties as do the LA.
3. As a Trust we understand that we then take on ownership of the land, what in essence does that entail? The land and assets transfer to the Trust to hold in Trust for the delivery of education. They cannot sell off the property or make any changes to its use. It is held in 'trust'. There are no further liabilities existing insurances remain in place and if something happens the LA must provide you with a building to deliver education.
4. Are there any increased or change in responsibilities for governors? The GB become the employer which as long as they follow HR advice is no more onerous than it is now. They are responsible for the performance management; pay increases; recruitment etc. (that they probably feel they are now!). They are also the admissions authority but I expect you will follow the same process as you do now as we all do!
5. What does the initial cost cover and would you be the one to act as project manager, as it were, to establish the Trust? The initial cost covers all aspects of the consultation; conversion to foundation status; setting up the trust; there are the legal fees for the land transfers etc. when it is all done you are a Trust and I will be the one to take it forward and support you to set up your board etc. as well as being available to answer questions in your first year.
6. Should other schools want to join once we have already established ourselves, what would the cost be to them? They would pay the initial fee (around £6K and legal transfer of land costs) it is a little cheaper but I would need to get a quote to be more precise.