



Summary of consultation meeting with staff

Wednesday 17th September 2014, Abbotsweld Primary School

Present: 31 members of staff, Maxine Evans (Chief Executive, NETAT), Takako Yeung (Director of Operations and Development, NETAT), Ruth Bird (Chair, Interim Executive Board), Lesley Lynn (Headteacher), Stephen Rodwell (Academies Officer, NETAT), Tula Smith (Senior HR Consultant, Essex County Council), Fran Johnson (IEB), Tosca Boothman (IEB), Jacky Castle (IEB)

What follows is a summary of points raised at the initial meeting between NET Academies Trust (NETAT) and the staff at Abbotsweld Primary School.

- Introductions by NETAT representatives included an outline of the purposes of the meeting. Attendees were also advised that any matters of a personal nature associated with the employment of an individual would be reserved for proper negotiation with HR and Trade Union representatives at a later date.
- Details of our two current academies were requested.
 - The Trust's first academy, Battle Primary Academy in Reading, converted on 1st January 2013. After a long history of being in Special Measures, Battle is now making steady progress. The first full Ofsted inspection since Battle converted is expected soon.
More information is available here:
<http://www.netacademies.net/page/?title=Battle+Primary+Academy&pid=18>
 - Our second academy, Henry Hinde Junior School in Rugby, converted on 1st January 2014. The Trust and the school have been working together since then to improve teaching and learning, engage with parents and the school community, and build upon the excellent practice already taking place.
More information is available here:
<http://www.netacademies.net/page/?title=Henry+Hinde+Junior+School&pid=19>

- Staff expressed concerns that NETAT might grow too quickly and sponsor more academies than it could reasonably and successfully support. Some recent examples were given where larger academy trusts have lost control of academies following criticism from Ofsted.
 - NETAT has no ambitions to become a multi-academy sponsor that grows too rapidly or is too large. Great caution and careful consideration has been exercised when agreeing to sponsor additional academies, making sure that all growth is measured and sustainable.
 - The priority for NETAT is to make improvements in the three Harlow schools currently due to convert on 1st January 2015: Abbotsweld Primary School, Latton Green Primary School, Longwood Primary School. Becoming the sponsor of more schools, in Harlow and/or elsewhere, depends on whether NETAT can first demonstrate that clear progress has been made in our current academies and in the three Harlow schools mentioned above.

- Questions were raised regarding the process by which NET Academies Trust was chosen as the academy sponsor for Abbotsweld.
 - Essex County Council considered a number of sponsors who presented to the Council and IEB, detailing their plans and vision for the three Harlow schools. NET Academies Trust was asked to sponsor the schools based on this proposal.

- Staff sought more information regarding any potential changes to employee contracts and terms and conditions following conversion.
 - On the conversion date (1st January 2015), all current staff contracts and terms and conditions will be transferred over to the new employer, NET Academies Trust, via the TUPE process.
 - Staff would legally have to be notified at this stage if any changes to contracts were planned. There are no current planned changes to staff terms and conditions.
 - A further meeting will be held in October to begin the formal TUPE consultation.

- Concerns were raised as to the lack of communication regarding the changes taking place and due to take place at Abbotsweld.
 - NETAT aims to be a transparent academy sponsor. Subsequent changes and important information will be communicated to staff and parents as soon as it becomes available, via letters, emails and further meetings.

- Staff asked whether NETAT planned to move individuals between the three Harlow schools following conversion.
 - Staff initiated moves may be possible following negotiation between staff members and the new Executive Headteacher (to be formally appointed on 1st January 2015, and introduced before then).

- Disruption to teaching and learning caused by the unnecessary redeployment of staff will be avoided; staff at Abbotsweld know their pupils, school and community well, and this is a clear strength to the school.
- NETAT were asked whether there would be any interaction between the three Harlow schools.
 - NETAT envisages that staff at the three schools will interact throughout the school year, particularly through staff training days. Collaboration and partnership between the schools will be part of the Executive Head's agenda when he or she is appointed.
- Clarification was sought regarding the appointment of the new Executive Headteacher and the likely changes in senior leadership at Abbotsweld.
 - Typically, when an Executive Head is in place, one senior staff member, often called a “Head of Learning”, will be responsible for the day to day running of his or her school and will be the ‘face in the playground’ for parents. The Executive Headteacher will be responsible for the outcomes of pupils across all three schools. He or she will also be responsible for strategic thinking across the three schools.
- Staff asked about the practicality of making long-term plans for the school, given that the conversion and appointment of the new Executive Head are imminent.
 - NETAT urged staff to continue developing their visions for the school. NETAT and the Executive Head will want to work with staff when shaping the long-term aims and objectives for Abbotsweld.
- Staff were thanked for their attendance and contributions and invited to send any further comments or questions to Takako Yeung: takako@nationaleducationtrust.net

Our websites:

National Education Trust (NET) - www.nationaleducationtrust.net

NET Academies Trust (NETAT) - www.netacademies.net