



"Aiming Higher"

Haywood Engineering College

A Foundation School

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'Students said what a special place this school is and inspectors agree.' Ofsted 2007

20 February 2008

Mr G Rowney
Director of Children and Young People's Services
Management Suite
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Civic Centre
Glebe Street
Stoke-on-Trent
ST4 1HH

Dear Mr Rowney,

Possible Position Statement

Destroying Schools for the Future or Building Schools for the Future?

I am writing in response to your email of 8 February which was sent to all primary and secondary schools. I am concerned that this "confidential" draft which you have now spoken about to the Sentinel, misinforms the recipients, especially in section 6 about Haywood High School and Engineering College. Below is a refutation, sentence by sentence, followed by a suggestion of what you should have written if you intend to support the school and help raise achievement across the city. Your words from the Possible Position Statement are in bold. I have sent a copy of this letter to the original recipients as well as other relevant people in order to correct the many inaccurate statements which have been put into the public domain.

6. **Haywood High School & Engineering College**

This should read "*Haywood Engineering College. A Foundation School*". As you know we have been a Foundation School since 1 September 2007 despite the tactics to prevent that happening and subsequent attempts to delay the transfer of land and implement the necessary personnel arrangements. Given the government's stated preference for schools to pursue Foundation Status, a policy clearly expressed by the Elected Mayor and Cllr McLaughlan, I'm surprised that you have included no mention of our status as a Foundation School as a platform for building on in the northern cluster. Similarly although you have referred to other school specialisms you have ignored our specialist engineering status (recently re-designated) which could provide a much needed boost to technology across the city and local employment.

The roll is expected to fall to 965 by 2014. We doubt this because as a popular oversubscribed Foundation School able to develop our own admissions policy, we do not expect our numbers to fall. Indeed we have just been contacted by the Deputy Director to

raise our admission limit from 180 because of the demand for places here. This was an admission limit forced on us by the LA instead of our usual 210!

Despite the offer of a new build on Bank Top, Acreswood site, public consultation showed strong support for the school and a resistance to agree to any changes. 504 individual responses were received and a petition of 5,829 names was submitted. The responses argued strongly that the school should be left unchanged.

No offer was ever made to build a new Haywood at the Bank Top site. A new school yes, in the context of St. Margaret Ward taking over the James Brindley site and therefore James Brindley and Haywood students fighting for places in a new school, but certainly not Haywood Engineering College. This has never been offered to us. Also these sentences imply that the school is resisting any form of change. This is simply not true. The school has changed constantly since my arrival 8 years ago and meets virtually all of the transformation criteria. That is why as a whole school community we were able to easily draw up in January 2007, in conjunction with Creative Partnerships, an educational vision for a school of the future in anticipation that the provisional plan for refurbishment, drawn up prior to your arrival, would begin in September 2008. You heard this vision for the future presented by our year 11 students at the formal consultation evening which outlined our radical refurbishment proposals which would have a major impact in teaching and learning. Our responses to you closure proposals argued that the school should be able to refurbish itself on the same site putting into operation plans, led by the student voice, which have been formulated over the past few years and argued that it wasn't necessary to waste money by ignoring the changes made to the school regarding its extensive ICT facilities, its engineering facilities, its art and music facilities and links with the City Learning Centre and other recent refurbishments. Your statement '**unchanged**' is very inaccurate. Were you not made aware that at the meeting for the community on 15 November 2007, also attended by the Elected Mayor, the Council Manager, Mr Robinson, asked 3 questions of the audience:

1. Do you accept that change must take place?
2. Do you want Haywood to close?
3. Do you want Haywood to remain on its current site?

The unequivocal answers received from the community were 'Yes', 'No' and 'Yes'. Hardly a community resisting change!

Your next sentence reads

Although the school is popular in the local area, the most recent exam results suggest that the school is just above government baseline expectations in terms of GCSE attainment including English and Maths.

This is disgracefully misleading and the reference to specific exam results in your Position Statement in just 2 schools can only be because you want to undermine these schools. Your sentence somehow implies that our school shouldn't be popular because of our exam results. I believe that all the parents and carers who send their children here have a better knowledge of the school than you do. The facts are these. In terms of our overall five or more and 1+ A – G grades, as a very inclusive school we are in line with the national average and our able and talented students have above average results in comparison to other Stoke schools. I assume, although you weren't clear in your Position Statement, you are referring to higher grades A – C including English and Maths. Our results were 31%. The government has made reference to their concern about schools achieving below 30% but many of these schools have pointed out that Ofsted has nevertheless described them as either good or

outstanding. You may have forgotten that we were described by Ofsted as good with outstanding features. I write 'forgotten' because in some of your position statements or draft proposals you have never made reference to our Ofsted report which is still one of the best not just in Stoke but in the surrounding area. You will be interested in this emailed comment to me from Dr Peter Clough, Deputy Director of the DCSF School Improvement Division:

"I am also concerned by the suggestion that, in relation to secondary school performance, we dominantly use raw attainment scores (specifically the percentage of pupils gaining 5 good GCSEs, including English and Maths). I can give you categorical assurance that all available qualitative and quantitative data, including Ofsted's reports, are used to give a full picture".

If the Deputy Director of the School Improvement Division is giving me his categorical assurance that all available data, including Ofsted reports, are used to give a full picture, why aren't you using all available data? You seem only to focus on data which seeks to undermine this school and other schools. I notice that in your attempt to malign Longton you refer to their CVA score, but make no reference to it in our case or in the case of other schools. Is this because the use of Key Stage 2 - 4 CVA data places us and other schools in a better light? With successive CVA scores for 2006-2007 of 1006 and 1002 we were 6th and 7th respectively in comparison with other Stoke schools. CVA scores measures actual student progress. As Ofsted said about this school "All students made good progress". Clearly our parents know what is happening here and that's why they support us. They also support our 'outstanding care support and guidance' as described by Ofsted and our development as a fully extended school at the heart of its community, involved in integrated youth support work. I'm also mystified why, if you are so concerned about higher grade scores including English and Maths, you have made no reference to it in the sections on other schools which are staying open i.e. Birches Head 27%, below the baseline, or Thistley Hough 31% the same as us, Sandon High School 32% one above us.

You also seem to have ignored the recent Ofsted comment in your own 2007 Annual Performance Assessment of Services for Children and Young People in Stoke-on-Trent City Council. "Standards of achievement in secondary schools are down but improving. Results at Key Stage 3 have improved overall and are in line with similar authorities. Improvement was most noticeable in Mathematics, although there was a slight drop in English. GCSE results at Key Stage 4 also improved, with the proportion achieving five A – C grades, including English and Mathematics, NOW IN LINE WITH SIMILAR AUTHORITIES".

It's interesting to note too that in Education Walsall, led for some time now by Serco, the 2008 GCSE results published in The Guardian, 10.1.08, out of 18 secondary schools, only 4 schools had Key Stage 2 – 4 CVA scores above 1000, the national average, (the results of Walsall Academy were not published!). In the much-maligned Stoke-on-Trent out of 17 schools, 8 schools were above the 1000 national average. Similarly in Walsall, 10 schools were below the government baseline of 30% higher grades including English and Maths with one school at 30%. Again, in the much criticised, but rapidly improving Stoke-on-Trent. 5 schools were below the baseline.

I'm even more amazed by your last 2 sentences:

"Additionally the school site does not meet BB98 requirements for more than 750 students, and cannot be expanded. In view of this, it is not proposed to make any major investment at the school, but to refurbish it towards the end of the BSF Programme in 2012 or 2013."

You seem once again to have ignored the section of our formal response, sent in before 11 January 2008, which totally refuted this misleading assertion. Copied below is an extract from my letter to Tamasin Dale, Schools Capital, DCSF. I actually mentioned to you last term the House of Commons report referred to in my letter, but again you have chosen to take no notice.

1. Building Schools for the Future.

At least the former Assistant Director, Howard Cartlidge was honest in his usual direct way when he told me in January 2007 that in a falling rolls situation the school in the middle of the city should be closed whether it is popular or not. Since then Serco have tried to use either the under performing A – C English and Maths argument and/or the unsuitability of the site with apparently the support of the government. In Serco's consultation booklet proposing the closure of Haywood this comment is made: "Haywood. This site does not meet government standards and cannot be extended so it is proposed not to have a school there." All I can do in my utter disbelief is quote back your own recommendation from the government's response to the Seventh Report from the Education and Skills Committee, Session 2006 – 07 Sustainable Schools: Are we building schools for the future? Published by the House of Commons 22 October 2007:

Recommendation 37: Greater flexibility on building standards, emphasising that they are guidance rather than requirements, would allow authorities at local level a greater degree of choice over their school estates, and allow them to find the most suitable ways of making schools in their area more sustainable.

The Department's guidance on school design – Building Bulletins – generally does offer flexibility by allowing designers to take alternative approaches to proposed guidance. The building bulletin most commonly referred to in the context of BSF is Building Bulletin (BB) 98. This fulfils two main functions. Firstly, it establishes the overall build area that would be needed for a secondary school of a given number of pupils. It gives a clear, fair and equitable mechanism for funding all types of new school buildings. This function of BB 98 is widely understood by local authorities, designers and developers. Secondly, BB 98 gives minimum areas for various types of indoor and outdoor school spaces.

However, these are minimum standards only – not requirements. BB 98 offers a flexible approach to designing a school. The Department actively encourages designers to think creatively about 21st century design, meeting these challenges with a range of spaces of different sizes to suit schools' curriculum and management models.

Some of the criticism of BB 98 comes because some local authorities impose the minimum areas as 'standards'. This creates frustration both for schools who want to operate different organisational or curriculum models, and for architects who wish to design more creatively. We are working with Pfs to produce a simple document which will help schools and designers understand the principles of BB 98 and how it can clearly give them the flexibilities that they need to develop transformational school designs within budget.

Also in our solicitors' submission (attached) to the LA it is pointed out that the guidelines on closing schools do not at any point mention the state of the school site as an issue to be considered by decision makers when deciding whether or not a school should be closed. We also do not consider that BSF requires the closure of schools.

The Director himself heard at our consultation evening our proposal to continue the work done by our students in designing with Partnership for Schools an iconic learning tower as an integral part of the school's refurbishment. The students' ideas have already been presented at a DFCS event.

It is perfectly possible to refurbish this site as you are suggesting for other schools that do not meet the guidelines.

In conclusion, I suggest that as far as Haywood is concerned, what you should be writing for section 6 of your Position Statement is this:

“Haywood Engineering College. A Foundation School”.

Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11	Total
211	210	223	206	212	1,062

As a Foundation School, the roll is expected to stay stable. Haywood has recently been successfully re-designated as a Specialist Engineering College. Although the site size is not extensive it can continue to meet the needs of the local community as a fully extended inclusive school. A joint sports village strategy encompassing Dimensions and land at the rear of Port Vale would be developed in parallel with the refurbishment. Central to the refurbishment will be an iconic learning tower design produced by students of the school in conjunction with Creative Partnerships. Immediate refurbishment would generate national publicity for the LA. The college would continue to build upon its collaborative work with other schools in the northern cluster including a shared 14 – 19 curriculum and as a lead school in the implementation of the engineering and health and society diplomas.

As for the rest of the document I still believe the alternative proposals drawn up by our 3 local MPs and Headteachers presented to you, the Mayor and Cllr McLaughlan by the officers of the Secondary Heads and Principals Forum provide a better way forward. This proposal suggested that it was up to individual governing bodies to negotiate if they wished to become academies and I still believe that should be the case. At no time have you even sat down with Headteachers and discussed the pros and cons of academy education, especially how they would promote the inclusion agenda and integrated youth support. Neither have you discussed, and you didn't even mention at the recent meeting with Heads and Chairs of Governors, your proposals for post 16 education. You seem to have totally ignored the carefully worked out proposals from the northern cluster for 14 – 19 provision and our pilot work for diplomas.

It is also disappointing that at the “information” meeting on Friday, 8 February with Headteachers and Chairs of Governors you didn't reveal the details of your position statement. I continue to be concerned both as Headteacher and as Convenor of the Secondary Heads Forum about the lack of proper consultation and a breakdown of trust between yourself and us. Below is another extract from my letter to Tamasin Dale.

I recently had the pleasure of hearing Mick Brookes, the general secretary of the NAHT speaking at a FASNA conference about S. Covey's publication “Speed of Trust” and ‘Where Trust is an Issue’. He identified the following characteristics:

ORGANISATIONAL

- Aggressive top down control
- Intense Micro Management
- Enforced Compliance
- Punishing Systems & Structures

PERSONAL

- Dysfunctional Relationships
- Hot, angry confrontations or cold withdrawal
- Energy draining interaction
- Defence posturing and legal positioning
- Hidden agendas

Sadly this very much applies in Stoke at the moment and is far worse than the situation under the failed leadership that Serco replaced. All of these characteristics where trust has totally broken down apply to the relationship between Serco, as represented by the Director, and Haywood. It would be a massive bonus for the children of Stoke-on-Trent and certainly for the children of Haywood if in 2008 we moved to a situation "where trust is a valuable asset" and the following characteristics were on display in terms of our relationship between the LA and particularly the Director, Ged Rowney.

ORGANISATIONAL

- Helpful systems and structures which lead to effective collaboration, communication and execution.
- Positive relationships and partnerships with employees and stakeholders.
- Focus on work
- Strong creativity and innovation
- Healthy work place
- An investor in people

PERSONAL

- Cooperative, close, vibrant relationships
- Focus on acknowledgement on building on strength
- Uplifting and positive communication
- Mistakes seen as learning opportunity and quickly forgotten
- Positive energy and positive people

In my meeting with you and the other officers of the Secondary Heads Forum, I did refer to this breakdown of trust but sadly your recent Possible Position Statement and the way you have handled it does nothing to repair the trust.

Hugh Irvine, from the Hands off Haywood Community Group ended a recent email to Mr Robinson and Mayor Meredith with this comment:

"Surely, Haywood is entitled to some of the BSF money on offer. This statement makes it look like the Council will try, over the coming years, to break the community down by failing to provide adequate funding for proper refurbishment of the school. This smacks of revenge by the Council on a community that dared to stand up and be counted.

Please, gentlemen, revise this document before you sign it."

Is it a coincidence that the two schools St. Joseph's and Haywood who have led a vociferous campaign against Serco proposals have been put to the bottom of the BSF pile?

I hope you will revise your Position Statement before it is signed off by the Mayor and the Council Manager next week. This will show that you have properly consulted and properly listened to our community and other communities. It will also show that you are aware of the views of Jim Knight, Minister for Schools, as expressed in a letter to The Guardian, Monday 4 February 2008:

“I am happy to reassure your readers that closing schools is certainly not our preferred means of tackling surplus places (new plans put 1:10 secondary schools at risk, January 31). I have not ordered a review of surplus places.

However, we have renewed a contact with the Audit Commission to develop a “toolkit” to help councils plan for demographic changes. It will contain examples of how councils can manage their schools with lower numbers of pupils. It is not a plan to close schools.

Building Schools for the Future is one of the biggest school rebuilding programmes ever and will see every single secondary school rebuilt or refurbished. Under this scheme a few unpopular and failing schools may not be rebuilt. It would clearly be wrong to spend millions of pounds of taxpayer’s money rebuilding their schools when they are neither needed nor wanted by parents, and the money could be better spent on expanding successful schools. These decisions are not made by Ministers in Whitehall – they are made, in consultation with parents, by locally elected and accountable councillors.

Jim Knight

Minister for Schools”

Yours sincerely

David Dickinson
Headteacher

Headteacher: David Dickinson B.A., M.Ed., F.R.S.A



SETPOINT
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CITY OF
Stoke
on Trent

Time 4 Me



Specialist Schools
and Academies Trust
EXCELLENCE AND DIVERSITY



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