



# The Federation of Ramsgate Grammar Schools



## Newsletter: June 2010

### ***New Academy Status?***

At their meeting on June 28<sup>th</sup> the Federation Governing Body will be considering whether to apply for the "New Academy Status". In simple terms this would mean opting out of KCC control, gaining more income (direct from the DfE) and freedom of action. It is not dissimilar to Grant Maintained status which many schools – including Chatham House – enjoyed before GM status was abolished by the last government in 1997. Although the New Academies Bill currently going through Parliament doesn't require a ballot of parents, we would like to sound out the views of parents/carers. Attached to this newsletter is an Academies Question & Answers paper, setting out pro's & con's ~ we invite parents/carers to read it & submit their views.

### ***BSF: Going, Going, Gone?***

Even before the change of government, BSF planning was subject to frustrating delays, partly because of the bureaucracy of the process, and in part because the project for the Federation was one of the most challenging. We had extensive and robust discussions with the LEP team of architects, builders & KCC officials about the design. We were determined that it had to be right for us, and in many ways a complete new build would have been better than the compromises forced by trying to squeeze everything onto the Chatham site. Our sticking points were (and remain):- no construction on the playing fields & astro-turf; provision of sufficient on-site hardcourt PE/recreational space for the boys & the girls; proper classrooms rather than open-plan "learning barns & plazas"; a full-size Sports Hall and a multi-purpose school Hall; and a design sympathetic to the listed building & the site. Suspending disbelief about whether in fact any BSF projects which have not yet started are going ahead, Design Workshop planning meetings are supposedly going to resume in July. If it transpires that everything we need can't be fitted on the Chatham House site we will press for a multi-site urban campus solution, with substantial improvement of the main Clarendon building too.

We have been told that the government has decided to postpone a final decision on approval for future BSF projects, including ours, until the autumn spending review. KCC have made the obvious points that cancellation would waste the significant amounts already spent on planning costs, and that it would harm the local economy. It would also disadvantage the schools which were due to be rebuilt in Wave 4 in comparison with neighbouring schools which have been rebuilt/refurbished in Wave 3. Nevertheless, given all the economic forecasts, it is difficult to shake the sinking feeling that the BSF programme will be cut and/or delayed or cancelled altogether. Recognising that this continued uncertainty is

making sensible planning impossible, and is unhelpful to morale, the governors are strongly supportive of plans to make the best of our existing set of buildings at Chatham & Clarendon, by using them in a radically different way: as one multi-site "urban campus".

### ***Other (Non-BSF) building works***

Using our own resources and non-BSF capital funds, we will continue the programme of gradual improvement to existing buildings so that boys and girls can make greater use of the Chatham & Clarendon House sites. In the main Chatham House building the Library has, at last, been completely re-roofed and the entrance/ground floor redecorated – a make-over which will be rolled out to other parts of the building.

The joint federal Sixth Form, formally merged as one entity from this September, is the jewel in our crown – in many ways it exemplifies what the two schools are all about: excellence in academic achievement and in personal development. Young people enabled and encouraged to be the best that they can be, young citizens to be proud of and who will go on to make a positive difference to their world. At present CCVI has over 600 students, roughly a third of whom join us from other schools in the area - those students deserve the best learning environment we can provide.

The scheme to convert the Cavendish Centre as the new base for our joint Sixth Form "CCVI" goes ahead this summer & Phase 1 will be complete in time for September. This new combined Study Centre/Common Room will provide an unrivalled specialist facility to support post-16 studies; Phase 2 will add a further specialist Baccalaureate Study Centre in readiness for the start of the IB Diploma & IBCC curriculum in 2012. Arts facilities which are being displaced from Cavendish will be relocated elsewhere in the urban campus, i.e. shifting practice rooms back into Clarendon main building so that peri instrumental music lessons can be more easily accessed there, and relocating the Music Technology (recording studio) facility within the Chatham House music zone.

### ***Functional Merger: Admissions***

Whether or not close collaborative working eventually leads to actual legal amalgamation (which will be subject to a formal process of consultation, not yet started) the Federation still needs to function as one institution. Falling rolls in some East Kent primary schools, and in our case the demands of a BSF project co-locating both schools on the Chatham House site, were the reasons for reducing our PAN (Planned Admission Number) this year. This meant the Federation schools are expected to contract from four forms of entry each, to six forms of entry between them. This is not a particular logistical issue at Clarendon which is again under-subscribed, but it has emerged as a real problem at Chatham, which was heavily over-subscribed. As the Admissions Appeal Panel recently upheld 10 requests for places at Chatham over the planned PAN of 90 (3 groups) we will have to run 4 forms of entry in Year 7 anyway! We have also learned that approximately 20 boys who had passed the 11+, in Ramsgate primary schools and whose parents put Chatham as their first choice, were allocated places elsewhere instead. This cannot be right and underpins our determination to change the PAN admissions arrangements for 2011 – to a mixed federal PAN of 180 places, boys & girls. This should enable all those students, boys and girls, who have passed the entrance

exam and who want to come to the Federation, to exercise that choice. With the assistance of a parent who has market research expertise we are also setting up a working party aimed at recruiting more girls to the Federation.

### ***Functional Merger: “The Urban Campus”***

The practical implications of fluctuations in the PAN and in student intake (& consequently in our budget), do pose serious challenges for the school. A 20% reduction in the student population over the next 5 years means the schools will lose over £1 million of their combined income. Running one Federation curriculum will be the only feasible way to ensure that boys and girls can access the best facilities, the best teaching, have genuine subject choice and can benefit from an even greater range of enrichment/extra-curricular opportunities.

Therefore, from Sept 2011, we are reorganising the Federation as a multi-site “urban campus”. The Chatham House site will be the base for “Lower School”, ie:- Years 7, 8 & 9, boys and girls. The Clarendon House site will be the base for “Upper School”, Years 10-11, boys and girls. The joint Sixth Form Centre will be in what is now Clarendon’s Arts Centre (the Cavendish building), though a significant amount of post-16 teaching will still take place on the Chatham site too.

We believe this arrangement will not only make the best use of the facilities but also maximise our ability to recruit and sustain a balanced intake of boys and girls. With the Chatham site (Lower School) as their shared home it offers a safe, secure and attractive site, with plenty of space and no inter-site movement for younger students. We hope this will encourage more parents of girls to choose the Federation for their daughters. We see real advantages in developing the Clarendon site as a shared Upper School, operating a slightly different and deliberately ‘senior’ ethos for Years 10, 11 & the Sixth Form, closely linked to progression into CCVI. The only specialist facilities they would need to move inter-site to access would be for Sport/PE – ie the playing fields at Chatham House & the local Sports Centre. CCVI students, based ‘in the middle’ at Cavendish Centre, would find some of their lessons timetabled on both sites, and we will adjust the pattern of the school day to build in some “movement time” for those who need it.

*Important Note:* Our ‘unique selling point’ will be that the Federation offers substantial single sex teaching within a co-ed institution. There will be **no** change to single-sex teaching at KS3 & most of Key Stage 4, at least for 2010-11 - and we want to uphold that position into the future for as long as it is affordable. For that to be sustainable we need sensible balanced admission numbers which generate cost-effective groups, or perhaps the significant additional funding which might come from taking on the grant-maintained New Academy status. Even so, where it makes sense to do so, in some KS4 GCSE options, mixed-teaching groups may be the best way to secure widest choice of subjects & student choice. For example from this September we are going to run some mixed-gender GCSE groups – in Spanish, and in Food Technology, so that all Federation students can have their preferred combination of subject choices.

### ***Functional Merger: One staff .....***

Increasingly, staff at Chatham & Clarendon will work across both sites – particularly with the joint Sixth Form CCVI. In practice it will become one staff, and to bring joint leadership across both schools at the level of senior and middle-management,

this term has seen a series of staff restructuring appointments, most of which will take effect from this September. The final round of interviews for new Heads of Federal House & some Subject Leader posts takes place next week. A complete list of Who's Who in the Federation will be published in the July newsletter however details of appointments so far are as follows:-

Head of School, Chatham House/Lower School site: Dr P Birchley  
Head of School, Clarendon House/Upper School site: Mrs D Liddicoat

Head of CCVI; Mr M Moody  
Deputy Head of CCVI: Mr C Lewis

Asst Headteacher i/c Careers, & Community Links: Mr F Fenner  
Asst Headteacher i/c E-Learning: Mr C McFarlane  
Asst Headteacher i/c Baccalaureate Programmes & Specialisms: Mr M Morley

Senior Tutor (Lower School/Chatham House site): Mrs J Bouaziz  
Senior Tutor (Upper School/Clarendon Site): Mr P Hughes

Professional Tutor (Teaching & Learning, Standards): Mr C Bowman  
Baccalaureate MYP Coordinator: Miss S Mattocks  
Baccalaureate IBCC Coordinator: Mrs S Andrews

Head of English Faculty: Mrs M Sutton-Jones  
Head of Maths & Computing Faculty: Mrs H Sutton  
Acting\* Head of Science Faculty (\* for 2010-11): Miss A Tippett  
Head of Languages Faculty & SL for Spanish: Mrs R Coldwell  
Head of PE & Sport Faculty: Mr C Goodwin  
Head of Arts Faculty & SL for Art: Mrs G Youle  
Head of Humanities Faculty & SL for Geography: Mr S Wilson-Queen  
Head of Social Science Faculty & SL for Sociology: Mrs D da Costa

SENCO: Mrs M Henderson  
Subject Leader for History: Mr D Potter  
Subject Leader for RE: Mr S Thomas  
Subject Leader for Technology: Mr T Brewin  
Communications Manager & Webmaster: Mr A Mair  
Primary Links Coordinator: Miss S Purland (formerly Holmes)  
Gifted & Talented Coordinator: Mr L Moore

### ***Functional Merger: Ethos ....***

The change from two autonomous schools with their familiar territorial allegiances and strict gender segregation, to an integrated co-ed institution spread over several sites, albeit all with easy walking distance, will require careful management. In particular to maintain and build upon the positive ethos which is a known strength of both schools. The federal House system will be central to strengthening the common ethos: shared values which promote the importance of respect and responsibility, encouragement of participation in school, building confidence and growing leadership qualities. In the year ahead staff will be working closely with the students themselves to decide what the new federal House system will look like, how it will be organised and how we ensure it blends the best of tradition from

both schools. It will be a House system where, even within a big collective institution, individual students are known, cared-for and supported. And we will use the House system to do what it does best: encouraging individual excellence *and* cooperation & teamwork within healthy competition. More Inter-House events where both boys & girls can cheer on their House, one federal Sports Night, one federal joint Production – which will be just as unifying and successful as the joint concerts.

Naturally it is understandable that some people would have preferred the schools to stay separate and segregated – it is familiar, it is what people signed-up for when they chose the schools for their sons & daughters. Generations of students have in turn become parents of students who have been similarly influenced by the Chatham House/ the Clarendon House experience. In adapting to a changed situation, the Federation schools have a real opportunity to move forward, improve what we offer our students, and secure the future of selective education in our community. As the Chatham & Clarendon Grammar School ~ CCGS, developing a new shared identity which is recognisably rooted in cherished traditions, we can blend the past with modernity, we *can* have “the best of both worlds”. It won’t be easy, but if we all approach this in a spirit of positive determination we will succeed.

### ***Other Staff News***

As we near the end of the school year, some staff will be anticipating 22<sup>nd</sup> July with decidedly mixed feelings. As ever there are colleagues who will be leaving the Federation – to enjoy well-earned retirement, a promotion in another school or a family elsewhere. The final newsletter of the year will include a full tribute to colleagues who are departing and pay particular tribute to some outstanding veteran servants of the schools. The strength of the Federation schools has always been the commitment of the staff and the good relationships with their pupils, so I am sure that the students will want to organise their own way of expressing their appreciation. Meantime here are their names:-

Chatham House ~ Mr A Williamson (Head of School), Mr C Harvey (English), Mr K Frost (Science), Mr P Bundy & Mr C Wildman (PE), Mr B Rothwell (ICT) Miss C Whyte (Music), Mr & Mrs Bishop (Library & Cover), Miss J Allibon (LSA - English). Clarendon House: Mr R Hume (History) Mrs S McMillan (Food Tech), Ms R Lapish (English), Ms I Bello (Science maternity cover), Miss N Walton (PE), Mrs J Webster (Maths maternity cover).

### ***Other News, some Dates for the Diary***

Federal Prize Giving events:-

“Junior Prize Giving” Years 7-8-9-10, Boys & Girls. The Winter Gardens, Margate on 15<sup>th</sup> July at 7pm. (Guest Speakers: Chris Panteli, Chair of Governors, and the Head Students of Chatham & Clarendon).

“Senior Prize Giving” Years 11-12-13, Boys & Girls, The Winter Gardens, Margate on 16 September. (Guest Speaker: Laura Sandys, MP for South Thanet)

### ***An Extra Week's Holiday in 2010-11***

The official term dates for 2010-11 were published some time ago, and as you know schools are expected to decide themselves where the 5 additional school closure dates - for 5 statutory Inset Days - are deployed. At the Federation for 2010-11 we have decided to follow the example of some other schools in the area, and aggregate the 5 Inset Days together – as one week. This will be the week 18-22 October, in effect extending the traditional autumn half-term break to two weeks. This breaks up the longest term without undue interruption to programmes of study: for instance the Spring Term (Terms 3 & 4), is already short and affected by modular exams, and of course the Summer Term (Terms 5& 6) is broken up by public exams. We are grateful that the overwhelming majority of parents/carers support the school by not taking their children out of school for holidays during termtime – it *is* much appreciated. We hope that this new approach to Inset Days will make it that much easier for parents to fit in a holiday during the school year without disruption to their children's education.

## **Grant Maintained New Academy status for the Chatham & Clarendon Grammar School Federation? *Some Questions & Answers***

### ***What are the benefits of/arguments for GM New Academy status?***

Will it change the basic nature of the Federation schools? No: the Federation would remain a selective grammar school partnership and we would not have to change their name to include the title "Academy". It is perhaps significant that a majority of the 162 grammar schools have already registered their interest in considering GM New Academy status (including over 20 grammar schools in Kent).

The GM New Academies will still be subject to external accountability processes, although for "Outstanding" schools Ofsted inspection will be replaced by a slimmed down 'health check'.

The GM New Academies will be funded at the same level as other maintained state schools plus their share of the central funding which local authorities spend on their behalf (anything up to 15% of a school's budget). Schools with a deficit of £100,000 won't be allowed to become GM New academies, schools in surplus will be allowed to carry that over.

The GM New Academy schools would be free of local authority control. Do the Federation schools have enough experience of managing their own affairs? Yes: Chatham was a GM school back in the early 90's and has been a Foundation School ever since, this year Clarendon also switched from a Community to a Foundation School. The Federation Finance team and the governors Resources Committee have extensive experience of managing devolved budgets: we recently gained the FMSiS standard again; we are certainly capable of managing a bigger budget with equal effectiveness.

How much does the local authority hold back/top-slice from schools budgets for central admin & specialist services? Nationally the figure is between 10-15%, however KCC hold back 8% at the centre – so for the Federation schools on our current combined budget of about £8 million that would represent approximately £640,000 per year. In a very recent paper KCC have suggested that in fact they would only 'give back' the equivalent of 1.5% to

schools which opt-out, barely £120,000 p.a. – a claim we are challenging via our local MP and the DfE.

What is the financial incentive for the Federation to become a GM New academy? If the Federation received that 8% amount restored to our budget direct from the DfE, or indeed less even £400,000- £500,000, it would make a critical difference to us in a number of areas. It would effectively guarantee the continuation of single-sex teaching at Key Stage 3 and in the core subjects at GCSE. It would keep class sizes at a level which maximise high quality teaching & learning, it would allow us to put more into key priorities like Gifted & Talented provision. It would provide sufficient funds to buy in the specialist services we actually need and use in our own schools, rather than subsidise those we don't. It would fund a big enough rolling operational contingency to cover all reasonable eventualities (such as replacing a failed boiler or a damaged roof).

With GM New Academy status, the Federation would own its land and buildings – bringing both freedoms and legal liabilities: the responsibility to maintain the fabric of the school and the freedom to capitalise on surplus assets we own. In the absence of a major BSF rebuild and refurbishment programme (please see article in the newsletter), we would need to finance improvements to the learning environment – by direct application for capital grants from central government, and by exploiting the potential of what we already have.

As a GM New Academy the Federation would have more control over admissions, and with that flexibility be better able to meet parental preference: accommodating the fluctuations in the numbers & balance of boys and girls who are deemed selective and whose parents/ carers choose the Federation for their children.

Although GM New Academies will be free to change the terms & conditions of for its new employees, there is no obligation to do so and existing terms & conditions of staff will be protected by the TUPE regulations in a transfer process which must involve consultation with the unions.

### ***What are the arguments against it?***

KCC are in an awkward position: not happy that the education authority section is deconstructed, yet as a conservative-controlled authority they recognise the GM New Academy programme is the major flagship education policy of Mr Cameron's government. The official response they circulated to Kent schools reflects their dilemma: "we believe that Kent, as an excellent authority, adds value to the school system and has a crucial role in championing children and young peoples' education and their families' interests and well-being. We continue to support diversity and new models of school organisation, increasing flexibility, freedoms and choice for schools. These complement all of our and our partners' efforts to raise standards and improve outcomes. We need to work together to ensure Kent remains at the forefront of progress, success and innovation".

The main national teachers unions have issued a joint statement urging school governors not to adopt Academy status for reasons which seem to be based on some experiences of the old "failing schools" fresh-start Academies set up by the previous government, rather than the GM New Academy model offered by the new government.

Their main worry is that because for GM New Academies, Trust Boards (Governing Bodies) become the employer rather than KCC with the freedom to set pay and conditions, the staff would be at risk of exploitation. The simple solution is that the Federation governors would only switch to GM New Academy status with the guarantee of retaining nationally agreed terms & conditions for all teaching & non-teaching staff.

Unions argue that opting-out to become GM New Academies will not reduce the bureaucratic burden & give schools greater freedom; after their experience of the last administration most headteachers and many teachers would probably disagree.

Unions argue that the local authority provides certain key services more economically – admissions, financial services: insurance, payroll & audit, school improvement, SEN, Ed Psyc & Ed Welfare support, health & safety and legal advice, etc. KCC's advisory service has already effectively disappeared, Academies can employ their own specialist student support staff, and schools have become astute at identifying best value services – which could be bought-in from the authority or from other providers.

The unions also argue that schools would be 'looked after' by their local authority if they got into difficulties, especially in the tough times ahead (for example a serious budget deficit and associated staff redundancies). In reality no local authority can afford to subsidise or write-off school deficits: any deficit would still have to be paid back (to the authority) by schools in that predicament, probably by top-slicing an even bigger proportion of their devolved budget. All school governing bodies are legally obliged not to run a deficit – local authority schools aren't insulated from the consequences of poor financial planning or wider economic pressures. There is no structural reason why a well-managed GM New Academy school would not be well-placed to remain solvent, self-sufficient and thrive.

Unions suggest that accessing funding for capital building schemes will be more difficult for GM New Academies than for local authority schools. Without labouring the point, our experience of the local authority-delivered BSF programme has been almost entirely negative, and in any event the government has made it clear that a different method of allocating school capital project funds will be used in future. The GM New Academies would still get Delegated Formula Capital Grant (though that might be cut for *all* schools in the autumn spending review).

Unions still view Academies as creeping privatisation, and worry about businesses getting control of public service organisations. Unlike the "failing school" fresh-start Academies, the GM-New Academies do not require business sponsors or any kind of external private investment or control; they will be a free state public service, funded directly from central government. Existing governing bodies can simply transfer across to become the equivalent Trust Board which governs a GM New Academy, they are not replaced with unelected corporate/business sponsors.

Unions suggest that opted-out schools would be less likely to work together collaboratively. In fact GM New Academies deemed "outstanding" will be expected to form partnerships to assist other schools in their area; the Federation already has a strong set of links with other schools in Thanet through its various specialisms.

The staff at Chatham & Clarendon are being consulted and their views will be relayed to the Federation Governors at their meeting. The Federation Leadership Group will propose that a guarantee to protect all Federation employees rights by adopting the national terms & conditions of employment, is a pre-condition for considering GM New Academy status.

### **What next?**

Schools deemed "Outstanding" by Ofsted are automatically 'pre-approved' although the Academies legislation going through Parliament does not require a parental ballot to establish such a change, we would like to give our parents/carers the opportunity to register their views.

The Federation Governing Body will be debating the issue at their meeting on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> June. If you have a view you wish to be relayed, for or against the option of switching to Grant Maintained Academy Status, please send it via either of the email addresses:-

[office@chathamhouse.kent.sch.uk](mailto:office@chathamhouse.kent.sch.uk) or [office@clarendonhouse.kent.sch.uk](mailto:office@clarendonhouse.kent.sch.uk)

or in writing to the Clerk to the Governors c/o Chatham House.