



Parent/Public Consultation Meeting held on Thursday 1st December 2016

Co-Education Proposal for September 2018

In attendance:

- Mr S Gardner (SG) – CEO
- Mr M Bailey (MB) – Chair of the Regional Governing Body (RGB)
- Mrs J Diaz – Principal of HGS
- Year 5 parent

MB, Chair of the RGB, welcomed all attendees to the meeting and outlined the format of the consultation:

- Presentation by SG, CEO (attached)
- Question and answer session

SG presentation:

- SG outlined the timeline for the consultation process
- SG outlined the purpose of the meeting:
 - To outline the general points regarding this consultation for those who were unable to attend the first consultation meeting.
 - To provide and update on the consultation so far and any feedback received.
 - To provide an opportunity for discussion and feedback from attendees.
- SG explained that the School was consulting again on becoming a co-ed school because of a number of reasons, including:
 - The School still believes the proposal is the best way to provide high quality Grammar provision for students in this area. Holcombe Grammar School for and Fort Pitt proposed a merger a couple of decades ago to rationalise place provision, and more recently Holcombe and Chatham Grammar School for Girls (CGSG) had tried to initiate a new 11+ test for their schools in order to increase the number of students able to attend the schools. Holcombe has made several attempts to work with CGSG to rationalise provision in an effective way, in order that the students at the schools were best supported. However, CGSG has chosen to partner with a High School instead. It is still the belief of the school that the most effective provision of grammar school places in the Chatham area would be a co-ed school able to expand and

contract between 6 and 9 forms of entry, depending on the size of cohort at the time.

- The school believes that currently parents in this area of Medway do not have a realistic choice between single sex and co-ed grammar provision.
- HGS has direct daily links with 2 co-ed provisions – the New Horizons Children’s Academy is co-sited and The Victory Academy is less than a mile away. The school’s ability to support and provide opportunity to these partners is limited by the single sex provision, especially with the High School, where the single sex provision at HGS is a barrier to allowing all able children who did not take the 11+ test or only demonstrated grammar ability later in their school career to access the grammar school provision. Of the pilot group that accessed the provision, all the Boys have continued at the Grammar School and thrived; whilst unfortunately the girls have not felt able to continue to benefit from this provision in an all-boys environment. For the primary school students, it is clearly unfair that whilst all these students access enrichment in Science, Maths, MFL, and PE provision at HGS, only the selective Boys would be able to continue their educational journey into Secondary, while the selective Girls would have to leave. This is not fair.
- The Department for Education’s Green Paper demonstrates that the Government is exploring how links between grammar schools and non-selective schools can benefit children. However, it is clear that for this to have maximum impact, the best grammar provision would be co-ed, so that the school would have expertise to meet the needs of both genders, and where enrichment opportunities were identified at the Grammar School one gender would not feel part of a tiny minority of the provision in that school.
- CGSG is in a very similar position to HGS in terms of balancing provision with financial realities. The school was invited to pursue a grammar collaboration to help ensure all students across both schools had the best possible opportunities in a grammar school setting. However, CGSG has decided to pursue a collaboration with a High School, Brompton Academy. It is unclear from the published documentation whether CGSG will remain a single sex, standalone, selective girls school. This has not been guaranteed in any of the documentation. It would be helpful for everyone if CGSG were able to share their strategy for supporting a school which in 2014/15 published accounts registering a £171,070 in-year deficit, with unrestricted funds carried forward of only £8,671.
- SG explained that the Trust have been exploring the question of whether students in different areas are, in reality, able to access their choice of grammar provision, and the impact of Medway’s student transport policy of only funding travel to the nearest appropriate provision. SG thanked Medway Council for sharing their admissions maps and explained that the admissions map illustrated that, in fact, very few students outside of the Rainham area attended Rainham Mark Grammar School. This supported the Trust’s belief that in reality students and parents outside of the Rainham area, for whatever reason, did not have the choice of a co-ed grammar school when choosing provision for their child.
- The fact that the admissions maps from the council showed that almost every student attending Rainham Mark Grammar School came from within the Rainham area

demonstrated that for parents there was no realistic co-ed grammar provision in this part of Medway.

- SG explained the next steps in the consultation, and MB then invited questions / comments from the floor:

Year 5 parent – Why does the Medway transport policy not allow children to have transport to the school of their choice?

SG – This appears to be a historical decision. I would hope that at some point in the future this provision may be put in place to enable real parental choice.

Year 5 parent – Why didn't HGS and CGSG come together to form a co-ed grammar school between them?

SG – We did invite CGSG to engage in a process that could have led to such an outcome; unfortunately, their Governors did not support such a proposal.

Year 5 parent – You have referred to CGSG's financial position; how will that be resolved if they go in with Brompton Academy?

SG – Unfortunately, we do not know what the plans are between Brompton and CGSG to secure CGSG's financial future. It would be useful if their plans were made transparent. If the plan is for CGSG to go co-ed in the future, or for students from Brompton to use CGSG as a kind of G&T provision, what would this look like? The only thing that appears to be clear is that CGSG cannot continue as it currently is operating, which is resulting in a significant in-year deficit and recruiting less than 100 students each year.

Year 5 parent – Do you think that CGSG and Brompton will operate like a comprehensive over 2 sites?

SG – Unfortunately, I cannot answer that; you would have to ask CGSG and Brompton Academy and see if they will share their proposals about how the two schools plan to operate in the future.

Year 5 parent – If CGSG is in financial difficulties, then isn't HGS in a similar position? How is HGS planning to overcome these difficulties?

SG – From what we have seen we believe HGS is in a better position than CGSG. 3 years ago we identified the potential financial difficulties the school would face and conducted a significant restructuring process to make the school financially viable on the numbers we were expecting into the school. We have filled over PAN in the current Year 7 and 8. This was above our projected numbers for financial modelling, and so we are in a better position than we were expecting. Finally, we have been a popular choice for internal and external students choosing Sixth Form provision, which has again put the school in a better financial position than expected. Therefore, HGS is financially secure.