Minutes of the Parent Meeting for Friesland School
held on Thursday 19th April 2018 at 6.30pm at Friesland School

Present:
School Representatives
Mr Monk (Headteacher)
Mrs C Collishaw (Clerk)
Mr C Patterson (Assistant Headteacher)
Mrs K Palmer (Assistant Headteacher)
Mr A Morgan (Assistant Headteacher)
Mr J Hardy (Assistant Headteacher)

Governors
Mr M Garnett (Chair of Governing Body)
Mr M Macmillian (Vice Chair)
Mr M O’Neil
Mrs D Foster
Mr I McNamee
Mr A Durrant
Ms J Burnett

Two Counties
Mr D Vasey - CEO

NAS/UWT Representative
Mr D Wilkinson

Parents and Students
36 in attendance

Mr Monk gave a 45 minute presentation on the situation regarding academisation and the current consultation. The slides from this presentation are available on the school website.

He presented on the following three areas:

1. The timeline for considering academisation
2. Being specific about the reasons why the Governing Body and the Senior Leadership Group at Friesland believe the time is now right to academise
3. Addressing the issues as to why some staff are opposed to academisation and providing clarification on some of the ‘issues’ that have been raised in the community.

The Headteacher then opened the floor for questions from parents and carers (one student was also present).

The Chair of Governors addressed the room and explained that the Governors have the overall final responsibility for the decision on whether to academies or not. They want the ethos of school to continue as it is. He explained that it is the Governing body who appoints the Headteacher. It is the Governors responsibility to set strategic targets and question decisions and strategies for the School. They are responsible to for considering the views of all the stakeholders of Friesland School, staff, parents and pupils.

Academisation is a difficult issue and there are advantages and disadvantages to it, there will be many different views amongst the stakeholders. The Chair assured everyone that they will consider all points and they will have to make their decision on how to proceed taking into account all the different views and opinions presented throughout the consultation processes.

A parent asked why the School was rejected the first time from the Trust?

The Headteacher explained that there were 3 schools who had applied to join the Two Counties Trust and the regional school’s commissioner rejected these schools as they wanted to gather more information about them. Friesland was put on the agenda for the next meeting and that is when was accepted and an academy order was issued.

A parent asked how many schools in total there are in the two Counties MAT?
The CEO of Two Counties explained that there are 6 secondary schools currently in the MAT. DCC had asked them to sponsor a school that currently “Requires Improvement” (RI). The regional school’s commissioner had asked the MAT to have another good school, so Two Counties had approached Friesland, as well as engaging in discussions with other schools.

**A parent asked if there is a cap on the number of schools a MAT can have?**

The CEO of Two Counties explained that there is no limit. But as a Board of Trustees Two Counties have agreed to have no more than 10 Schools. Friesland school is an attraction to Two Counties Trust as it is a strong good school. Capacity will be given from Friesland School to help support other schools.

**A parent asked what Ofsted status these schools currently have?**

The CEO for Two Counties explained there are 3 good schools which originally set up the trust. The Trust was then asked to by DFE and Derbyshire to sponsor Manor School, which was in special measures at the time. The CEO explained that they are proud of what has been achieved there and that the School are hoping for an Ofsted inspection, where they would hope to get a ‘Good’ judgement. Then there is the Heritage High School and Frederick Gent School who are both RI.

**A parent asked where Two Counties is based?**

The CEO for Two Counties replied that the offices are at Ashfield School as there is no cost to the Trust there (Ashfield is a very large school). He explained that MATs take a slice of money from each school, and that this is no different from LEA Schools as Schools give Derbyshire a slice of their money for central services. The average top slice in the East Midlands and Humberside to MATs is 5.5%. Two Counties believe that the cost should be dependent on the level of need the school has. If the School is good or outstanding the cost is 1% if the School requires improvement the cost is 2% and if the school is in special measures the cost is 3%. So, for Friesland the cost would be 1% which would be significantly lower than the national average.

**A parent commented that she was worried that a level of existing management at Friesland would be replaced if the school academised**

The CEO for Two Counties and the Headteacher were able to reassure those present that this would not be the case. In all six schools, including the one in Special Measures, the governing body still oversee the decisions made by the Headteacher. Two Counties believe in local governance. On the Two Counties website it is made very clear regarding the structure of the schools. The only slight difference is that in an Academy, the Governing Body is accountable to a Board of Trustees, and the board of trustees to the DFE.

The Headteacher reassured everyone that if Friesland academised nothing would change in terms of the current leadership at the school.

The CEO of Two Counties explained that the only difference for the school will be the financial budget. The Governing body of Friesland will set the budget, as is the case now, but the Board of Trustees will have to approve this.

**A parent asked why you pay more as a special measures school when a school in special measures would need more money in order to improve?**

The CEO of Two Counties said that this was a very good point, but it is found that schools in special measures need more support and that support needs paying for. The principle of Multi-Academy Trusts is that schools within them support each other by providing school-to-school support.

For example, one of the schools in the Trust had weaknesses in their Science and Languages departments. So, the Trust seconded two members of Staff who wanted to support the departments, which have improved. One members of staff is staying at the new school and one is returning to their original school.

**A parent asked how the Trust measures how a school is Good / RI etc?**

The CEO from Two Counties explained that they use the Ofsted measurement for this. He also explained that good and outstanding schools still have weak areas that need improving.

The CEO explained that there is still a concern about the pupil premium (disadvantaged) students in all the schools within the Trust, but one of their schools has been narrowing the gap and they are sharing these strategies with other schools.
A parent asked the Union representative why the members of the NAS/UWT went on strike. Her daughter is in year 11 and it is a crucial time to go on strike. The staff striking are held in high regard by students and staff alike. A parent asked the Union representative to explain why the Teachers were striking and what is it they are not happy about?

The union representative apologised for the strike action and the disruption it has caused. He thanked the Headteacher and Chair of Governors for inviting him here today. He made the point that the success of schools is linked to the terms and conditions of their Staff. It is good to hear that Staff recruitment and retention has not been an issue for Friesland as a foundation school.

The union is concerned about the irreversible change academisation brings. Academy chains come and go, Headteachers come and go. The Union has seen thousands of staff terms and conditions of service change, loss of jobs, academies handed over to other MATs. Staff will lose their statutory terms and conditions if the School does academise.

With the LEA there are statutory terms and conditions. Academies do not have those same terms and conditions.

The union representative continued to say that there are local Derbyshire policies and procedures that they would like to see remain, but this is not going to happen. These are local collective agreements explaining how they are managed; performance management and sick pay among them. The union explained that none of these polices have been agreed between Two Counties trust and the union. The union believe they are not as beneficial as the ones DCC have. There has not been an agreement reached on those polices. Those polices will be imposed on our members following academisation.

Mr Wilkinson continued to raise the question; what will the position for School be in 10/20 years’ time? In 2011 academisation was on the Government’s agenda and all schools were told they needed to become an academy. This has all changed now and schools no longer need to academise.

The Chair responded and explained that the Governors are only considering academisation with Two Counties trust and not academisation in general.

The Union Representatives explained that Staff are currently under Derbyshire policies at Friesland School and if they become under Two Counties Academy Trust they will lose these policies.

Two Counties CEO explained that the Trust contains schools that were Nottinghamshire ones, some that were Derbyshire ones and there was one standalone academy that had joined the Trust. He explained that currently the trust is in negotiations with all the unions to harmonise the policies as all schools will work under the same policies (which is a legal requirement for a Multi-Agency Trust).

The Trust has set up a JCC with all unions to represent all staff across the schools in the trust at the meetings. Two Counties confirmed that they have taken on board all the feedback and agreed any points / changes that the NAS/UWT has fed back at these meetings, and the policies have been amended accordingly. All the points that the NAS/UWT have raised, the CEO explained, have been agreed to. Until new polices are in place Schools are following the existing polices. The CEO explained that pay has increased for some staff at previous schools due to these negotiations.

A parent explained that the School has a problem with communication as 44 members have gone on strike, but you are saying nothing is changing, the staff are not stupid, and so they must be worried about something.

The union representative confirmed that the MAT is currently not signed up to any polices, but they hope to reach an agreement with the Union in the future.

The Headteacher explained that during the proposed strike action he was not allowed to talk to the Union representative or NAS/UWT members in School. The only communication the School had with the NAS/UWT membership was via the local, regional and national executive representatives. That is the way the constitution of the union is set up during a dispute.

A Parent asked if there was a staff meeting about it?

The Headteacher explained that there was a staff meeting held in October, a further meeting to which Two Counties were invited in November and a further meeting between Governors and staff before the original vote was taken. At no time during consultation did the Union representative in school or at head office ask to talk to the Governors.
A parent asked if Friesland School Joins Two Counties can the DFE move the School to another trust?

The union representative explained that that is correct and one concern of his members. It introduces risk where there does not need to be any. He explained that there are schools that were in MATS and the school was failing so they removed them from the MAT, they are not in any trust and not under the LEA anymore. The Headteacher explained that the DFE have that power now over Friesland as a foundation school, and would continue to do so in the future whatever type of school we were. It is only a concern if a maintained school or academy is failing.

A parent explained that they are still confused as to why the teachers at Friesland School are striking. Is it a national standpoint regarding academies or is it Two Counties that they do not want to be a part of?

The union representative explained that it is not about the Two Counties Trust. It is around terms and conditions of their members. If these terms and conditions were guaranteed the members would not oppose academisation. We need to reach an agreement around the employment framework for teachers.

A parent asked if the conditions for Staff Tupe across to the new company?

Mr Wilkinson explained that this can happen and there is a short time when things cannot change (1 year) but after that they can.

A parent asked if all the members were unanimous in their voting?

Mr Wilkinson did not have those figures to hand. The Headteacher explained that there were 31 out of 44 members who voted yes to the strike action.

A parent asked can the DFE move the school into a Trust at any time?

The union representative explained that this only happens automatically to an LEA School if the school goes into special measures and at that point an academy order is put in place, or if the school meets the definition of a ‘coasting’ school. The union representative stated that Friesland is well away from these measures.

An Assistant Headteacher explained that Friesland School does meet elements of the coasting definition across the past three years. There is no choice for a school to which Trust they go to if the decision to convert is taken by the regional schools commissioner, whether they are an LEA school or an existing academy. As a good school, we can choose with whom we academise.

Schools are only moved from Trusts if the school or Trust is failing. The Regional Schools Commissioner would make that decision. That risk is there no matter whether we are an academy or an LEA School.

An Assistant Headteacher explained that the Leadership team looked at a lot of academy trusts before choosing Two Counties. Several academies wanted the school to do it their way if new schools joined, their uniform, their rules, their exam boards, and their model. This is not want the leadership team wanted for Friesland School. We want to keep the ethos of the school which we believe Two Counties does.

A parent said that he wants to know how the policies and terms/conditions affect his daughter’s education?

The union representative explained that any polices affect how the Staff are managed. Potentially affecting motivation and retention of teachers, as well as teacher workload. There is a teacher shortage nationally. An assistant Headteacher explained that Friesland does not have a teacher shortage, nor have we struggled to recruit so far this year. The school believes that any new policies or terms/conditions would be of no detriment to the staff.

A parent explained that the Headteacher and CEO have already explained that there is a group of people working together to agree the best conditions for staff so why is this still an issue?

Mr Wilkinson explained that these policies are not finalised. The CEO of Two Counties reminded parents that Two Counties are fully engaged with all teacher and non-teacher unions regarding the harmonisation of policies, to date all policies have been agreed with all union amendments added.
A parent explained that one of the big issues within this whole process has been communication. As a parent he was still really confused as to what the actual issues are around this process. He was confused as to why the Leadership team cannot talk to Staff?

The Headteacher explained that the lines of communication are back open now as the consultation has been reopened.

A parent said that this is a trust issue. All this information has been given to the staff, parents and students alike. People are choosing not to trust what the Headteacher and CEO are saying.

The Chair explained that there was a full consultation process originally. The Governors looked over all the information that was received from parents, staff, students and all other stakeholders. They discussed this and voted and decided on the best course of action. The consultation has now been reopened to see if there is anything that was missed and all this information, including the points made tonight, will be considered when the Governors vote again. The Chair said that the Governors are not going to be forced into deciding based on the fact that union members might strike. They will make the decision on what is right for the future of Friesland School.

A parent asked if the school can still decide not to academise?

The Headteacher explained that the choice is still open.

A parent asked which school will be supporting Friesland as the Two Counties trust does not have an outstanding school.

The CEO explained that one of their schools has self-evaluated as an outstanding school, and they are just waiting for Ofsted to come and confirm this.

An Assistant Headteacher explained that the leadership team feel on their own currently, there is next to no local collaboration. By collaborating with the other schools within Two Counties, it will help us to improve further, we can do things differently and learn from each other. Two Counties Trust has similar schools with similar issues. Friesland has talented staff, it is about taking their talents further, finding solutions to similar problems and utilising our different strengths, supporting each other. My wife works here, I work here, why would I support something that is going to have a detrimental effect on my family?

A parent asked if schools have improved in the Two Counties MAT?

The CEO of Two Counties explained that Trusts need to have been a MAT for longer than 2 years to be in the league tables. The Trust have monitored their progress and as a whole MAT there has been significant improvement over the whole of the Trust over the past two years.

The CEO explained that we know where weaknesses are in the schools and we can put an action plan in place to support those schools.

A parent raised concern that she has not heard from the stakeholders who are very important, the students. My son is a stakeholder and I have not heard their voice tonight.

A parent stated that she is not really sure of the value of their voice and it feels that the decision to academise has already been made. ‘I sense a futility that it doesn’t really matter what I say this evening’.

The Chair replied to say that the consultation is open, and the governors will consider any and all information before making their decision.

A parent mentioned that she is very concerned about academisation and in principal she does not agree with it. However, this is not a criticism of the leadership team at Friesland whom she loves. She is a parent of a child with additional needs. She is concerned about the legal structure. Currently under the LEA parents have rights for SEN students, she understood that under an academy this would not be the case.

The Chair replied that the Governors will not consider anyone’s own personal political view and will decide what is best for the School. The CEO explained that whether the School is an LEA school or an academy, for all students with additional needs the procedures and rights are the same, there is no change. The LEA will still be responsible for this and admissions. The Governors will set the admissions criteria, but the LEA will organise the application process. For all 6 schools currently in two counties the LEA organise the admissions process.
A parent explained that they did not receive a letter about tonight’s meeting. Concern that other parents did not receive this notification.

The Headteacher explained that the letter had been sent home to all parents via Parent Mail, placed on the school website and then a reminder had been sent by Parent Mail. Parents/carers of Year 5/6 students at feeder schools had also been sent a letter of invite.

A parent said that if Friesland school becomes an academy you will potentially have over 30 members of staff who are unmotivated or disgruntled, this will affect the students. How are you going to safeguard against this?

The headteacher said that he thinks very little will change. We have committed talented staff and he thinks there will be very little movement. 'I hold the Staff in very high regard and they have been very professional in between the strike days you would not know there is an issue. There are other staff that supportive of academisation as well'.

The union representative said they would support an independent survey of all the workforce to see how the full workforce feel and the Governors could take this into account in their decision.

A parent asked if retention of teachers is good in the Trust?

The CEO explained that across the 6 schools, up to Easter this year was the lowest turn over each school had known, every school is fully staffed. The advantages to staff recruitment is that if you get good candidates you can cut costs in advertising across the schools.

A parent said that this school was built with tax payers’ money, what happens to the building if the School becomes an academy?

The Headteacher explained that Friesland is a foundation school, so the Governors already own the land as such. The ownership will transfer to the Trust but will be named to Friesland School.

A parent explained that they are still confused about the whole thing. What’s evidence, what’s rumour, what’s fact, what’s conjecture? How will these policies effect my daughter’s education and that of future generations? I think the communication has been shambolic throughout the whole process and I accept Mr Monk’s apology that some parents had felt this.

A parent stated that what needs to happen from here, communication about this issue needs to improve. I am opposed to privatisation. But fundamentally we have to do what’s right for the school. I have attended all the meetings and emailed Mr Monk and he has answered all of my questions.

A parent stated that she felt the consultation had been far from shambolic. She had read everything available, and attended all of the consultation meetings. She felt her views had been considered and questions answered at all stages. She too had e-mailed Mr Monk and received a response to her questions.

The Chair explained that everyone has had the opportunity to come tonight and ask questions and he was grateful to all the people that have attended.

A Governor explained that he is a parent of two children at the school and he wants the best for them, and when looking at the consultation paperwork he will be making his vote taking into account all the stakeholders.

A parent explained that the consultation document was not clear at first on the website and was not there previously, but it is now, and he urged people to read that.

A parent asked why now? Why are people questioning the leadership team and governors? Day in day out these people are running this school and we trust them to do that. Why don’t we now trust them? The parent wanted to say thank you and that the staff are doing a great job.

A parent asked ‘what have the pupils been told?’

The Headteacher explained that he did assemblies to all year groups when the discussions were first held. It was an agenda item on School Council meetings during the last consultation and has been
discussed again at the most recent School Council meetings. Different students have responded in different ways.

The union representative asked if there could be a poll, of all stakeholders, on who is for or against academisation.

The Chair explained that everyone is able to write in with any points / concerns they wish to raise.

Mr Wilkinson explained that after 2020 there will be continued funding for LEA to carry on maintained schools.

A parent asked ‘if we stayed an LEA school what could we do as a school to improve?’

An Assistant Head teacher said that he was not sure as the LEA is losing more and more capacity all the time. The CEO of Two Counties explained that 10 years ago there were in excess of 20 school advisors and there is now 1. An Assistant Headteacher explained that we would continue to strive, on our own, to improve and become an outstanding school.

A student explained that students are getting good results and going to college sixth form, why do they have to make levels of progress?

The Assistant Headteacher explained that this is the school’s attainment which is good. But schools are measured on progress and judged by OFSTED on this, which in 2017, in particular, was not as good as it should be.

A parent said that it is all results and number crunching. Schools are more than just results.

An Assistant Headteacher replied that he agreed, but that happy, motivated, well taught children will go on to get good results in the vast majority of cases.

A parent explained that he worked in an Academy and it as was awful and the school bounced from one MAT to the next, this is his worry.

A parent said that if there is going to be no change for the students, why are we doing this?

A parent explained that certain data was missing from the recent report sent home and this was quite demoralising and unmotivational for the students.

The Headteacher explained that this was due to action short of strike action that members of the NAS/UWT had been taking as part of their action. As members were not inputting data we did not have a complete set of data for students. Hence there were gaps. The Headteacher agreed it was a concern.

A parent thanked the school for running the evening, living through last few months and whatever view we have on academisation, we respect you and the leadership team and are grateful for all you do for our children.

Meeting closed at 9.05pm