

WILLIAM MARSHALL SCHOOL



June 2015

The Way Forward
By the William Marshall Parents Committee

William Marshall School

THE WAY FORWARD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Norfolk County Council has indicated that they are considering closing the William Marshall School in Welney after a recommendation by the School Governors.

There is an ongoing consultation with stakeholders before the Director of Children's Services at the Council decide whether to accept the recommendation of the Governors' to close the school.

Parents and supporters have set up a 'Save Our School' Campaign in order to persuade the County Council to consider the effect the closure of the school will have on the education of the pupils and the local community.

The case has been put forward that the closure is based on the failure of the leadership and governance of the school culminating in the inability to provide a conducive environment to provide good quality education for the pupils. It was also stated that the roll of the school is too low to be able to sustain a viable future.

We put a case together in our report entitled 'Case Against Closure' which was distributed to all those involved in the decision making process regarding closure of the school.

This report 'The Way Forward' is our response to the sets of questions that were given to us at the meeting held between the Parents Committee and the Norfolk County Council.

We have asserted that Federation is the best option for the William Marshall School in the long run but that the current Partnership with the help of the new volunteers who are ready to help at the school should improve the situation at the school and the relationship between the school and Upwell School,

We intend to start a pre-school in collaboration with or independent of an existing pre-school in a neighbouring village and encourage villagers who have taken their children elsewhere to bring the children back to the village.

There are various developments planned for the village that will introduce new families to the village thereby hopefully increasing the number of primary school age children within the Schools catchments area.

We have plans and procedure in place to ensure the governors get all the help they need, that the teachers have all the support required and that the children get the good education they deserve.

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IMPROVE THE GOVERNANCE OF THE SCHOOL

The partnership with Upwell School has been in place for ten years, has it been successful in bringing about improvement?

There has been some improvements but not as much improvements as had been hoped for. At a meeting held with some of the governors of Upwell school, it was intimated that Federation with Upwell although is desirable but cannot take place for now as Upwell, as a school, needs to resolve a few pressing issues. So for now we can only carry on as Partners until such a time as Federation can occur.

The head teacher of Upwell school has indicated his willingness to continue as a visiting headteacher at William Marshall School and promise to do all he can, especially working together with the new potential governors, to bring about the change required to turn William Marshall School into a good school.

There is an ex-headteacher who now resides in the village and willing to help at the school to fill in the gap. The current visiting head teacher is going to have a meeting with the lady to explore how her skills, ability and availability can be utilised at William Marshall School

Can the school afford its own headteacher?

The short answer is no. The current head teacher of Upwell has indicated that he is happy to carry on as a visiting head teacher and is enthusiastic about the future development at the William Marshall School Welney based on the interest shown in the school by the villagers and the offer of help that is being made to help.

Where might governors find leadership support?

There various avenues open to Governors to get help in Leadership. One of the major ones is an initiative set up by Norfolk County Council to endeavour to help governors in an effort to turn Norfolk schools from 'Needing Improvement' to either 'Good' or preferably 'Excellent'.

This initiative termed 'Norfolk to Good and Great' (N2GG) aims to provide extra funding and a framework to support 'focussed on improving leadership, provision and outcomes'.

This initiative is targeted mainly at schools assessed as requiring improvements or to be at risk. The main focus is the support that Norfolk System Leaders can provide to other Schools.

Governors can also consider cluster based working involving school improvement partners. This has been proven to help in rural primary schools to positively enhancing the leadership of the school by offering 'effective professional development and mutual pastoral support'.

The Dioces can also offer leadership support if, when and required.

Coupled with this is the 'high quality support' which is now available from within the community at Welney.

Federation is two/three/four-way solution agreed by governors for mutual benefit. What might William Marshall bring to the federation?

William Marshall School Welney can provide new visions, energy and enthusiasm by the drive and skills on offer from those who are willing to become Governors and others who are willing to offer their services in other ways..

The School building which is owned by the William Marshall Trust and is made available to be used as a school free of charge.

Villagers and parents who are prepared to help in the school to help run support activities including homework clubs and after school clubs, PTA (Parent Teachers Association), fund raising events and other activities that might be necessary to keep the school on an even keel.

Children of William Marshall School who are eager to learn and who deserve to be provided with an environment suitable to help in their learning and development.

What advantages might there be in joining the Diocesan MAT?

It would have been advantageous to be able to join DEMAT but as far as the Diocese of Ely is concerned William Marshal Trust is currently too small a school to be considered for DEMAT inclusion. The School or Federation of Schools need to have some degree of self-sustaining in order to be considered. This might be given more credence in the future if and when William Marshal School is part of a Federation of other smaller schools.

Previous requests to come forward as governors have been ignored. What guarantees are there that the offers to join the governing body will materialise? Do the volunteers understand the role of governors? Do they understand the need for a relentless drive for school improvement?

Previous requests have not been explicit enough as villagers were not aware of the dire situation caused by the lack of leadership and enough governors in the school. This was because the governors did not want to cause panic amongst the parents.

The furore caused by the consultation on closing the school has 'woken up' the villagers to the need to be involved in the running of the school and the necessity to jointly and severally 'own' the problems at the school as a vital community asset of the village.

To this end, we now have a deluge of villagers (see appendix 1) with varying background, experiences, skillsets and qualification who are extremely keen to become governors and to help in any way necessary to improve the leadership, help in raising the standard of education at the school and enhance the image of the school.

From our research and information freely available online and in various documentations we have complete understanding of the role of governors which, though not exclusively, are as follows:

We are aware that, in the main, the role of the governors are “to contribute to the work of the governing body in ensuring high standards of achievement for all children and young people in the school by setting the school’s vision, ethos and strategic direction, holding the head teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils and overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent”.

We are also aware of the other activities required of the governors in terms of contributing to the strategic discussions on the vision and ethos of the school, ensuring broad and balanced curriculum, managing the school budget (including the pupil premium allocation), staffing structure and policies and help in setting the principles to be used by school leaders to set other school policies.

We have an understanding of the requirements for governors to hold the senior leader of the school to account by monitoring the schools performance by agreeing outcomes from evaluations and use this to form the priorities in the schools developmental plan.

We know that all relevant available data and feedback on all aspect of school performance need to be considered carefully in order to get a view of the progress the school is making.

We are prepared to ask challenging questions of school leaders in order to ensure that policies and procedures have been developed to ensure that the school is operating effectively and ensuring that these finding are publicised to all stakeholders including pupils, parents, staff, and the wider community, including the Diocese, the County and local parish council..

We are ready to help in ensuring that “staff have the resources and support they require to do their job well, including the necessary expertise on business management, external advice where necessary, effective appraisal and CPD, and suitable premises, and that the way in which these resources are used has impact”

We are comfortable, when necessary, in being involved in the appointment of the headteacher and other senior members of staff, be involved in the setting of headteachers pay and agree the pay recommendations for other staff, be part of the second stage of staff grievance and disciplinary matters and hear appeals about pupil exclusions.

What the new crop of potential governors have in abundance, apart from the enthusiasm and various skillsets, is time.

We have the time to devote to getting to know the school, by occasional non-intrusive visits in order to ‘gain a good understanding of the school’s strengths and weaknesses’. We have time to attend relevant regular trainings and development events. Time to attend meetings. We have time to do all that is necessary for us to act in the best interest of all the pupils of the school

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INCREASE THE ROLL

William Marshall School does serve its community – but there are only 31 children living in the catchment area. What guarantees are there that families will move into the village? Or that they will send their children to WM?

The renovation on the empty houses in Chestnut Avenue, mentioned in our original submission 'Case Against Closure', are about to be completed and new tenants moved in. These are family dwellings and we envisage there will be eight children moving into four houses. Renovations on four more houses are going to be completed soon and potentially another eight children will be moving in. Planning permission has also been granted to build three new family homes in the village. These, again, we expect can bring in at least three more children to the village. When we start the pre-school facilities we hope that we will be able to encourage families to move into the village and to eventually send their children to William Marshall School.

There is also a plan by 'Elgoods' to start development on a row of houses at the Riverside by the Parish Council village Hall. This is a development of about 6 family homes.

We cannot guarantee that families will move into the village, but if we can help to enhance the leadership and governance of the school, improve the educational standard of the pupils and promote the virtues and ethos of the school, we hope to be able to encourage families to move into the village because of the 'good' school we have in the village.

One thing we can be almost certainly guarantee is that if the school is closed we do not think that any family with children will move into the village.

Pre-School facilities must be self-financing. What is the evidence pre-school facilities are needed. Who will undertake to provide them?

There are currently about six children in the village attending pre-school facilities outside of the village. Having spoken to the families of the children involved we have been told that they would use a pre-school facility if one is set up in the village.

We are in conversation with pre-school facility providers in a neighbouring village to see if they are interested in opening one in the village in collaboration with the William Marshall School Parents committee. This is in the discussion stage and we would know of the outcome in the near future. If the collaboration efforts fail, members of the William Marshall Parents group and other resident of the village are willing, able and have the resources (human, time, qualifications, experience and finance) to set up a self-financing pre-school facility.

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STANDARDS

How will you ensure that evidence of pupil achievement is measured against a wider external base?

Continue doing what the school currently does by comparing the pupil's achievements to those at partner and cluster schools and comparing them to National averages.

How will you inject challenge into the school and into classrooms and raise the expectations of staff, children and parents?

Children will be challenged by setting targets and rewarding successes. Encouraging parents to take an active role in the education of their children by arranging necessary review meetings with them to give regular feedbacks on the progress being made by the children and to plan and agree potential remedial actions necessary to improve the education levels of the children.

We intend to change the perception of Norfolk being an area of low expectation by bringing best practice in the enhancement of educational aspirations of parents for their children into William Marshall School.

We will re-introduce a Parents Teachers Association and through this organise after school clubs and homework clubs in order to provide needed supplementary and remedial classes to pupils who have hitherto not had any help available at home.

How will you demonstrate the impact of people premium?

People Premium Intervention is designed to ensure that funding to tackle disadvantage reaches the pupils who need it most. The background of children is no longer acceptable as a reason for lack of achievement.

We would, without compromising the anonymity of the children, follow the new framework for school to monitor how well gaps are narrowing between the performance of different groups of pupils in the school and compared to all pupils nationally, how well pupils make progress relative to their starting points and the extent to which well-judged teaching strategies, including setting challenging tasks matched to pupils' learning needs, successfully engage all pupils in their learning

How will you ensure that staff engage with professional development and become less isolated from other educational establishments?

We will encourage staff to work closely with Norfolk County Council and the Norfolk Integrated Education Advisory Service (NIEAS). This will ensure they get the professional Development they need and they will by attending necessary training courses be able to continuously develop their skill, get

the chance to meet with their peer groups, form crucial networking links and collaborate and work in partnership with others.

How will you monitor the consistency of the good teaching in the school?

Monitoring should always be seen as an essential part of the leadership and management of a school. The headteacher's role is to ensure that the standards the children achieve are as high as possible, that the progress of all pupils is monitored, that the school provides a good quality of education and that the improvement of the school is the aim of all stakeholders within the school.

In order to achieve this the headteacher, supported by the Governors, will establish a systematic procedure that will inform the management and the leadership of the school about levels in standards and achievements, consistency, strengths, weaknesses and overall effectiveness of the quality of education provided. The extent to which the school is on track to achieving its academic objectives, the progress being made on any school improvement plans, the quality of teaching, learning and the impact of Continuous Professional Developments (CPD) should also be monitored.

This will need to be done via various information gathering exercises including analysing headteacher and other staff reports, scrutinising children's works, observing children's learning, talking to children, observing teaching, analysing planning/range of assessment data. Also analysing responses to questionnaires and having discussions with parents and the local community. Then comparing these to levels attained by peer school.

Although not exhaustive, this will help in the process of monitoring the consistency of good teaching in the school

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FIND WAYS OF PROVIDING VALUE FOR MONEY

What is the Role of the Trust

The history of William Marshall, the biggest benefactor to Welney is well documented elsewhere. The William Marshall Charity was set up over 340 years ago. The Trustees of the Charity decided to set up a school for the children in Welney about 200years ago. The Current school, with a few modifications and modernisation, is the result.

There are two William Marshall Charities in Welney. The Charity of William Marshall which provides support to the locals and local organisations within the Parish of Welney and The William Marshall Educational Foundation whose brief includes financial assistance to education in the local school.

The building that the School is housed in is provided on a peppercorn rent to the Local Authority and can only be used as an educational establishment.

The Charity also provided funds to the school, as necessary, for refurbishments and provision of required facilities like the library.

The Board of Trustee of the Charity has pledged its continuous support of the school now and in the near future in terms of the use of the premises and in the provision of financial and other assistance as required.

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SUMMARY

We believe William Marshall School Welney is not just a school, it is currently the heart of the community. The closure of the school will almost certainly drive a nail in the coffin of Welney as a village to live for families and as a ghost town for those that chose to remain living in the village.

We envisage an exodus of parents from the village if this closure goes ahead and devastation to the community of Welney.

The Welney community at large were not aware of the dire situation at the school. We are now and as one, from the Parish Council to all the organisations, the parents, governors, teachers and pupils stand shoulder to shoulder to say that we do not want the school to close and that we will ALL work together to bring about the necessary change required to turn the school into a good school.

Give us the chance to do so.

The William Marshall School Mission Statements states that:

“At William Marshall Church of England VC Primary School we endeavour to promote Christian values, encouraging all pupils to reach their potential academically, socially and spiritually”

Let us give the children the environment and the opportunity to achieve these aims.

There is a poignant statement on the school website that says as follows:

CHILDREN LEARN WHAT THEY LIVE

If a child lives with criticism - He learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility - He learns to fight.

If a child lives with ridicule - He learns to be sly.

If a child lives with shame - He learns to feel guilty.

If a child lives with encouragement - He learns confidence.

If a child lives with praise - He learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with fairness - He learns justice.

If a child lives with security - He learns to have faith.

If a child lives with approval - He learns to like himself.

If a child lives with acceptance and friendship - He learns to find love in the world.

Let us as adults not introduce criticism of their school. Stop showing hostility to their cause. Let us desist from pouring ridicule at their school and therefore bringing shame to them.

Let us give them encouragement, praise their achievements, treat them with fairness, praise their efforts, show approval for their endeavours, give approval to keep their school open and let us provide a safe a secure environment for them to learn in.

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APPENDIX 1

Potential Governors and other Volunteers

Following are the short bios of potential governors and list of other volunteers

Tracey Sandford

DipHE/BA Hons Youth and Community work. 11 years with Suffolk County Council as a youth worker, including running Alternative Education Programmes with local schools. 4 years with Essex County Council as part of the Children's Trust, piloting the Common Assessment Framework and Multi-agency networking.. LA approved foster carer

Christie Webb

I have a degree in Business Management and Level 3 NVQ in Team Leadership I have worked as a Business Manager, dealing with HR and accounts, in both the public and private sector for 10 years. I have volunteered with children at my local riding school, running lessons and summer camps and also volunteered with Cambridgeshire Scouts.'

Steven Ashworth

Recently retired Police Detective with last 8 years experience in Child Protection & Safeguarding. Responsible for monitoring the safeguarding of children at risk on the Child protection Plan in London Boroughs of Haringey, Brent, Islington/Camden. Also responsible for investigations against professionals in conjunction with the LADO. Guest lecturer in Safeguarding for Royal College of Pediatricians, University College Hospital, Royal Free Hospital and others.

Sheree Edmunds

Level 3 qualified pre-school teachers

Lanre Bombata

Semi-retired Business and IT/IS consultant. Degree Qualified in Engineering, Masters Degree in IT and also in Business and Management. Worked within the private and public sectors in various management roles for several years. Within the last 10 years has, at various times, been a University lecturer, lecturer in higher education colleges and more pertinently been involved in remedial and supplementary classes for key stage 2 pupils either after school, at Saturday classes or privately at home. A Welney Parish councillor and member of the Board of Trustees of William Marshall Trust.

Graham Rainbird - Welney Parish Councillor, Member of the William Marshall Board of Trustees

Ray Gilbert - Welney Parish Councillor

Brendan Morgan , Carole Lowry, Aimee Lawrence and an ex Head teacher