

Notes of the 3rd Meeting of the Amalgamation Review Committee Monday 30th March 2009

Attendance: Liam O'Dwyer, Regina O'Connell, Val Quinn, Janet O'Shaughnessy, Miriam McNally, Mark O'Leary, Catherine Troy, Loretta Wynn, Frankie Berry, Brenda Egan, Paula Keenan, Nora Duggan, Maura Buckley, Declan Keane, Barry Glennon and Eoin O'Mahony.

Apologies: Laura Behan, Shirley Wolverson and Jason Maguire.

Notes of the February Meeting

The notes from the February meeting had been circulated in advance and were deemed accurate.

Approval of Agenda

Agenda as circulated was approved.

Report from Eoin O'Mahony

Eoin O'Mahony had prepared a draft report and circulated it to the Committee in advance of the meeting, at the meeting he gave a powerpoint presentation on the findings of his report on the possible amalgamation of St. Mary's School for Deaf Girls and St. Joseph's School for Deaf Boys.

Feedback from the Committee

Following Eoin's presentation, the questions and points raised by the committee were:

- Was the response received in the survey equally representative of both schools?
Eoin had not analysed the survey on that basis so did not know.
- Regarding section 3 of the report, it was felt more quantitative data was needed. There was disquiet from staff with regard to prospective discipline problems, and maybe less focus on academics. The Committee would like a better view from the staff who should now be surveyed on the same basis as the parents.
Eoin agreed to do this.
- It was felt that the response to the parent's questionnaire and the method of asking staff and teachers was very random and generated a very small sample.
Eoin responded saying that the response rate from the parental survey was good and that the method of interviewing staff while random was normal practice for such qualitative research.
- Senior Cycle amalgamation might be more problematic. Would amalgamation result in a change of teachers during cycle?
Liam responded that the decision would be made by Principals and Teachers, together with CIDP. This would be in the future, but any amalgamation would attempt to generate as little disruption as possible.
- Concern about location of amalgamated schools. This was never raised in the report. People did speak about it, but no direct question about location was asked. Members of the committee felt this was a key question and would like to see a direct question about location included in the survey with staff.
Liam felt that this was really a matter for discussion after the decision about the amalgamation was made.

Eoin said that the issue would be raised in the new staff survey.

- Overall feeling that not enough consultation with staff had taken place.
- People concerned about jobs.
- In-depth discussions with both staffs to take place if amalgamation is to go ahead.
- Some clarification needed on the comment in the report that amalgamating the Primary schools should be a priority. It was felt by the Committee that everything should happen together – this needs clarification.

Eoin agreed this would be reflected in the report.

- By parents not responding to the Parental questionnaire, would this indicate that they were leaving the decisions to the school?

Eoin didn't think so.

- Concerns about tradition and history in both schools. Committee worried about ethos, standards – not wanting to lose the good things we have already. Really important that knowledge and resources available in both schools are tracked. It was agreed that there should be forums between both schools set up if amalgamation is to go ahead.
- Location not about marking territory. School for the Deaf within the village – some think it's good, some think it's not. Both views expressed, but the majority want the education facilities kept separate to the village, want it to be seen as other schools, i.e. not behind high walls.
- Because of the concerns and mixed feelings of the committee, it was suggested there would be no problem delaying the report by a few months. It was decided a staff survey was to be carried out and analyzed and included as part of the report and presented at the next meeting.

AOB

Draft staff questionnaire to be distributed, Wednesday 22nd April, returned Friday 1st May, analyzed by 6th May and included as part of the report which will be presented again at the next meeting.

Date of next meeting.

Monday the 18th of May 2009

Venue: St. Mary's Play Hall at 2.00pm