



The
CHATHAM & CLARENDON
GRAMMAR SCHOOL
Federation

www.cgrammarschool.co.uk

Chair of Directors: *Mr C Panteli* Chief Executive: *Mr D J Smart*

Federation Sports Night – Wednesday 20th July

Dear Charlotte, Hanna & India (& everyone at Clarendon who signed your petition),

Thank you for your letter and the attached petition: a serious effort which deserves a serious response. Your concern for the school does you credit, and although I don't agree with some of the observations you have made, you have presented your case very well.

I won't go over, again, all the reasons why the Federation was formed in 2008 – if anyone still doubts that it is to protect and improve selective education in Ramsgate then only events will prove who is right about that. The generation of students who are coming through the Federation from now on, who never experienced it as two entirely separate schools, will find the whole experience less worrying than those who have been used to that separation. Of course eventually everyone will get used to it, but in the meantime there is bound to be a degree of anxiety - I understand that, and we will do everything we can to reassure students and to sort out the things which cause concern. What I do know, however, is that the Federation won't succeed if it is approached half-heartedly; it cannot be a genuine partnership of equals unless there is some give and take on "both sides". The starting point is to accept the need for a fresh start, that the Academy is not going to be Uber-Chatham House or Greater-Clarendon, but something new, based on the best from both schools. It simply isn't possible to retain everything which was separately different about the two schools when, as an Academy, the students are sharing facilities, teaching, resources and opportunities.

You are right to point out the need for compromise. Compromise is when each of the partner schools contributes something to the collective fresh start, and each gives up something - it isn't always going to be possible to create something new by simply morphing 50% of something-Chatham with 50% of something-Clarendon. Just as some Clarendon students seem to think that they are being "taken over" by Chatham, there also probably as many boys who feel that it is actually the other way around, that "their school is being taken over by Clarendon"! Both of those (opposing) points of view are understandable – and both are misplaced. It may not be obvious to everyone but taken overall, the compromises which underpin the Federation are evenly balanced . Here are ten specific examples

1 ** The organisation of all pastoral care in a House system (rather than the traditional Year groups previously used at Chatham House) applies the Clarendon approach to the whole Academy.

2 ** In 'twinning' the Houses, this deliberately balances and equalises the existing girls Houses with the boys' senior Houses, however the boys also 'lose' their traditional junior Houses, again applying a Clarendon approach to the whole Academy.

3 ** The system of rules, rewards & punishments for the boys & the girls, "The Behaviour Pyramid" , applies the Clarendon approach to the whole Academy

Chatham House Site ~ Vice Principal: Dr P N Birchley

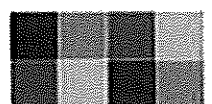
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Clarendon House Site ~ Vice Principal: Mrs D J Liddicoat

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ACADEMIES

4 ** In the new Academy uniform, replacing the Y10-11 boys green blazers with the black fitted jackets, applies the Clarendon approach of treating older students differently, to boys as well as girls

5 ** The informal nature of the Junior (Y7-10) Prize Giving applies the Clarendon approach, whilst only for the Senior (Y11-13) Prize Giving event are we retaining a more formal approach, closer to what has traditionally happened at Chatham House.

6 ** The joint Carol Service, held last year at St Georges Church so that all the boys and girls could attend, again adopted a regular event from the Clarendon calendar.

7 ** The curriculum – an obvious example would be the investment in a new ‘state of the art’ Food Tech room at the Chatham site, so that boys can enjoy a subject that was previously restricted just to the girls, applying a Clarendon approach. And also in Technology, through access to the facilities at Chatham, the girls can have more involvement with the resistant materials/electronics aspects of Technology. Drama - a subject popular at Clarendon is being introduced to the Year 7 - 9 curriculum for boys as well as the girls. The girls have already benefited from direct access to the outdoor PE/Sport facilities on the Chatham site without having to waste lesson time going up to the Sports Centre or taking a coach up to Newington Field – this will be extended under the Urban Campus arrangement.

8 ** Extra curricular activities. Both partner schools have offered successful trips, events and activities separately, from now on these will be open to boys & girls equally, to the benefit of everyone.

9 ** There is a balance in leadership and management positions held across the Academy – senior managers, Heads of House, Heads of Department and so on, so that staff from Chatham and Clarendon are equally represented.

10 ** The single replacement group for the two previously separate parents associations starting in September will be a new ‘Friends of the Federation’, based on the existing Clarendon PTA.

So returning to Sports Night itself. Some of the reservations expressed in your petition seem to be based on never having experienced Sports Night – the boys will tell you that it is about both serious competition and fun, it’s intended to be an enjoyable occasion, which should include the girls just as much as the boys. If the girls approach Sports Night with an open mind and get involved as much as they always have in Sports Day, they will enjoy it just as much as before. To me it seems a pity that we cannot be positive about the approach taken in one partner school, without that automatically being seen as a criticism of the other. There was no ‘implication’ in the letter, just a statement of fact: Sports Night *has* been a very successful approach used by Chatham over the years – helping to popularise the subject, strengthening the ethos which helps us to recruit students to the school in the first place. Sport/PE is a big part of what makes the Academy unique and reinforces our positive reputation. We can no more carry on having separate different Sports Days/Nights, than Britain could be represented at the Olympics by two completely gender-segregated teams. There’s only one team, the British Olympic team, and in future whenever Federation students compete in sporting events on behalf of the Academy they will wear the same badge.

Why hold it in the evening? Sports Night attracts considerable support from parents who are able to attend precisely because it is held in the evening rather than the working day. Why hold it at the Chatham House site? As a venue, the Chatham House playing field is not only more attractive and accessible than the Newington Field, in effect it is also the Academy’s playing field, and as far as possible it is where our Sports & PE events *should* be held. Won’t it disturb the usual pattern of the school day? Yes this is a change which “interrupts” the usual

routine of lessons - just as a conventional Sports Day would, just as Focus Days do, however all students do not have to travel home and back for the evening. The school will be open for anyone who wants to stay and do their homework here during the afternoon session, and no-one will be punished for being unable to do their homework because they are participating in Sports Night, either as a competitor or a spectator.

To be fair there are aspects of the way Sports Night has been organised this year which will also be a break with tradition for the boys: sharing the evening on the Chatham House site, sequencing the events to give equal prominence to boys & girls races, and it is also the first year a truly joint Sixth Form can participate. As another example we want all the students, boys & girls, and their parents to be vocal in their support for everyone taking part. So to encourage friendly competition, we invite the cheerleaders to support their twinned Houses, cheering as loudly for the boys as for the girls. I dare say some traditionalists won't like that either, but I see it as a potential unifying factor and something which enhances the fun of the occasion.

An aspect of the Sports Night approach has been a licensed bar, traditionally called "The Pimms Tent", alongside the BBQ, operated by the parents association for visiting parents, selling a range of soft drinks too – helping to raise money for the school. It is not in any way paid for or subsidised from the Academy budget, so there is no question of "wasting school/government money on a bar". In all the years it has been running there have never been any problems associated with it – any more than serving wine at the Clarendon Prize Givings, or the Art Exhibitions, or the School Productions, or PTA Quiz Nights, or the Carol Concerts, has ever caused a problem. Adults, be they parents or teachers, are very aware of their situation in attending a school event: that they are role models for children, that some will have to drive home afterwards - and even though it is (intentionally) a social occasion, of course they will act responsibly. It is interesting that some of you seem to assume, without any evidence, that they will not! Incidentally, on the subject of social responsibility and healthy lifestyles (i) there will be an extensive salad bar along with the usual ingredients we expect at a barbecue – including veggie-burgers!, and (ii) if you want an ice cream van to be present that can be arranged.

In conclusion I have taken your petition seriously and attempted a detailed, serious reply. As with any of the federal changes being introduced we will review Sports Night after the event and see if there are any ways in which it can be improved. Meantime I look forward to next Wednesday evening and hope it will be a successful event which does live up to the high standards set by previous years. It is far more likely to be a success, to be a fun evening if everyone, boys and girls, gives it their wholehearted support.

David Smart
CEO & Principal
The Chatham & Clarendon Grammar School Federation