



Parents/carers meeting

Tuesday 16th January 2018, 2.30-3.10pm and 6.30-7.30pm

Present:

- Nick Capstick, CEO, White Horse Federation
- Candida Hutchinson, Interim Headteacher 1 Feb 2018, White Horse Federation
- Gill Gooch, Acting Headteacher
- Kirsteen Roberts, Chair of the Strategic Management Board, Oxford Diocese
- Marion Standing, Oxford Diocese Link Adviser
- Chris Kiernan, Head of Education Reading Local Authority (2.30pm meeting only)
- Lorraine Doyle, Chair of Governors (2.30pm meeting only)

Nick Capstick, CEO, White Horse Federation

Nick Capstick explained that the White Horse Federation had been brought in until the end of the academic year to provide support and stability to the leadership of the school and to begin the process of school improvement. Nick explained that he was giving the school an excellent Headteacher in Candida Hutchinson with whom he had worked for the last 15 years and that the focus for the next few months was to provide stability to leadership and to improve systems and processes in the school. Nick spoke about a set of non-negotiables for teachers.

Nick explained that he and Candida had a track record of building great schools and that St Mary and All Saints would benefit from support from the wider family of schools in the White Horse Federation and that within the Federation there are experts in all areas of the curriculum and year groups and that he would be providing monitoring as a critical friend to the school to support and guide the school to keep things on track.

Nick explained about the 100 day plan that is being developed. The plan is broken down into 9 lots of 10 days with the tenth lot of 10 days available for celebrating if the plan has been completed or for last minute fast track activities. Nick explained that the 100 day plan included holiday periods and that the plan involved a role for parents to help with homework.

Nick explained that there would be three versions of the plan; one for teachers; one to be shared with parents/carers and one for the children.

Nick outlined the track record of the White Horse Federation noting that there are currently 20 schools in the Federation. 15 of the 20 schools are primary schools with some secondary and special schools. 13 out of the 15 primary schools were also previously in an OFSTED category 3 or 4.

Nick emphasised that he was committed to supporting St Mary and All Saints and that in return he was looking for the commitment from everyone at the school including parents and carers. Nick spoke of the need for joint ambition and joint endeavour and outlined the partnership that he wanted to establish with parents which relied on parents telling the school if they are not doing the job they want from us and telling us and other parents when the school is doing the right things.

Parent/ Carer questions and comments (collated from both parent sessions):

Q What happens after 100 days?

Nick explained that the honest answer to the question of what happens beyond the end of the summer term is that he doesn't know at this stage.

The decision to find a permanent sponsor for the school resides with the Regional Schools Commissioner in partnership with the Local Authority and Diocese Board. Nick explained that the school is now a priority school for the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Secretary of State for Education is aware of the school's needs.

Nick offered a guarantee to parents that if the White Horse Federation is not the long term MAT partner for the school they will ensure that they work in tandem with whoever the long term partner is to make sure the school doesn't suffer from a lack of continuity.

Q What sort of organisation is the White Horse Federation?

Nick explained that the White Horse Federation is a not for profit organisation that works outside of the Local Authority system and is held to account by the Regional Schools Commission. Nick explained that some of the schools had joined the Federation because they had received a Directive Academy Order, others had opted to join the Federation because they were either considered Good or Outstanding by OFSTED and wanted to support other schools.

Q What information is there about the track record of the Federation, other than what you have told us?

Nick explained that the RSC, Diocese and LA conducted a due diligence exercise on the Federation. The schools in the White Horse Federation are subject to OFSTED inspection and are Good or Outstanding. Kirsteen Roberts recommended parents look at the Federation website to understand more about the ethos and character of the Federation. <https://thewhitehorsefederation.org.uk>

Q How is the MAT held to account?

The Mat is held to account by the Education Funding Agency for its expenditure and by OFSTED for the standards of the schools.

Q Did you bid for the school?

Nick explained that the process of matching up was conducted by the RSC and Diocese and LA and no bids were submitted.

Q Parents commented on the fact that if it is going to take 2 to 3 years to turn the school around this will mean some of their children will have spent their entire primary career in a school in special measures which isn't good enough.

Nick explained that the Federation has a commitment to the school and that the school will start to improve immediately it is just that it might take 2 to 3 years for the OFSTED label of special measures to be removed.

Q Parents commented on the loss of energy and belief in the school and questioned whether it was worth keeping their children at the school

Nick explained that many of the schools in the Federation had been like St Mary and All Saints when they joined the Federation and that now the dashboard for the schools would show that in 6 of the 7 categories the schools across the Federation are outstanding and in one area very good. Nick stressed that the reputation of his Federation meant a lot to him and that he would not jeopardise his reputation if he didn't think he would be able to improve the school. Nick acknowledged that the children at the school had not had the best education in the past but that he couldn't change that but that he wanted the opportunity to work together.

Q Parents commented that it was embarrassing to see the school in the local press.

Nick agreed that he wanted the school to be a school of choice in the local community and a place that the children were proud of.

Q Parents asked whether the schools that he had worked with had any similarities to St Mary and All Saints?

Nick noted that many of the schools had similar demographics, some of the school had large numbers of BME and that many of the schools had suffered from frequent leadership changes.

Q a parent questioned the reference to BME and demographics noting that a school with a similar demographic (Katesgrove) had been a good school for a long time.

Nick agreed that the main issue had been around leadership and spoke about the need for a set of non-negotiables for teachers to understand the curriculum, for children to take pride in their handwriting and presentation of work and for homework to be marked and for children to move on only when they have mastered the curriculum so that there is a progressive approach to learning.

Q a parent questioned if the school had the resources to support the approach outlined given the number of Teaching Assistants that had been taken from the school.

Nick explained that the progressive curriculum approach was about ensure that there is clear differentiation and challenge for all and that progress happens for everyone. Nick spoke about the need for both quantity and quality of work to lay the right foundations.

Q parents asked about the resources and frequency of staff turnover and how they want to see the same teacher in the class for the whole year.

Nick explained that he couldn't promise this but that as part of a MAT he had the resources to help the school. Nick stressed the role of leadership in the school was to create a place where good teachers want to stay.

Q what difference will parents see as part of the 100 day plan?

Nick explained that children should come home able to do more than they could before. Parents should see that handwriting and presentation in books is more consistent and that there is a greater quantity and quality of work in their books.

Q what ratio of staff is needed?

Nick noted that currently the ratio of staff to pupils is 1:27 which was in line or lower than many schools.

Q A parent asked about provision under an EHCP

Nick explained that every child with additional money would have that additional money accounted for to them.

Q Parents asked if the MAT affected finance

Nick explained that despite being the CEO of a financially sound organisation he hadn't discussed the finances as his focus was on quality.

Q Parents asked for information to be shared with them on spelling and punctuation so that they could help to reinforce learning at home.

Nick agreed this would happen

Q Parents asked how homework works in other schools and commented on their frustration around the lack of marking and feedback on homework which is often just displayed in the school without any feedback to children.

Nick commented on his traditional view of homework and guaranteed that homework would be marked going forward.

Q Parents asked if the school would be hiring people to help with phonics etc.

Nick noted the need to evaluate what is good already in the school to identify gaps to help train teachers to develop their techniques.

Q A parent commented on the difference between learning at school and with a private education company out of school.

Nick commented on the fact that the school had good teachers but that they had not always had great leadership, direction and structures. Nick commented on how brilliant Candida is at motivating and giving direction to teachers.

Q Parents commented that teachers in the past had been scared to lose their jobs.

Nick noted his wish for teachers to be innovative, creative and not to be afraid to take risks and that he wanted to create a learning environment that was exciting.

Q Parents asked if the school would consider putting parents on the employment panel.

Nick noted this was not a decision for the Federation but for the Strategic Management Board.

Q Parents asked to hear from Candida.

Candida spoke about how excited she was to be taking up the post from 1 Feb and that she had already started to work with Gill Gooch on the 100 day plan. Candida explained that her first two weeks would be spent watching, learning and getting to know the names of pupils and parents. She would also be meeting with staff to understand the challenges and barriers and talking to the leadership team about responsibilities and expectations. She would also be focusing on year group priorities.

Q A parent of a pupil starting in September asked when they would know if the White Horse Federation would be the long term partner for the school?

Nick explained that he expected to know by the end of March and Kirsteen Roberts noted that parents would be informed as soon as possible of the name of the long term MAT partner.

Q If the White Horse Federation take over will the school keep its name and church status.

Kirsteen confirmed that when the school formally joined a MAT a package of information would be shared with parents but that the school would retain its Church of England status and its name. Kirsteen clarified that the school is not yet an academy and remains a maintained school under the LA remit with the powers over finance and HR and the management of the Head the responsibility of the Strategic Management Board.

Q A parent queried if the reason why the financial management had been taken away from the Governing Board was because of financial irregularities.

Note post meeting: There are NO financial management concerns or irregularities at the school.

Q Parents commented on the need for the school to be honest and truthful with parents.

Nick agreed that his approach was to have a clear dialogue and to be transparent with parents.

Q Parents welcomed the reintroduction of the PTA.

Q Parents asked how long the interim Head would be in place for.

Nick explained he couldn't promise that Candida will be at the school on a permanent basis as they don't know how the RSC will resolve the long term running of the school.