



The Upper Wharfedale Primary Federation

Common themes emerging from responses to the Federation Communications Evening

November 2017

The Governors have analysed the responses and comments received on the communication evenings and are pleased to be able to summarise these below. We are meeting again with colleagues from North Yorkshire on 12th December after which we will be able to give you further information on how we intend to move forward. We would like to thank you all once again for all your contributions and will write again before the Christmas break.

Sustainability of Communities

There is, as expected, very strong opposition to closing any of the schools largely due to the effect that would have on the nature of said communities described variously as ghettos, retirement villages, etc.

Governors' Response: We agree that the effect of closing schools on communities would be detrimental to the vibrancy and future of those communities. Closure will only be considered when all other options have failed, bearing in mind that schools have to be both financially and educationally sustainable.

National, Park/ Parish Council Issues

There is very strong feeling that the National Park has a major role to play here and needs to do more to encourage affordable housing, opportunities for work, and thus bring young families to the area. Council tax for second homes needs to be reconsidered, as do planning regulations around occupancy.

Governors' Response: We agree that the National Park needs to take steps to ensure that its recent resolution F3 is implemented, and that it not only recognises the role it has to play in the sustainability of village schools and communities, but acts upon it.

Community donations/sponsorship

There is a strong feeling that the community could and should be involved in sponsorship of some kind and a suggestion that parents who could, should be asked to pay for school trips etc. rather than funding through the school budget; an increase in local precept was also mentioned as was local tourist tax and a review of tax on small businesses.

Governors' Response: The Governors are in the process of examining the legal and practical implications of sponsored giving as a way forward. If we proceed with this option, it must be made absolutely clear to parents that this sponsorship is purely voluntary and in no way constitutes school fees.

Transport

A number of written and verbal comments around transport issues were made suggesting that children could be transported up dale from Skipton to take up surplus places in the Federation rather than building a new school(s) in Skipton.

Governors' Response: The organisation and financing of school transport is not in the hands of individual schools or the Children's Services area of NYCC. It has its own department, own budget and decisions are made without reference to schools. This is a county-wide problem and needs to be tackled at that level. While the Governors agree whole heartedly with the comment, children attend schools depending on parental choice and cannot be re-directed towards a particular school. We are however pursuing a marketing campaign to ensure parents from further afield consider the Federation schools.

Extend the Federation

More than 50% supported extending the Federation.

Governors' Response: Talks with other local schools and on a county-wide basis continue, but without willing partners, extension is not possible at the present time.

Distinctive Ethos

A minority stressed the importance of maintaining a non-church option.

Governor Response: The Governors agree that it is important to preserve this element of choice.

Change in organisation

Only a minority supported changes in organisation e.g. moving children.

Governor Response: Whilst Governors agree that wholesale movement of children up and down the Dale is not something they wish to pursue, small scale travel between schools would help to address the issue of small cohorts: this would enhance our provision for these groups of pupils.

Leadership and Management

A number suggested that more up to date budget figures would have been helpful. A number of requests were made to put the boards on-line for further reflection at home. The Governors were commended for their clarity, transparency and commitment.

Governor Response: We are only allowed to publish the latest figures that have been approved by the Governors and the Local Authority. These figures are made available to us at three points in the year. Those used at the exhibition were the latest version available to us. Boards will be made available to individuals upon request.

Anne Vetch

Chair of Governors Upper Wharfedale Primary Federation