

## **Record of Online Public Meeting concerning the proposed amalgamation of Woodfield Community Primary School and Grove Road Community Primary School, Harrogate**

First public meeting held on 10 January 2022 at 6:30 PM using Microsoft Teams.

Present: County Councillor Patrick Mulligan (Executive Member for Education and Skills, NYCC), Chris Harrison, Interim Co-Headteacher, Grove Road School, Margaret Beagle, Chair of Governors, Grove Road School, Matthew Atkinson, Acting Executive Headteacher, Woodfield Primary School, Holly Whyte, Acting Headteacher, Woodfield Primary School, Janet Booth, Chair of Governors, Woodfield Primary School.

Amanda Newbold (Assistant Director, Education and Skills, NYCC) Andrew Dixon (Strategic Planning Manager, NYCC), John Lee, Matt George (Strategic Planning Team, NYCC).

Apologies: Chris Parkhouse, Headteacher, Grove Road School.

Approximately 32 people attended.

Janet Booth, Chair of Governors at Woodfield School, welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced representatives from the two schools.

Patrick Mulligan introduced himself as County Councillor for the Airedale division in Craven and Executive Member for Education and Skills. He regretted that the meeting could not take place face-to-face but the spread of Omicron was rapid and it would have been highly irresponsible to meet face-to-face at this time. This was a consultation event and a written note of the meeting would be made and submitted to the County Council's Executive as part of the decision-making process. To assist with this, the meeting would be recorded. The recording would then be discarded once the written note had been compiled.

Andrew Dixon and Chris Harrison provided a presentation which covered:

- Background to the proposal, including the Woodfield Ofsted inspection and the Directive Academy Order
- Pupil numbers and financial projections
- Amalgamation proposals for September 2022 and September 2023
- Benefits for all pupils
- What would happen to staff at Woodfield School?
- What happens now?

County Councillor Patrick Mulligan then opened the meeting to questions.

A parent of a child at Grove Road asked what will the leadership structure be across both sites, and with a move to a part-time Headship, how will that work to ensure continuity across both sites?

Chris Harrison replied that they are not moving to a part-time Headship but a co-Headship model and a large part of this was to give a broader scale of capacity across the two sites. He was full-time in school and would be taking active headship on Mondays and Tuesdays. He would mirror Mr Parkhouse and they were on the same page in terms of the direction of the school. They had a broad leadership team already at Grove Road which would work closely with Woodfield staff to grow leadership across the two sites. As they open the nursery on the Woodfield site, the nursery lead is already part of the senior leadership team,

and each phase leader is actively involved in the senior leadership team. Having cross pollination of staff across both sites would be critical in staff development and leadership. The school runs IRIS connect, an inter-school, inter-staff support network to support staff development. He can be based at one site and watch and coach staff teaching at the other site using the IRIS platform. It would be one school across the two sites with their team very carefully distributed across those two sites. They would grow new leaders as the school always has, to support the school as it grows and take on those challenges as they go.

A person asked on behalf of parents with children with SEN, especially autism, are Grove Road prepared to take on a large number of pupils with SEN and prepared to meet the needs of the autistic learners at Woodfield?

Chris Harrison replied that Grove Road already has a significant percentage of their children on the special needs register, just over 35%, and they have an intricate network of support in school including their targeted mainstream provision. They have some high quality expertise on site led by their Special Needs Co-ordinator and Assistant Headteacher. Having that full-time SENCO in place will be a key part in supporting children. Autism is a very common area where they have been supporting their special needs intake. They have the expertise in-house and the capacity in terms of supporting children. They are careful in the way that they allocate children's classes to make sure that the balance is right so that the support can be given as best they can. As for any child coming into school they would go through those processes and supporting and integrating the children in the best way that they could.

They would be very actively involving the staff from the two sites and making sure that the people who know those children best and know what support is working would be part of that process, making sure those children are helped and keeping parents and carers actively involved the whole time. They want the process to be smooth for families. If anybody has questions or wants to see what it might look like in practice, they are more than happy to set up visits for parents and carers to come across to Grove Road and see the provision, and to take people on tours around school and to talk about the provision that is in place.

Amanda Newbold asked if Mathew and Chris might talk about the transition plans, particularly for children and people with SEND - what the arrangements could be and what families might expect to see in preparing children should the proposal go ahead to move from Woodfield School to Grove Road?

Chris Harrison replied that families had free choice where their children go and it depends on what choices are made. They offer school tours and he would be happy to talk through their curriculum model. There would be a need to support children leaving Woodfield and coming to Grove Road and dialogue between the two sites would be critical, in meeting needs, particularly for the most vulnerable learners, and in making sure they are supported.

Mathew Atkinson supported this and added that they would be looking at transition activities throughout the summer if the proposal went ahead. He had met last week with Mr Parkhouse to discuss this and how they would support children. Children would come down to the Woodfield site and up to Grove Road as well. There would be handovers between key personnel in school, including class teachers, teaching assistants, and the Special Educational Needs co-ordinator.

Chris Harrison added that they can explore the use of the IRIS connect platform in terms of cross pollination of ideas and support within the staff teams towards the end of this academic year to make sure that everyone is on the same page before September comes. They want to be able to hit the ground running if it all goes ahead.

A parent of a child at Grove Road School with a younger child who would start reception in 2024 said that under the proposals, the younger child would go down to the Woodfield site, and she spoke about the potential problems of dropping off and picking up her children from two different sites. She would have to drop off earlier to allow her elder child to walk half an hour, who could get freezing cold and soaking wet. She didn't think that walking between the two sites is a viable option. She currently uses the after school club for one child. Is it going to be subsidised? If she chooses to put both children in this provision, will one have to walk to the other school for the after school club or will she have to pick up from two sites? It didn't seem like it was going to work and be a sensible option. Children would be absolutely freezing and there is going to have to be half an hour at either end of the day to allow for walking. It didn't seem feasible.

Chris Harrison replied that they are thinking carefully about how parents and carers are going to be able to manage across the two sites. Having staggered starting and finishing times would be part of that but also at Grove Road the children can start coming in from 8:40 in the morning into school even though the school day doesn't start until 9:00. These intervals of transition build time at the beginning and the end of the school day. They will very carefully plan out what works best at both sites involving the parents and carers and staff in those conversations about exactly what times work best.

He added that in terms of the wrap-around provision, the breakfast and after school clubs, they are going to continue to provide those free of charge for disadvantaged families with children receiving free school meals. For others it is a paid for provision but having the staggered start and end times and the broader pick up and drop off times will help. They will also have the walking bus in place dropping off at one site and then going across Skipton Road and across the Iron bridge (depending on which site it goes to and from) and that would mean dropping both children off at one site. He appreciated it can be a bit of a hike for little legs so they were also looking at opening up the back entrance of the Woodfield site to cut the walk down significantly. They were doing everything they could to minimise the impact on children having to move between two different sites.

The parent added that she did not have any sort of extra support so she would have to pay to put her children over two sites and have additional ferrying round between two sites picking up. She thought she was going to have to drop off earlier to allow for her elder child to walk to the school to allow that extra 30 minute walk. This meant getting both children up earlier to take them to school and she might as well just drive round Harrogate. It didn't seem like it would work in her opinion.

Chris Harrison added that the pupil premium fund is there so if children are entitled to free school meals then that can be part of the supportive process with the wrap around care.

The parent clarified that she was not entitled to anything.

Chris Harrison replied that it would probably be more likely that parents would drop off younger ones and have the walking bus for the older children because they would be able to walk more quickly. They go to the gardens across the road from Grove Road School on a regular basis and the trickiest part is getting across Skipton road but having a lollipop man on site makes that significantly easier. Having him as part of that process to make sure children cross safely will be paramount. They appreciated the input on these conversations and they will be actively involving families to make sure that whatever process is discussed and then put in place works.

Councillor Mulligan thanked the parent for the comments and said that the purpose of the consultation process is to identify issues such as these and he was sure that the school leadership would be having a good look at that these.

A parent of a child at Woodfield School asked if a parent from either school decides that they want their child to go elsewhere, what would be the provision to facilitate that, particularly for parents at Woodfield, who would have the most significant change in the short term?

They also asked, in the first and second years, most of the Woodfield site would be empty. Were there any proposals about what to do with this largely empty facility in the first couple of years? It would be very expensive to run.

Chris Harrison replied that in terms of children moving elsewhere, this would go through the usual school applications process. Mathew and the team at Woodfield would be happy to signpost schools and be part of that supportive process as would Grove Road. They had their application process online on their website. Every school would be happy to take a phone call and talk through the process for applying for a new place.

Andrew Dixon added that should this proposal go ahead, those parents with children at Woodfield would automatically transfer on to roll at Grove Road from September 22 but if parents wish to look at other schools and consider other options then there is the North Yorkshire mid-year transfer process. This is available via the website and also manually. This information can be provided through Woodfield School.

Chris Harrison said that regarding the use of the Woodfield site, they hoped to use both sites, with a lot of children from Grove Road coming across to use the outdoor space, to set up Forest Schools, and to look at possibly setting up an urban farm. Some classrooms might be used as breakout spaces and intervention rooms. At Grove Road, where they were going to have more space it would gradually morph into specialist provision, intervention spaces, library spaces and subject specific spaces like science labs.

The parent added that it would be such a shame if the site was not used.

A parent with a child at Woodfield asked why can't the children that are already there stay on the Woodfield site as it is going to be mainly empty, since it is going to take years to do the whole process. With Covid children have been through so much already. Taking them away from their friends to somewhere totally different and twice as big could just send their mental health over the edge.

Chris Harrison acknowledged that it would be a big shake-up for a lot of children, but potentially coming across to Grove Road there might be some familiar faces as so many Woodfield children had come across to the site. Purely from a staffing point of view there would not be an equal split of children to distribute staffing equally enough. It would be too much of a juggling act to put a lot of children across to one site rather than put a few children across to another site. There will be work put into the transition process so children can get used to the site and get to know teachers. Also with the school running Thrive provision, they can support emotional welfare because there is capacity built into the system. It is something they needed to be mindful of and making sure the children are happy and healthy going through the process is their top priority. He recognised that it would be difficult for some children going through the process, however, there is not a way of splitting the classes across the two sites and splitting a phase lead across the two sides. It was something that needs to be grown organically.

The parent said that she wasn't sure that she agreed as he had said that all the teachers will be kept on that are already at Woodfield, and there only need to be about three members of staff for the children that have to filter out of Woodfield.

Chris Harrison replied that in terms of growing a collaborative model as a single school going forward they need to have a starting point and supporting the children where they are going to thrive best academically around a specialist team in place. There is not going to be a right or wrong answer in terms of the children moving, and it would be a difficult balance, but the support and the additional staffing at Grove Road that that might not necessarily be able to be put in place at the Woodfield site, is going to support those children. Having the Thrive provision and practitioners on the Grove Road site is going to be intertwined in that transition process.

The parent said that in her personal opinion, regardless to what any parent or child at Woodfield says, your minds are made up and the children will have to suffer for it.

Chris Harrison urged parents at Woodfield to speak to parents and carers who had come to Grove Road and ask about the transition process. The feedback from families had been overwhelming positive. Nothing was set in stone and this was the time to try to get this right. There was no one answer that would work for every single person but they needed to look at what worked best for the vast majority. He emphasised that this was another change and Covid did not make this any easier. They all needed to work together as one school community across the two sites. He added that nothing was set in stone, they were going through the process of trying to work out what is going to work.

Councillor Mulligan said that he shared what had been said, Covid had made it very difficult for children. One of the difficulties with academisation is when the schools commissioner cannot find a multi-academy trust to take on a school. There was another example recently at Burnt Yates near Harrogate, where they had a failed Ofsted, and the schools commissioner couldn't find a multi academy trust and the school closed. He had concerns about this as with maintained schools North Yorkshire would be able to work on the necessary school improvement and this would provide a breathing space so when Ofsted came back there would hopefully be a better result. Now with an academy order, if a trust cannot be found, the school must close if it is considered unviable. There are other examples where school closure would seem likely but, with the proposal for Grove Road to come in the Woodfield site would stay open.

Chris Harrison added that as a parent, if you want to visit Grove Road School, you are more than welcome to. You can bring your children and have a look around the site too, and see what learning looks like.

A parent with two children at Woodfield said that the presentation had talked about if this goes ahead. What happens if it doesn't?

Andrew Dixon replied that the Regional Schools Commissioner had exhausted any solution for securing a Multi Academy trust to sponsor the school as required by the Directive Academy order. The County Council reviewed other options to retain education provision in the Woodfield community, and the only and best solution appeared to be the amalgamation for Woodfield. Both governing bodies had considered this before asking the County Council to consult on this. If the proposal did not succeed, they would have to look at closure of the school as there would not be a solution either in the Multi Academy Trust sector or in the maintained school sector. This proposal was an opportunity to maintain education provision in the Woodfield community.

The parent then asked what would happen to the site?

Andrew Dixon replied that that would be for the County Council to consider supplementary to the primary decision to close the school. The site was owned by the County Council, and it would be considered in the medium to long term after closure of the school.

A parent said that it seemed that all options had been exhausted and it sounded like this was going ahead and the consultation was a bit of the formality. If all children from Woodfield decided to go to other local schools and there are no children to move to Grove Road will this still go ahead?

Andrew Dixon replied that they are waiting to see the feedback from communities to the consultation and the level of support. The County Council's Executive and the two governing bodies would want to reflect on the level of support or otherwise. If there was a movement of a significant number of Woodfield children to alternative schools that would require a review of the finance and organisation proposals. It would depend on the level of movement by parents and what impact that would have on the overall proposal.

The parent asked how many children needed to move from Woodfield to Grove Road to make it a viable option?

Andrew Dixon replied that there would not be a single figure. The staffing structure in the financial projections is based on the current numbers and the published admission number of 50. If pupil numbers were less than projected then there would need to be a review of the staffing proposal and a review to see if it would be a viable proposal.

A parent said that as a parent at Woodfield she could say that half of those there now would not go to Grove Road.

Chris Harrison replied that it was families' free choice as to where to go but there was also the capacity of other schools in the area to consider. People will vote with their feet and choose which school which is best for their children. Schools will offer visits. Grove Road would have the capacity to take more children in based on the model proposed. Other schools might be more limited in the capacity they have, so there might be friendship groups breaking up or children having to travel further. They did not know until people started looking elsewhere if they wanted to.

The parent said that she travelled from Boroughbridge to Woodfield to take her children there, and could take her children to her local school. The reason that she did this journey every day was because of the grounds, teaching, friends, and the whole school. She and her siblings had gone to Woodfield. Now two years before one of her children has to leave, he has to move up the road.

Andrew Dixon said that since this proposal had become public knowledge with the request to start the consultation, they had seen very little movement, as yet, from Woodfield School. Parents of the two schools will be digesting the information through the consultation period and making their views known, and we need to wait and see the impact of their future position with regard to September 2022.

A parent said that she lived on St John's Road and it was already a 15 to 20 minute walk for her children. Her children loved Woodfield. She could have moved anywhere within the last three years but chose not to because they loved that school. Bilton Grange School is her closest school. She did not want her eldest child to walk further from Woodfield to Grove Road. There was a chance that Bilton Grange wouldn't take her children in. She could not

drive and felt she was between a rock and a hard place. It sounded as if this proposal had already been decided.

Councillor Mulligan thanked her for her comments and said this was a consultation and the school leadership would be looking at these issues.

A parent asked, it had been said that the proposal was based on the numbers at Woodfield being 50, but the table in the presentation had shown that numbers there were already below 50, how did this affect this proposal now?

Andrew Dixon clarified that the proposal was based on the existing numbers plus year groups to come, of 50 per year group, across the two schools.

A parent said when he first heard about the amalgamation, from every school that he rang he was told it was oversubscribed or wouldn't take children with SEN needs. It felt like whether parents want their children to go to Grove Road or not, they would eventually go there; it felt a foregone conclusion and this removes choice.

Andrew Dixon replied that some schools will be fuller than others in some year groups. He suggested that anyone who received a response of that nature from an individual school would be best placed to contact the Harrogate admissions team, which can make enquiries on their behalf. Any parent who is declined a place has the right to a statutory admissions appeal.

The parent said that he rang Harrogate Admissions directly and found he could get a space for one of his children but not the other, and this was a problem for other families too.

Andrew Dixon replied that where a school can admit one child but not another, the parent would have the statutory right of appeal, but it would be down to the school, if they are their own admissions authority, to make that decision in the first instance.

A parent said that she had chosen Grove Road School for her child because it was a good school. How would the school ensure that the quality of education would not be affected by amalgamating with what is currently an inadequate school. How would they ensure that her child was taught by good or outstanding teachers?

Chris Harrison said that the curriculum offer would be an umbrella offer across the two sites which was available on the school website. Children are at the heart of it. Children would have the same diet of learning and the same quality of offer. The broader leadership capacity would help maintain quality across the two sites. While Woodfield currently had an inadequate Ofsted judgement, there was a lot of quality among the staff on the site and as they came together they would need to bring those strengths and successes while making sure there was a robust monitoring system across the school. With IRIS connect system there was capacity to observe and record lessons even if they were not in the building. They run learning walks every 3 weeks on a 2 year cycle. Monitoring systems are robust, rooted in staff development, and make sure children get the absolute best out of their learning. This would be rolled out across the two sites.

The parent said she could write a wonderful presentation and upload it, but delivery could be shocking. She wanted to make sure the actual delivery was good.

Chris Harrison added that IRIS is an online video platform where whole lessons and half days can be videoed. There was also the option for in-ear coaching where someone can coach through an earpiece and this can be done across sites. They had the capacity to observe lessons. They did not use formal teaching observations any more. Recording is

taking place on a weekly basis. There are staff film clubs where they can watch the teaching. The monitoring system includes checking the planning and book scrutiny but also involves staff joining other classes for 20 minutes followed by coaching conversations. On IRIS connect they had built curriculum pages and can bank quality-assured clips providing expectations of teaching for those new to the school. Part of Chris' role was to lead on curriculum monitoring and growth, to make sure children have a rich diet of learning.

A parent said that on the comment about the teaching at Woodfield, his children were really happy there. One of his children was on the SEN register and the SENCO provided so much support, and the teaching was great.

Chris Harrison added that a big part of this process would be merging the teams as there were a lot of strengths in Woodfield that they wanted to bring in.

A parent added that they didn't mean to cause any offence, as a Grove Road parent they wanted to ensure the best for all children.

Counsellor Mulligan thought that everyone could agree to that.

County Councillor Paul Haslam said that he had been a governor of Woodfield School since the school hit its problems. He wanted to reassure that the quality of teaching at Woodfield was now the best that he had seen it in all his time there. The Ofsted inspection related to leadership. There had been six different head teachers in a very short space of time. Pupil numbers had dropped badly. Leadership for the last two years had been excellent and had allowed the existing staff to flourish. The governors have had to consider the school numbers. If the school had the right numbers they would not be looking at this as a solution. They could not become an academy. The ability of the school rides on having a sufficient number of pupils and the school does not have enough currently. This solution he believed would give a better and enhanced offer for both schools, and give both schools access to brilliant facilities and air quality. He believed and he thought the other governors believed, it will give better education all round. The key to social mobility was great education and that was what this amalgamation option was about.

Dennis Richards said that he was a governor at Grove Road School for 5 years and had been head teacher of a large Harrogate secondary school for 23 years. He knew most of the Harrogate primary schools. The parents of families at Woodfield tonight had done a brilliant job. Grove Road had an outstanding reputation for dealing with children with special education needs, speakers of other languages, and those receiving free school meals. Governors had gone through this proposal with a toothcomb. If parents had any difficulty with the academy they should take it up with the MP. Matthew Atkinson would like to stay but financially it was impossible. He recommended to Woodfield parents that they take Chris up on his offer and go around Grove Road School and he was sure that they would be impressed with what they see.

Chris added that he would be more than happy if any parents had any further questions to visit around during the school day or outside school time. He totally understood the difficulties for some parents. It was not a done deal. They were trying to protect the Woodfield community, giving opportunities for children to stay together, for teaching teams to continue working together, and for teams to collaborate and grow across two sites. That seemed so much better than allowing the Woodfield site to close. They were hoping this could act as a safety net for many families. He hoped more people can start to see Grove Road extending friendship and growth across both sites.



For Grove Road parents there might be concerns about what the amalgamation might do in terms of quality across a larger site. Their leadership team was growing to match this with the co-headship model and growing new leaders on site. They would not have agreed to be part of the process as a school if they did not see significant benefits on both sites. There had been a lot of work to ensure that it was right for the children and communities on both sites. It was not a done deal and they need to involve all stakeholders in the conversation to quality-assure the process.

County Councillor Mulligan said that he would also encourage all parents to visit the school, see what is available, and keep an open mind.

Chris Harrison added that in terms of concern expressed by some Woodfield parents about the length of journey time and lack of access to transport, his school's pupil premium plan budgets in for facilitating taxis for families that find transport very difficult.

County Councillor Paul Haslam said governors had considered opening the rear entrance to the Woodfield School site and he was delighted to hear about this, improving access for pupils from the Claro Road area. On Woodfield Road, before April, there will be a 20 mile per hour speed limit outside the school with enhanced road protection. These additional measures coming would ensure safety and access to the school.

Councillor Mulligan thanked everyone for attending. He guaranteed parents that their points would be noted and taken up with the school leadership. He thanked the two school leaderships who had worked very hard to try to get to solutions. He hoped parents would be open minded and visit Grove Road School. They were welcome to make any further comments and the consultation was open until 28 January.

The meeting closed at 7:55 PM.

## **Record of second Online Public Meeting concerning the proposed amalgamation of Woodfield Community Primary School and Grove Road Community Primary School, Harrogate**

Second public meeting held on 17 January 2022 at 6:30 PM using Microsoft Teams.

Present: County Councillor Patrick Mulligan (Executive Member for Education and Skills, NYCC), Chris Harrison, Interim Co-Headteacher, Grove Road School, Margaret Beagle, Chair of Governors, Grove Road School, Matthew Atkinson, Acting Executive Headteacher, Woodfield Primary School, Holly Whyte, Acting Headteacher, Woodfield Primary School, Janet Booth, Chair of Governors, Woodfield Primary School.

Amanda Newbold (Assistant Director, Education and Skills, NYCC) Andrew Dixon (Strategic Planning Manager, NYCC), John Lee, Matt George (Strategic Planning Team, NYCC).

Apologies: Chris Parkhouse, Headteacher, Grove Road School.

19 people attended.

Margaret Beagle, Chair of Governors at Grove Road School, welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced representatives from the two schools.

Patrick Mulligan introduced himself as County Councillor for the Airedale division in Craven and Executive Member for Education and Skills. He noted that this was a consultation event and a written note of the meeting would be made and submitted to the County Council's Executive as part of the decision-making process. To assist with this, the meeting would be recorded. The recording would then be discarded once the written note had been compiled.

Andrew Dixon and Chris Harrison provided a presentation which covered:

- Background to the proposal, including the Woodfield Ofsted inspection and the Directive Academy Order
- Pupil numbers and financial projections
- Amalgamation proposals for September 2022 and September 2023
- Benefits for all pupils
- What would happen to staff at Woodfield School?
- What happens now?

County Councillor Patrick Mulligan then opened the meeting to questions.

A parent governor at Grove Road School said he was impressed by the ethos, integrity and ethics of Grove Road. He thought the amalgamation was a fantastic idea for widening their community and was a big supporter of the process. He asked about the budget, as Grove Road was looking to achieve a budget surplus, which was forecast for 2026. How did the shortfall in budget at Woodfield School affect Grove Road School moving forward?

Andrew Dixon said that he understood that on the closure of Woodfield School, the budget position, which is forecast to be a deficit, would no longer be carried forward to Grove Road School. The Woodfield balance would have to be absorbed by the County Council on closure.

A parent from Grove Road School said that the parking at Grove Road is chaos already. How could they facilitate more students, parents, and cars, if they were catering for a community further away which might drive more. How could they make sure it would be safe?

Chris Harrison replied that there was much better parking at the Woodfield site. It was hoped that this, along with use of a walking bus, would negate the difficulties around parking. They could also extend out the staggered start to the school day to support parents and carers in the drop off phase. The school saw the benefit of this extended time as they had early bird maths running five days a week so children can get additional maths input at the start of the day every day. The Grove Road site was landlocked which made parking very challenging, but they would have access to the parking at the other site as well.

The parent asked if this meant asking people to drive past Grove Road, even if their child attended Grove Road, to go to Woodfield to park, and make their child walk from there?

Chris clarified that was not what he was saying, it was more for parents and carers making multiple drop offs that could take advantage of the staggered start and the walking bus.

County Councillor Paul Haslam, a governor at Woodfield School, said that during lockdown and over the Easter holidays of 2020 they had worked in coordination with Grove Road, with their parents walking between the two schools. They did not see any particular issues although he appreciated that the traffic could have been different then. They had worked this before and it was a successful joint operation during that time.

Chris Harrison said that they appreciated and respected the work that was going on behind the scenes at the Woodfield site. They appreciated it was difficult and challenging circumstances. He looked forward to welcoming and broadening their school community. If anyone on the Woodfield site - staff, parents, children - wanted to visit the Grove Road site they were welcome to do so. They wanted to help the Woodfield staff in this complex, difficult transition phase.

A parent asked about the leadership arrangements at Grove Road School. She had understood that from 1st February there would be a joint headship, but from what she gathered this was already happening. She was concerned because Mr Parkhouse had not been in school and there had been no communication. If they were going to have two sites, were they going to be kept up to date with what was happening and who the leadership team was? Mr Parkhouse had not been at either of the consultation meetings. It was a bit concerning that there was a lack of communication about leadership.

Chris Harrison clarified that Mr Parkhouse sent his apologies, he had had a positive Covid test. They would not normally communicate out to parents and carers if a member of staff was ill or unwell. It gave the opportunity to grow the co-headship sooner than intended. He appreciated that this could be potentially confusing and a few children would take a little time to settle into the routine. Mr Parkhouse was very frustrated he had not been able to attend tonight. The co-headship model was communicated out to families. It was to broaden the capacity of the leadership team and support Mr Parkhouse. They believed that running a co-headship model was the right way forward for the school and community. It offered greater leadership capacity across two sites and the scope for the rest of the staff to grow into positions of middle and senior leadership. Chris Harrison would be maintaining a teaching commitment throughout, which would be balanced when Mr Parkhouse was in school running his headship position. It also offered the opportunity to model a healthy work/life balance to staff and the community.

A member of staff who worked in Grove Road school in a supporting capacity asked how the amalgamation would affect funding because at the moment they were massively strained staffing-wise, especially in the support area. She hoped the amalgamation would ease that.

Chris Harrison replied that it depended on the number of children that came across to Grove Road and the nature of support that children need. If the amalgamation went ahead, there would be work done to look at the staffing structure to meet the needs of children. He appreciated that it can feel very stretched at times and COVID had not made this any easier but it was the nature of school budgets that staffing in schools can be very difficult to manage. They were hoping that the amalgamation would put them out of the deficit budget and give them more flexibility in supporting children. Potentially in the long term the school may even grow to two form entry. It depended entirely on the numbers. If fewer children came across, this would have an impact on the staffing model proposed. It depends on which schools families wanted their children to attend. He was sorry he could not be clearer at the moment.

Debbie Pitt, School Business Manager at Grove Road School, said that the way that money comes into the school would alter slightly if they moved to split sites. In terms of levels of support for children the actual method of funding would not change. Children would have the same level of funding coming into school. It comes down to pupil numbers. Support staff would be allocated according to pupil numbers and need, as they currently are.

A governor at Grove Road School asked about the potentially positive impact for children with Special Education Needs with the amalgamation. His view was that it was vast and offered the opportunity to support vulnerable children in the community.

Chris Harrison said the amalgamation offered the opportunity to expand the capacity of their school's existing targeted mainstream provision. They would be able to protect more children who can drop out of the system through their difficulties accessing the mainstream curriculum. They would be able to provide a more bespoke alternative curriculum outside the classroom, including forest schools, nurture, thrive provision, and an urban farm. In terms of children in class, they were very excited, as with one school on two sites they would be able to bring whole classes across to the forest school and the green open space, which would benefit children's mental health and well being and enable them to take part in healthy living, growing and planting. He looked forward to welcoming more people into the team. There was a lot of strength in the staff on the Woodfield site. They would bring more expertise, ideas, and strategies to support children with those levels of needs.

The governor then asked if the amalgamation did not take place, what would happen to the Woodfield site?

Andrew Dixon said that if they could not find a solution within a maintained school scenario and there was no academy sponsor that could be found, so that there was no option to sustain education provision in the Woodfield community, they would have to consult on a school closure. What happened to the site would be a decision that would be taken subsequently to the closure decision. It was never a factor in why the County Council would close a school. It was always supplementary to the core decision of closure. If the amalgamation did not go ahead, Woodfield would face a very challenging future.

County Councillor Mulligan thanked Chris, governors, and officers. He thought this was a very good plan for education in the area and the best solution that could be hoped for. He reminded everyone that the consultation ran to the 28 January. All the comments made

tonight had been recorded and would form part of the consultation. He thanked everyone for their contributions.

The meeting closed at 7:05 PM.