

ARC MEETING 01 December 2010

NOTE: Owing to weather conditions attendance at this meeting was less than normal. Hence it was deemed not to be a *formal* meeting. However, it was agreed that a note should be taken of proceedings as a further contribution to the overall Amalgamation discussion.

Present: Frankie Berry, Liam O' Dwyer, Regina O' Connell, Mark O' Leary, Liz Mc Lafferty, Loretta Wynne, Catherine Troy, & Miriam Mc Nally and Judith King

Apologies: Laura Behan, Shirley Wolverson, Paula Keenan, Janet O' Shaughnessy, Brenda Egan, Barry Glennon and Declan Keane, (Parents representatives), John O' Brien, (INTO), Maire Collins (ASTI) and Catherine Keogh (IMPACT)

Both Principals had some feedback from staff regarding their views on the proposed amalgamation. Staff in St. Joseph's had a formal discussion at a recent meeting and they recorded a number of questions, the answers to which, they believe, will influence their capacity to support the proposed amalgamation more fully. These include:

1. How much has the process of amalgamation cost to date and why has no decision been reached?
2. How many job losses will there realistically be? Particularly given the current economic climate?
3. In comparison to the Deaf Village Project why does education seem to be further down CIDP's list of priorities?
4. Why does the Education Model work on a possible set of pupil numbers instead of the actual number?
5. Why is co-education a fait accompli?
6. Sean Herlihy in his Presentation at the 'Future of Deaf Education' Conference stated that Deaf Students learn best visually. Can CIDP guarantee interactive white boards for all classrooms as an urgent priority?
7. Why split the schools? We would prefer them to be located on the same campus? The students in the Primary School regard the Post Primary boys as role models and for this reason it is imperative that they remain together.
8. Will staff be given an option to work in another school if the amalgamated schools were deemed to be overstaffed?
9. Will SNAs be involved in a similar straw poll to that recently involving teaching staff?
10. How much disturbance money will staff be entitled to if they move school? (Staff present at the meeting recall staff having to do much of the physical labour of recent moves themselves!)

St. Mary's Staff are supportive of the idea of amalgamation but believe they can only truly offer their support ***if the facilities are at least as good*** as currently and if there are no job losses. They resent the

impression sometimes given that any resistance on their part is just because 'People don't like change', for they have embraced very significant changes many times. Their bottom-line question is: '*Why should we co-operate with a worsening of our conditions*'? Given the economic climate and the core funding budget cuts, staff are more sceptical than ever that any additional resources will be made available for the proposed amalgamation from the Department. For some staff in both schools the response to CIDP is: 'Proceed with the Village Project development and leave the schools alone until the economic climate is more favourable'.

Liam assured representatives present that CIDP had no intention of proceeding with an amalgamation that would lead to a worsening of conditions. He said it would only be implemented if it were guaranteed to lead to an *enhancement* of conditions.

In response representatives suggested that CIDP therefore demonstrate how they will supply the necessary funding to create an enhanced educational environment for all, should the Department decide not to grant funding. Those at the meeting believe that such a demonstration would enable more staff to come to a positive position as regards the amalgamation.

There are only two funding options, Liam responded; either the Department come up with the grants or CIDP sell some of its land. Either way a building programme will bring an inevitable level of disruption to both schools.

All agreed that at the Staff Forum that it would be important to point out and emphasise the positives both of the process to date and the amalgamation proposal overall. For example considerable movement has been made on the location options discussion and on the staff numbers situation.

Straw Poll:

Following the decision at the recent Steering Group meeting a straw poll of teaching staff preferences was carried out in both schools. The results are as follows:

- 2 Staff are interested in being put on the Panel
- 2 are interested in a redundancy package
- 2 will be retiring anyway.

All other Staff wish to remain involved in the education of Deaf Children and Young People.

These numbers mean that the Education Model proposal could now indicate a more negotiable level of staffing.

SNA positions

The SNA representative was concerned about potential job losses among the SNAs. Currently there are 8 SNAs in St. Mary's and 13 in St. Joseph's. Would there be an enhanced retirement package on offer to SNA's ? They wondered. Those at the meeting believed that the best and perhaps only way to negotiate

in regards to SNAs was in relation to pupils' needs. It was acknowledged that there is no panel system for SNAs.

STAFF FORUM

Those present then proceeded to work through the details regarding the staff forum. As regards whether or not it should proceed at all, given the unusual weather conditions, it was agreed that the 2 Principals would consult with one another on the following day and make a decision by noon. (This was done and the Forum postponed to a date yet to be decided in early 2011).

Schedule and Process

The Proposed schedule was then worked on and there was agreement to change a number of the details – the overall time allocation; the individual sessions; the focus of a number of the discussions. For example given the discussion above it was agreed that perhaps a useful focus question for the group work might be: What would make a difference in the amalgamation decision for you?

We then worked on the staff lists, made notes about the groups, (including those who could not be present on the day as they were involved in other training), and agreed about the lunch and break format and time.

The main Presentation drafted by Liam had been sent to the two Principals for approval and would be finalised this afternoon. It was agreed to omit a lengthy review of how the process got to this stage, so reducing the number of slides in the initial part of the Presentation.

Given that there has been some ethos discussion in both schools it was agreed that a verbal summary of that work from one of the Staff would act as a stimulus for the group discussion on Ethos.

Registration

CIDP Staff will be available to assist with the registration.

NEXT MEETINGS

1. Steering Committee – **January 20th 9.15-11.15** Venue: St. Mary's school
2. ARC full group – **February 2nd 10.00a.m. to 12 Noon** Venue: St. Joseph's school