



**Crossfield Avenue Cowes
Isle of Wight PO31 8HB**

Telephone 01983 203103
Facsimile 01983 203133
E-mail mail@coweshigh.org.uk
Internet www.coweshigh.org.uk

Headteacher David A Snashall
Associate Headteacher Dave Goodhead

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Keith Simmonds
Assistant Director and
Project Management Director for Schools Reorganisation
Schools Reorganisation Office
Isle of Wight Council
County Hall
High Street
Newport
Isle of Wight
PO30 1UD



Dear Keith

On the evening of Tuesday 14 July there was a specially convened meeting of the Governing Body of Coves High School to discuss the Coves Pathfinder Partnership (CPP) and Academies Enterprise Trust (AET) bids. Due to the absence of governors who participated in forming the bids and therefore declared an interest, the meeting was not quorate, so no vote was taken and no recommendation could be made.

However, members acknowledged that the vision of the pathfinder which is the policy of the Governing Body was embedded in the CPP bid whilst the AET bid specifically excludes the pathfinder approach.

After lengthy discussion, no preference for either bid emerged, and governors noted that both bids have the same basic aim to provide the best education for Coves High School pupils.

They have asked me to write to you with the following concerns/comments:

- If an academy is the selected solution we may lose the money awarded to the Pathfinder for building a new school, and funds may be raised by a PFI initiative
- The AET bid incorporates evidence of success in individual schools, but they do not have experience of running five schools in the same cluster
- If AET win the bid they may make changes which undermine the success (e.g. one year curriculum) that CHS innovation has secured.
- There is a need for pupils to have the smoothest possible transition to the new system which changing direction may effect adversely.
- There needs to be a balance of types of school across the Island to ensure that:
 - * By having a mix of suppliers (academy, trust) one school does not become stronger than the others.
 - * If we adopt one supplier for all five high schools and their approach fails all schools fail.
- CPP bid is a new concept whereas AET is tried and tested
- AET have little understanding of Island life and culture
- AET will impose a formula, while CPP involves innovation and continuing change.

- AET claim they can make a 6% improvement in GCSE 5 A*- C including English and Maths, but have not given a time frame for continued improvement. Is this for one year, two years or more? CHS is predicting a 9% improvement this year
- We are unsure of how AET plan to involve parents via "due diligence"
- Community use of the facilities is highly desirable, but will have running costs as will an extended day. We are not clear how this will be funded.
- We heard at the presentation on Monday that once a bidder is successful the local authority will work with that bidder to tailor the proposal. Will there be a mechanism for the Governing body to make input to this process?
- The Governors feel there is value in having an upper and lower school system and wonder why AET ruled this out.
- Both bids were supported by beneficial partners, and those supporting CPP were present and stated their full support and commitment to the bid. We hope AET partners are equally committed.
- Since the meeting two governors have asked me to point out that "we are well aware that improvements in education and schools requires strong and thoughtful leadership. Such leadership is not evident within the bid from the CPP team."

We would appreciate any clarification you can give us to enable us to fully assess both bids before the closing date for consultation.

Regards


Rhona Trodd
Vice Chairman

Cc All members of Cowes High School's Governing Body