

Dear Alison

Thank you very much for your email, the consideration given to the plan, The way Forward and the attached commentary written by Mary Jane Edwards.

.We have read the professional commentary and felt that we need to provide further clarification in order to ensure that a full picture of our aims, objectives and progress made so far is made clear so that this can be taken into consideration when it is used as part of the evidence which will help to inform the Director of Children's Services before she makes a decision upon whether or not to publish a formal proposal.

We are glad that the school will remain open in September but we need to make you aware that the fact the only assurance given was that it will only be open for one term has created fear, uncertainty and doubt amongst parents.

Following are our comments to your response to 'The Way Forward'

- **Page 2 confirms that William Marshall will not be entering into a federative partnership with Upwell Primary or any other potential partner at present.**

This is not due to lack of trying. We know that being in a Federative partnership with Upwell or any other potential partner is the way forward but there are barriers to partnership being put in our way by the self-interest issues associated with federation.

William Marshall School has a lot to offer in terms of Partnership (school building, keen potential governors and pupils whose education attainments need to be addressed etc,) but potential partners tend to concentrate on the negatives like having another site to worry about and sharing of resources.

There is no incentive for them to federate if the alternative is to just assimilate the pupils into their own school anyway which will increase the number on their roll and hence make them less vulnerable. Of course they also get the funding per child. They are in a win-win situation and have no reason to federate.

In our humble opinion, as concerned parents and villagers, the County Council should look at the extenuating circumstances especially in the case of a rural school and occasionally take the lead in prescribing federation rather than leaving it to the potential partner to decide.

- **The report accepts that the school cannot afford its own head teacher and that the arrangement with Upwell could cease at any time**

The arrangement is in place and nowhere in our report did we say that it could cease anytime. As a matter of fact we wrote that the head teacher is enthusiastic about the future development of the school based on the interest shown by the parents and villagers

- **On Page 3 the report acknowledges that the school is 'too small' to join the Diocesan MAT on its own**

This was what we were told when we had a meeting with representatives from the Diocese of Ely. We are ready to join if we are allowed to. Another barrier of entry.

- **Page 2 mentions an ‘ex head teacher’ who lives in the village and could ‘help out’ however there is no clear indication of how this would work in practice, and the individual is not named.**

It was unfortunate that the individual was away on holidays at the time and hence we could not get the full name. Her full name is Jennie Head.

We wrote that she was an ex-head teacher because we did not realise that the ‘head’ following her first name is her surname. She is not an ex head teacher. This was our mistake and we are sorry. But she was a senior member of the teaching staff when she used to teach.

She has had a meeting with the head teacher who considers her very knowledgeable and believes that she would be an asset to the school and can help with the educational leadership needed at the school.

Jennie is ready to work with the head teacher and other staff members to fulfil any senior role required of her to take the school forward. She is free to devote her time to the school up to three days a week.

- **On Page 3, it is clear that much of what is being proposed rests on those who are ‘willing to lend a hand’ rather than a clear strategic plan for the school’s long term sustainability to provide high quality education**

Those that are ‘willing to lend a hand’ are part of and parcel of the strategic plan for the school’s long term future. These people are there for the long haul. It is obvious that the school does not have the necessary resources to help in improving the educational standard.

These people who are ‘willing to lend a hand’ are professionals and are not different to any other external ‘consultants’ or helpers that the school might have brought in to help as necessary. Except that being part of the village they are willing to donate their time. Being unpaid does not necessarily equate to not being committed.

Those willing to lend a hand know the importance of the commitments required to ensure the viability, future existence and the improvement in the standard of education at the school.

- **Those indicating that they would serve as governors may individually have the skills necessary but it appears that none has previous experience as a governor.**

The County Council website welcomes all interested people who would like to be governors. Previous experience is not indicated as a pre-requisite.

We are aware that the composition of the Governing body specifies various levels of Governors (Partnership, Parent, Foundation, Co-opted, Foundation, Staff, Trust, Associate and Additional).

We are of the opinion that the governors selected by the County Council and possibly the Diocese and Staff will be experienced governors and we will only be providing governors, who are prepared to be trained, to fill other governorship roles. (See enclosed list).

We have also spoken to current governors and are quite happy to work with those who, with their experience, are prepared to carry on as governors.

We are definitely not suggesting that all the governors in the school should be inexperienced ones.

- **Page 3 gives the details of places that governors can go to for support but these are already in place and have not been used effectively to date**

The new governors will definitely use these support effectively and hopefully encourage the existing governors to do so.

- **The document makes an assumption that 'Norfolk to Good and Great' will provide 'extra funding' for the school. This is incorrect as the school has to pay to join**

The document did not make an assumption the 'Norfolk to Good and Great' will provide 'extra funding' for the school.

We are aware that the school will be charged to participate but we also know that 'NCC will provide additional resources to partly fund a programme where school support is at the heart'.

- **On Page 6 in relation to standards, the report comments that the school should 'continue to do what it currently does' indicating a lack of understanding that the school 'requires improvement' and has not been 'good' since it was inspected in 2000.**

This is in response to *'How will you ensure that evidence of pupil achievement is measured against a wider external base?'* not to a question on how we will improve the educational achievements.

The way to measure achievement is to do what the school and all other schools do currently by comparing the pupils' achievements to those at partner and cluster school and comparing them to National averages as stated in our response.

We do understand that the school requires improvement and the response to improving the educational standard is indicated in the answer to the second question on page 6.

We know and are addressing the challenge the school faces of a long term sustainable solution which will secure strong leadership and rapid improvement.

To this effect we have secured that services of and experienced senior teacher and a teaching assistance to help in the school starting from September. We have a group of experienced and dedicated villagers who are ready to start the afters school and supplementary classes to help with improving the educational standard. We have other members of the group who are going to start fund raising events for the school. We have also set up a Parents teachers Association. We are in dialogue with a company with a view to setting up pre-school facilities within the village.

We have diligently taken into account the requirements of NCC and worked hard to find solutions to all potential problems.

This is a long term project and we are sure NCC understands that we need to be given time to implement all the plans we have in order to prove that we can deliver.

We are extremely passionate, just like the NCC, about providing good education for our children. The difference of opinion is where.

We believe we can contribute to enhancing the leadership and governance of William Marshall School, help in providing additional resources and thereby becoming catalysts in rising the school's educational standard to good.

We await your report to the Head of Children's Services and ultimately the NCC's decision on the future of William Marshall School.

We implore you to give us the chance to turn the school's fortunes around and to keep it open.

Regards