

PROPOSED CLOSURE OF ARCHERS COURT MATHS & COMPUTING COLLEGE AND ITS REPLACEMENT WITH A GOVERNMENT FUNDED ACADEMY

Summary of the Public Meeting held on 3 November 2009

33 people attended the public meeting including parents, governors and other interested parties.

Martyn Doole the Area Childrens Services Officer outlined the background to the proposal, the options open to the Local Authority, the reasons why this particular proposal is being considered and the benefits accruing from the change to Academy status. He explained that the main driver for a 'structural solution' was the need to ensure that the school achieved a least 30% 5 A*-C grades at GCSE level including English and Maths.

With Canterbury Christ Church University as the main sponsor, the new school would have the backing of a nationally recognised educational institution, which coupled with new state of the art buildings would provide Dover with a first class school.

Sue Piotrowsky the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Christ Church University explained that heretofore the university had turned down all previous approaches to sponsor an Academy. They have agreed to be the main sponsor of this proposal as it will be an opportunity to have a brand new school with 21st Century state of the art facilities and provide a high quality inspirational learning experience for the children of Dover. It is the intention to build on the existing strengths of Archers Court. They would propose a new name "Dover Christ Church Academy".

Elaine Hamilton the headteacher of Archers Court Maths & Computing College said that Archers Court was recognised by Ofsted as a good school. It is the highest rated non-selective school in the Dover District. Results have doubled and they will achieve 30% including English and Maths at GCSE in 2010. 'A' level results have improved by 18% this year with 63% of the students taking A Levels achieving A, B or C grades. Attendance has improved and now stands at 94%. The number of pupils with Special Educational needs is increasing and she is concerned that the school is about to reach a plateau where results will not further improve. She is in favour of the establishment of an Academy as the status will bring with it new buildings and funding at a higher rate which would enable an improved learning experience for the children.

Parent – *Many Academies have failed in London – she has concerns that her daughter currently in Year 10 may be disadvantaged during the change.*

Academies have done well in Kent. The buildings are planned for the back of the site and will not impact adversely on pupils during transition.

Parent - *Has a child in Year 11 and a son at University – would like reassurances about post 16. How quickly will co-operation with the grammar schools happen – not sure what the sponsors get out of sponsorship – will there be a concentration on every child and not just the borderline ones – does not like the proposed new name of the academy.*

The plan is for transformation from day 1. The initial 'Expression of Interest' to the DCSF covered many of these points. The sponsors do not get financial gain. They are providing their expertise within the framework of collaboration in the education sector.

Indeed the sponsorship will cost the University a considerable amount. They are providing the DNA of the university, upping the grades and preparing children for employment. The government put strict controls on outcomes. Transition is planned to ensure the needs of pupils continue to be met.

Teacher – *Delighted to see the focus on the community – sad to see the loss of the name.*

Teacher – *Have the primaries been consulted? 48% pass the Kent test in some parts of the county. The pass rate in Dover is 13%. 5 of the 23 feeder schools hit the average targets of attainment. There is a need to involve the community. What % attending Christ Church come from Dover?*

The sponsors have not spoken with the primaries. KCC has sent copies of the consultation document to the Year 6 children in all the primary feeder schools. There are 2 separate consultations – one by KCC on the closure of the existing school, as a precursor to the opening of the Academy, and a separate but parallel consultation by Appleyards on the establishment of the Academy. There is an opportunity for all to contribute to both consultations.

Parent & Governor - *very much a supporter of the existing school – will money be available in the future to support the school? Will the investment be guaranteed?*

Prior to the establishment of the Academy a funding agreement is signed by the Secretary of State, which is the essential guarantee. With Academies being a priority of the current government and the expectation of similar support from any alternative incoming government, the future of the Academy is assured.

Teacher – *What is the structural change for Astor?*

A formal link with the proposed Duke of York Academy will be made.

Teacher – *Children arrive in the school with poor musical abilities. Will the Academy do more than just tinker? Results in some Academies are poor.*

Not all Academies are the same. Christ Church University will not give its name to a declining institution.

John Allison Vice Chair of governors: At the beginning he did ask – why us? However during the many meetings which have taken place prior to the proposal being made he has come to the view that this is the way forward. The involvement of educational heavyweights is a recipe for success.

Teacher – *There is a cap of 150 pupils - will that be sufficient to cope with demand?*

This was not an arbitrary cut, but one commensurate with falling numbers in the area. If numbers do increase then the PAN (Published Admission Number) could be increased.