



*The*  
**CHATHAM & CLARENDON**  
**GRAMMAR SCHOOL**  
*Federation*

**NEWSLETTER: February 2011**

***Bad News on Budgets***

I am very sorry to have to report gloomy news about the financial outlook for the Federation, however it will help parents to understand some of the difficult decisions which we are having to take. To recap, since 2009 the federated schools have had to “downsize” from 8 forms of entry [f.e.] (2 x 4 forms of entry), aiming towards stability at a combined total of 6 forms of entry. This contraction reflected falling rolls working through primary schools into secondaries, currently affecting all the schools in our part of East Kent. In our case it was exacerbated by the BSF-driven strategic political decision to contract the federated schools to 6 f.e. in order to squeeze them onto the Chatham site, and the previous decline in recruitment for Clarendon until this year. The overall impact of a 25% reduction in student numbers and therefore the schools’ income, equates to a cut of over £1 million in our joint budget by 2016-17. The additional income from Academy status since January is a very welcome and vital buffer but it is becoming clear that it will also be reduced in successive years.

Last week the YPLA, the government agency which controls funding for schools and academies, confirmed a further drastic cut for secondary schools which have sixth forms. From next year the amount 11-18 schools receive for sixth form students will start to be reduced down, and reach the level which is given to F.E. Colleges by 2014-15. In our case that will mean a cut of approximately £2,000 per learner over the next 3-4 years. As our joint Sixth Form is the largest in East Kent – with 520 CCVI students (& post-16 numbers are estimated to go up by 2.1% over the next three years), the cut is very significant. The bottom line is that we will have around £1 million less to run the Sixth Form curriculum by 2014-15. Added to the downsizing cuts mentioned earlier this will mean having to manage a whopping **£2 million** reduction in our basic budget over the next 5 years. Staffing represents the biggest element of expenditure in any school (about 75% of our costs), however we were on target to manage the “downsizing” without redundancies through normal staff turnover and not replacing colleagues as they leave. Now, with confirmation of the further cut of £1 million in our sixth form funding over the same timeframe, we will be in the same position as most other local secondary schools who are already being forced to have a programme of (phased) redundancies. Despite these cuts we will make every effort to protect the curriculum and maintain the highest standards of teaching & learning. It will, however, require us to work in different ways, for example phasing-in an approach to Sixth Form work more akin to that of universities and colleges – with lectures supplemented by seminars and tutorials, and a greater expectation of independent learning from the students themselves. It will be very difficult to maintain the same very wide range of subjects that we presently offer.

***The Baccalaureate – Decision to Defer***

In these very difficult circumstances, I hope parents and students will understand why we have reluctantly decided that we cannot now afford to switch our Sixth Form curriculum from A Levels to the (more expensive) Baccalaureate curriculum from Sept 2012. The start-up training and resources costs of a full IB/IBCC programme are expensive, and the operational costs of a full range of Baccalaureate courses, where students take 6 rather than 4 subjects, are costly. It was comfortably affordable based on current sixth form per learner funding, but it is not when that money is cut by 40%. This will put significant pressure on all schools which presently offer/would like to offer the IB, so there will be pressure from Heads’ Associations on the DfE to reverse the cuts to sixth form funding, however that might be a much more difficult ‘U-turn’ for the government to perform than reversing their plan to sell off bits of forest.

We will continue with the Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (MYP), which is cost-neutral, from Year 7 right through until everyone in Key Stage 3 & 4 has completed it, in the hope that by then (2015-16) the financial situation will, at least, have stabilised and a strong Bacc ethos will have been established in the main school. In this we are in step with government policy, which is now that all schools results should be measured by grouping certain GCSE subjects under an “English Baccalaureate” umbrella.

The decision to defer bringing in the IB Diploma & IBCC here is a blow to all supporters of the breadth and internationalism which are so strongly associated with the International Baccalaureate. I am a big fan of IB and *very* disappointed not to be able to bring it to the Federation – but my main responsibility is to make sure the schools don’t go into deficit precisely so that the children can receive the best possible teaching. All schools which offer the IB in some form will be facing very challenging times, and it might be that if the goodwill and trust is there, collaborative partnerships between Sixth Forms is the pragmatic way to offer IB in the future. Meantime we will concentrate our efforts in ensuring that the highest possible standards are achieved in the A Level & Vocational curriculum.

### ***Finding a positive way forward***

Assailed by all this gloomy financial news it is more important than ever to chart a positive way forward. Although I know some do share this vision, I passionately believe that determination to make the Federation work as a genuinely equal partnership will secure the quality of education for the boys and girls, now and for the future. The familiar saying “united we stand, divided we fall” seems very appropriate at this point in the schools’ history. In the medium term-long term, the *only* way for Chatham & Clarendon to get through these financial pressures is by working, whole-heartedly, as one cohesive institution. And we must not lose sight of the positives in our situation – BSF may have been cancelled but we have some fine buildings, full of character, and it really wouldn’t take £30 million to make them fully fit for 21<sup>st</sup> purpose. Now that BSF has been cancelled, we aren’t driven to squeeze everyone onto the Chatham site, we can use all the Chatham & Clarendon buildings, giving us the space to cope with bigger numbers. Now that we have Academy status, we are no longer trapped in the same constraints about a particular level of student intake. True, there is a real drop in the secondary age student population (KCC figures show a 1.3% fall in secondary numbers in Thanet over the next 3 years), and therefore fewer potential students from which to recruit. Nevertheless the Chatham-Clarendon ‘brand’ is strong, and can get back to a sustainable intake of at least 6 forms of entry, perhaps 7, over the next few years. That will of course, depend entirely on enough parents of students who are deemed selective, deciding to choose the Federation for their sons and daughters. We must work hard to highlight the benefits of our unique “best of both worlds” ethos, and to maintain high standards of behaviour and achievement. A parent at one of the recent “FQT” suggested that offering single-sex teaching at KS3 and in the core GCSE, yet running mixed groups in the option subjects was in some way dishonest, ‘it’s just a sop, you are just telling parents what you think they wanted to hear’. I stand by my reply: “No, it’s a serious effort to give parents what they want”. Right now and for the foreseeable future that is clearly to maintain a significant proportion of single-sex teaching. Of course no-one could guarantee we can afford to do this forever but we are sincere in our determination to offer it for as long as it *can* be afforded. It can be made to work and work well – the staff team at Chatham & Clarendon have the talent and the commitment to their students’ welfare and progress, they are the enduring strength of the Federation schools.

### ***The Learning Environment ~ is BSF coming back??!!***

With such serious pressure on the budgets, we have to work closer together and share sites in order to deliver the curriculum. Preparations for the “Urban Campus” reorganisation are well in hand and will be ready by September. We will provide additional changing facilities for the Y7-9 girls & boys at Chatham House, upgrade the toilets, add a Food Tech room and adapt outdoor courts for girls’ PE/Games too. At the Clarendon site the main thrust will be to clear the playground of the mobile classrooms, freeing the space for outdoor recreational/PE use, upgrade ICT, Tech and toilet facilities, so that we meet the needs of the Y10-11 boys and girls who will be based there. Even without additional capital grant from central government we have enough ‘Academy money’ to cover these relatively modest refurbishments.

Parents and students will have heard that KCC, and four other local authorities, recently won a court action against the Secretary of State cancellation of BSF Wave 4, albeit on a technicality. The High Court ruling states that Mr Gove is now obliged to reconsider each school's individual case with an open mind, but also "*the final decision on any school project still rests with him. He may save all, some, a few, or none. No one should gain false hope from this decision.*" Given Mr Gove's public criticism of the waste and unsuitability of how BSF schemes were being developed, and the state of the public finances, it seems very unlikely he will reinstate the original £30 million scheme to co-locate the Federation on the Chatham site. The best we can hope for is that a less grandiose, cheaper project, based on utilising both Chatham & Clarendon, might impress him as better value for money. We are already working on such a BSF-Lite scheme and will be ready to submit it as soon as we are invited to do so.

### ***The Great Uniform debate ~ dressing to impress***

To make sharing the Urban Campus work properly, to have a genuinely equal and shared ethos for the boys and the girls, to reassure prospective parents that we really are committed to and delivering a cohesive co-ed environment, we are introducing a unified approach to all our systems. The Code of Conduct, rules, behaviour management, rewards and sanctions, student support, assessment & reporting, and so on are all being brought into one common federal approach. For this to succeed it is vital that the boys and girls consider themselves to be equal partners in a shared institution, not 'visitors' in each other's territory. Consequently the Trust Board (governors) have approved using some of the new Academy 'start-up' grant to implement a unified Chatham & Clarendon look, taking the opportunity to improve both the uniform and *how* it is worn...

This change will NOT put parents to extra expense – following the usual 3 quotes rules the Federation is negotiating a best-value bulk order. To be ready in time for September final decisions on colour and style need to be made by early March. Depending on the outcome of our negotiations about value for money, the unique badge-ed uniform items will be provided free, either directly via the school or obtained through the usual local retail outlets using a voucher exchange scheme. In both cases a fitting service will be included, almost certainly in July, so that everyone is happy that their new uniform is the right size. In requesting quotes from various suppliers we have also taken into account the obvious practical considerations such as quality of finish, durability and ease of care. The new style skirt for girls (be it bottle green or black) will be in the 'panel drop-waist' style to be worn with the hem at a suitably modest number of inches above the knee! The girls will still be permitted to wear black trousers, and they will not be required to wear a school tie, as at present. There will, however, be new House ties for the boys, in designs incorporating their choice for Federation House colours.

Changes to PE kit, We are also developing a unified Federation 'look' in the shared colours of green, white and black, however this will be phased-in with the new Y7's starting this Sept, and current students will be able to carry on wearing their existing PE/Games kit. Although we are not in a position to provide a free set of the new style PE kit for all students, the Federation *will* provide the games kit for the students in our teams who are representing CCGS in competitive matches.

At the first parents "FQT" for parents of students in Y9 & 10, though only attended by 60 sets of parents, strong views were expressed by a few of those present, particularly that the proposed Upper School version for students in Y10 & 11, predominantly black, looked too different from the traditional green blazer look. It would be fair to report that discussion of this item generated more heat than light, and compared to the bigger issues surrounding merger like budget pressures on staffing and the curriculum, it seemed somewhat disproportionate. At the second FQT evening, aimed at parents of students in Y7 & 8, also attended by about 60 families, the various changes to uniform were much better received and generated no controversy.

The sample uniform designs we showed on both evenings were developed based on ideas suggested by the students, and so we are giving the decisive vote to the students. As one

young man observed trenchantly to his mother - “after all, we are the ones who have to wear it!”, and whatever emerges with majority support from them we want all students to wear it well and with pride. Nevertheless we *have* responded to suggestions from parents at the “FQT”s who wanted their views about uniform colour/style taken into account by adding a variation with more green in it as one of the options from which the students will choose (ie retaining a green skirt for girls, having a green v-neck pullover, having a green fitted jacket for Years 10 & 11). The samples have been modelled to all students in assemblies and through the School Council their reflections and suggestions have been gathered. We will be inviting all students in Years 7 to 10 to complete their own individual response by completing a uniform ‘Survey Monkey’ during the first week after half-term.

### ***The Road to Merger? Have YOUR say .....***

Regular readers will recall that first we wrote to all parents/carers last year (May 2010) to explain why we were requesting official permission from KCC to open a consultation process on seeking full formal legal merger of Chatham and Clarendon. In the turmoil which followed the general election, and the impact of cuts on local authority, this seems to have slipped from the radar at County Hall, and we decided to defer pursuing the matter until after Academy conversion and our longer-term financial position was made clear. Now that we can see the extent of those financial pressure, and have evidence that prospective Year 7 parents are attracted by the “best of both worlds” vision for Chatham & Clarendon, it is time to put a formal application before the government. The YPLA advise that the process has five steps:- (1) we submit a business case to the YPLA, passed on to the DfE, to justify why we believe the change is necessary. It is not mandatory to include an initial survey of parents’ and students views in the business case, but is considered good practice, so that’s what we will do. (2) The Secretary of State then considers this business case and decides whether to give permission for a formal public consultation; or not, he could just stop it at that point if he thinks the business case is unconvincing. (3) If it goes further, the formal public consultation would then encompass not only existing parents/carers and students, but also parent/carers of children in primary schools from Reception to Year 6. Wider community stakeholders – such as the other secondary schools, would also have to be consulted. (4) The Academy Trust Board (governors) are then obliged to reflect on the outcomes of this consultation and decide whether to continue with the request to merge. (5) If so the matter, including a full report on the consultation outcomes, then goes to the Secretary of State for his final and binding decision. The YPLA advise that the overall timeframe suggests Sept 2012 would be the earliest realistic start date for a formal merger.

### ***Key elements of our Business Case ...***

**\*\* ‘Negative reasons’.** Falling rolls & financial pressures – despite extra money from Academy status, we will still face a massive cut in funding across both schools of about £2 million by 2016, as a result of smaller year groups in the main school and a 40% cut to Sixth Form funding (explained in more detail elsewhere in this newsletter). With fewer students, less money and therefore cuts to staffing levels, neither school can afford to continue separately, because it could not afford to maintain enough staff, it would inevitably shrink the curriculum that each could offer, cutting the range of subjects and choice, and in turn lead to a fall in standards.

**\*\* ‘Positive reasons’.** Stronger & safer together than apart, able to achieve economies of scale, sharing one bigger joint budget, sharing teaching, running economical mixed groups at GCSE, which will protect the curriculum, and extend the range of extra-curricular & enrichment activities open to boys & girls, in turn helping to raise standards. Reorganising as “schools within a school”, based on a unified House system, and strong Sixth Form leadership - build on shared values and a common ethos of respect.

**\*\* ‘Pragmatic reasons’ – the Learning Environment.** After the cancellation of BSF, we have no choice but to make the most of all existing buildings for benefit of boys & girls, and give equal access to the facilities, it is the only way to access the more limited funds available to improve the learning environment. Maximise the advantages of being in the heart of the community, extend local partnerships.

**\*\* Longer-term viability and wider local impact.** A larger, strong, flourishing co-ed institution, operating in cost-efficient ways, and working in partnership with other local schools to help raise standards, is more likely to secure the future of selective education in our part of South Thanet & the wider community we serve.

As promised, we now want to invite your initial views on the idea of a formal merger, and add that to the business case which will be submitted in March. As with the Academy consultation in the autumn, we will use the online questionnaire system known as “Survey Monkey”. How to access it:- [www.surveymonkey.com/s/mergeranduniform](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/mergeranduniform) Parents are invited to **complete this by 7<sup>th</sup> March**. Alternatively you can send in a letter or email giving your views on this issue. The response is invited, one vote per household, from parents/carers with a child/children at the Federation who are currently in Years 7-11 and would therefore be directly affected by the proposed changes. The students in the relevant year groups will be asked to complete their individual survey responses in school during the week after half-term.

*Please note (1) This survey is not the formal, final or binding vote on merger, just an initial indicator of attitudes included in our business case; and (2) any nil returns to this survey will be taken to mean that those potential respondents who do not reply have no particular worries or concerns about the submission of a Business Case for Merger at this time.*

### **Summary of questions for Parents/Carers in the online ‘Survey Monkey’ questionnaire concerning proposals to ask the DfE for permission to consult on a future merger**

#### ***Q 1. (about you):-***

I am a parent/carer of a Federation student/students currently in Years 7-11 (identify year group & school).

**Q2** : Do you understand why the Federation Trust Board & Leadership team believe that the formal merger of Chatham & Clarendon is both necessary and beneficial? Yes or No?

**Q3**: Do you agree that the formal merger of Chatham & Clarendon is both necessary and beneficial? Yes or No?

**Q4**: Do you support the submission of a business case for merger to the Secretary of State, and consequent full public consultation Yes or No?

**Q5. (Free comment box).** Please add any comments you want to make, for or against, the proposal to request permission to consult on merging the Federation partner schools.-