



The source for news of the progress and planning for the 'rebuilding' of the two schools

Chatham House & Clarendon House Federation Newsletter



July 2009

When Are The Bulldozers Coming? BSF Update



Readers may recall that in the last newsletter I advised there has been a delay in getting on with the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) project for the Federation schools, due to turbulence in the economic situation.

Happily the 'big picture' procurement and commissioning problems are being resolved, and initial planning meetings with the Kent "Wave 4" BSF team have resumed. A series of intensive BSF-Federation design workshops timed to begin again in September, will get into the detailed planning of the new facilities we will need on the Chatham House site when the two schools are co-located. These dates are still tentative, but the best forecasts are that serious construction work cannot now start until 2011, and that a realistic opening date for the finished scheme will be during 2013 rather than September 2012. Whilst the delay is frustrating, there is an upside: we now have more time to agree the basic design and refine the plans, and finalise the best arrangements to cover the temporary evacuation of the boys from the Chatham site during the construction phase (more on this in the next article).

So, to recap some BSF basics and provide an update so that everyone is in the picture...

** The completed buildings will cater for 900 students Years 7-11, consisting of 3 forms of entry (boys, Chatham House) plus 3 forms of entry (girls, Clarendon House), plus a joint mixed Sixth Form of approximately 500+ students. When the current variable size year groups have worked their way through the two schools, the Federation will stabilise at around 1450 students, Years 7-13, on roll, on the Chatham House site.

** The buildings will be designed for integrated use by both Chatham House and Clarendon House students, avoiding needless and expensive duplication or contrived segregation (meaning there is no Berlin Wall dividing the boys and the girls sections!). It will be, quite literally, two schools sharing the same set of buildings: just one set of Science labs, shared by boys and girls, one set of Maths rooms, one Arts Suite, and so on. Boys and girls can (& will) still be taught separately at Key Stage 3, and for most subjects at Key Stage 4. There are, however, some GCSE options where mixed teaching is desirable and necessary (such as Drama, Music, Food Tech) and the buildings will be designed with that functionality in mind; the Sixth Form, as now, will be entirely mixed. The (shared) dining facilities will also look to the future, and include "internet café" spaces which are both social and which support individual independent learning.



** Acknowledging the size of our Sixth Form, KCC has confirmed that the Federation schools will be allowed to retain the Clarendon Arts Centre in perpetuity. We want to accommodate all the younger students on the one site, which makes it that much easier to manage ethos and maintain the highest standards of safety. So at this stage our intention is to adapt the Arts Centre building as a Sixth Form Study & Social Centre – although of course

the bulk of Year 12-Year 13 lessons will be in the new unified site at Chatham House. We value the way the senior students work with and provide positive role models for their younger peers, so Sixth Formers will be linked to the main school Houses and play a big part in the overall life of the school.

** The external architectural style of the additional new build will be sympathetic to that of the original Grade II listed buildings at Chatham House. It is a sensitive site which will certainly present engineering challenges for the architects and builders, however they believe the bulk of the additional new construction can be tucked away behind and linked to the old 3-4 storey building. Within that matching retro-18th C exterior we plan a thoroughly 21st C educational environment, with concourse, galleries, atriums & cloistered courtyard gardens, which will have the ‘wow factor’. A common entrance leading into the main concourse and on to the various Faculty subject areas – with a mix of conventional classrooms and lecture theatres, ultra modern labs, workshops & other specialised learning areas. Given the proud history of the two schools, the unique location in the heart of the community, the timeless appeal of the neo-classical frontage, and the real impact that

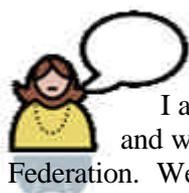


has on all who work here, we want to achieve something which is both fit for purpose and blends tradition with modernity, something which respects the past but also promotes innovation. This will be a challenge, particularly when some people would like to see a futuristic structure and others would prefer no change at all, however we are aiming to produce something which is much better than a mere compromise, a distinctive part of the community it serves and of which Thanet can be proud ~ Hogwarts with Attitude?!

** The project will also include significantly enhanced PE & Sport facilities – including a new Sports Hall, complete with dance studio and fitness suite, and a pavilion style viewing gallery looking out over the playing fields. Given the compact ‘footprint’ of the Chatham House site we envisage that this Hall will be specially equipped to be multi-purpose and thus also serve as a very large indoor venue for other events. Outside the facilities will be complemented with a full-size ‘astroturf pitch’ and other all-weather surfaces for PE and recreation.

** As a listed building of unusual shape on several levels, the main Chatham House building is not well-suited for teaching general mainstream subjects, however we are exploring how the quirky interior might be adapted to become a centre for the Arts subjects: Art, Drama Music. Imaginative reconfiguration of movement spaces and removal of some partition walls & internal corridors to open up cramped areas to let in more light and create bigger teaching & learning zones in the upper floors (the present Art rooms show how this can dramatically improve a learning environment even in a narrow building).

** To build on a successful tradition of competition and teamwork, and preserve the small school ethos of individual attention & care within a bigger institution, different areas of the enlarged new school will be designated as bases for the Houses. Each House to providing a ‘home’ for students Years 7 to Year 11 and linked to Sixth Form tutor groups.

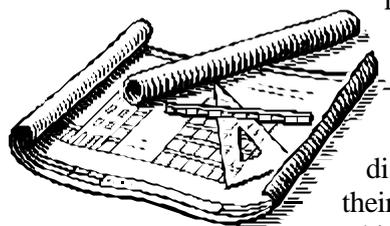


“And now the next question, from the lady at the back, yes - the lady in the orange dress” ...

I am sure that lots of students and parents are very interested in what is planned and will have questions, about BSF and indeed about many other aspects of the new Federation. We are going to arrange a “Federation Future Question Time” (FFQT for short!) event in the autumn term, loosely based on the BBC Question Time show. Exact date to be

decided - October/November - watch this space; probable venue could be the Clarendon Arts Centre building which has the biggest audience capacity. The event will be staged in a similar format to the BBC's Question Time, complete with roving radio mikes for questions in the audience, and the chance to put decision-makers on the spot. We expect the panel to include myself as the new Exec Head, Mr C Panteli Chair of Governors, the Heads of School for Chatham (Mr A Williamson) and Clarendon (Mrs R Coldwell), other members of the Federation Leadership Group and representatives from KCC and the local BSF team.

The main focus of the event will be to explain what is being planned for the redevelopment of the site under BSF, and the Project team will have cyber 'walk-throughs', plans and 3-D

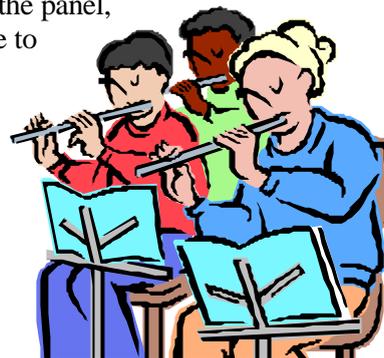


models to show what the new Federation campus will look like, inside and out. Naturally parents will want to know what is intended during the construction phase when the boys have to leave the Chatham House site. Apparently this is called 'de-canting' – and our objective will obviously be to minimise the disruption for the students – especially those who will be studying for their GCSEs and A Levels - and ensure continuity of learning & teaching during the construction phase, circa 2011-2013. The authorities

are supportive of a solution which avoids displacing them to a village of rented huts in a section of the field, blighting the PE/Sport curriculum in the process, and wasting precious BSF money which ought to be invested in the permanent buildings; other, more constructive avenues are being explored.

We also intend that "FFQT" is also a chance to talk about the broader changes which will result from Federation. What are the particular benefits of operating a federation rather than a full amalgamation? How will the distinct identities and traditions of the two separate schools be both respected and enhanced by bringing them together? How much of learning will be segregated, how much will be mixed, how much of the teaching will be shared? What is intended for the curriculum? How about the organisation of student care & support, the House system? How will it further improve standards of achievement, opportunity and choice?

It would be very helpful if we had an idea of the numbers who would like to attend ~ will one event be enough? Nearer the time, in the style of the BBC's Question Time, we will invite audience members to submit questions they would like to put to the panel, in advance as well as have an open-ended opportunity for anyone to raise a question from the floor on the evening. No pressure. Refreshments and entertainment will also be provided ~ it should be an evening which is both informative and enjoyable.



2009-2013: Convergence And All That

It is sensible for the two schools to begin working more closely together now, forging that partnership of equals sooner rather than wait until the schools are physically co-located in 2012/13. A new Federation Development Plan for 2009-10 sets out what we intend in detail, and will be posted on the schools' websites and hard copy available on request from September. Meantime a few snippets on the major strategic changes in the pipeline ...

** Working In The Same Way. To align admissions systems and achieve consistency in all other operational matters, we are seeking to switch Clarendon House to Foundation School status, which has worked very successfully at Chatham House for many years. From my discussions with senior officers at KCC, they have made it clear they are supportive of this change which is seen as a necessary step in making the Federation a success. A formal letter,

outlining the process and inviting comment, is on its way to all stakeholders who have an interest in the two schools' development.

** A Centre of Post-16 Excellence. A joint Federal Sixth is being phased-in from 2009-10 onwards. Although 'owned' by the Federation partner schools, this will be developed as one merged/amalgamated entity, recruiting students from Chatham, Clarendon and other schools in East Kent. We intend that it offers some of the benefits of a Sixth Form "College" whilst maintaining the traditions and strengths of a Sixth Form which is closely connected to the Federation schools. The Federal Sixth will have one admissions system, one options subject system, a common approach to pastoral support, advice & guidance, one consistent approach to monitoring the quality of learning & teaching, a unified programme of careers advice & help with university applications, etc. It will offer all its students the very best of teaching from both Chatham House and Clarendon House staff. We also want to encourage the students to integrate, so there will be one (business style) dress code, and they will be encouraged to devise joint representative groups, posts of responsibility and so on, and arrange joint social & cultural activities.

** Personalised Learning, Age not Stage. We have very many able students in the two schools who will respond well to being stretched – by which we mean pace & expectation in learning not a sinister medieval refinement to our discipline system. Our intention is to offer accelerated learning pathways through the school curriculum, from Year 7 to the Sixth Form. In practice this means covering the Key Stage 3 stage of the national curriculum in two years rather than three, offering earlier access to GCSE/Key Stage 4 courses; for older students Y10/11 upwards, access to a greater range of exam courses, earlier entry to GCSEs and indeed to A Levels where that is appropriate to their abilities and needs. For other students access to new Diploma Level 2/3 accredited courses in collaboration with our Thanet partners would perhaps be a better fit. For Sixth Formers this radical reform of the Federation curriculum will include access to foundation/entry level degree course modules, and perhaps the introduction of an International Baccalaureate pathway on to university. All exciting stuff and based on the concept that we are ambitious for our students and we want them to be ambitious for themselves – like the man in the USA said: Yes, We Can.

** Getting The Best of Both Worlds. Starting in 2009-10, students of all ages will start to notice more teaching by Chatham & Clarendon staff across both schools, more 'team-teaching' by staff from both schools, and more joint trips & activities - a trend which will grow over the next few years. Both schools have shining examples of best practice across a range of subjects and run an exciting range of cross/extra-curricular activities which really motivate and inspire the students – let's share that around so that as many boys and girls as possible can benefit.



** Maintaining a Grammar School Ethos : Admissions. The PAN (Planned Admission Number) for both schools is being reduced to 3 forms of entry in Year 7 each from Sept 2010, reflecting the falling rolls in some of our traditional feeder primaries and the broader demographic picture across Thanet. Inevitably the contraction of secondary school places is impacting on all schools in the area, including ourselves. In essence, Chatham House and Clarendon House could not continue as separate viable four form entry schools over the next decade: their budget and curriculum offer would come under serious pressure, with an adverse effect on choice and standards, and the very existence of one or other school would be under serious threat. Coming together now in a constructive partnership turns that negative into a positive, offering a secure bright future with plenty of scope for refreshing the educational experience we offer our students. By contrast for most of the next decade the

projected post-16 numbers are stronger, so for the foreseeable future a PAN for the Federal Sixth Form of 250 will be sustainable. Switching to Foundation Status for Clarendon will ensure that both schools can operate a consistent and fair admissions procedure, for instance with common admissions criteria, and Appeals Panels trained & operating in identical ways. The effect will be to help to ensure that students for whom a selective academic environment offers the most appropriate education are able to benefit from enrolment in the Federation schools.

And Finally

As we approach the end of term, the end of the school year and the glorious prospect of the long summer break, it is time to say goodbye and good luck to a number of colleagues who are leaving the Federation schools for pastures new elsewhere or to enjoy well-earned retirement....



From Chatham House:- Miss C Bolder (GTP in English), Mrs Y Gardner (SENCO), Mrs M Langworthy (Geography), Mr W Mbanga (PE & Sport), Miss L Owen, (GTP in Art), Mr G Smith (English), Mr I White (Science, Biology) and Dr C Wilson (Science).

From Clarendon House:- Mrs J Bennett (Headteacher), Mrs C Browne (Science, Biology), Mrs P Goward (Geography), Mrs S Hansford (Head's PA), Mr A Penrose (English), Ms S Poynter (Languages), Mr Sanchez Cuenca (Spanish), Mrs M Turner (Finance Officer).

On behalf of the students and staff I thank departing colleagues for everything they have done for the Federation schools, and wish them every success, good health and happiness for the future.

And of course let's not forget colleagues and students who will return in September - it has been an eventful year of hard work, fine achievement and some great memories: thank you all, and wherever you are going this summer, be sure to have a thoroughly restful and enjoyable break.

PSDon't forget: Back To School! Staff (training day) on Thursday 3rd Sept; new Year 7 & Year 13 students only (induction) on Friday 4th September; and everyone on Monday 7th September.

Mr D Smart
Executive Headteacher