

Appendix 1

Background

1. Sherwood Hall School was a part of the reorganisation of Mansfield schools and opened as a 'new' 11-18 school in September 2001. In February 2003, the school was inspected under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act (1996) and was judged to require special measures. Following this judgment, the then head teacher decided to resign with the agreement of the governing body. After two abortive attempts to recruit a new head teacher a new appointment was made in September 2003. An associate head teacher who had been working with the school became the head teacher in the interim.
2. The target for the school to be removed from special measures was spring term 2005. Unfortunately, despite positive early signs in the autumn term 2004, there was "limited progress" overall up to the visit of the HMI in January 2005. Given the disappointing progress under the leadership of the new head, local authority officers and the chair of governors discussed the effectiveness of leadership. The head teacher decided to retire and a successful local head teacher who had already led a school from special measures was appointed in an acting role. Under his leadership the school began to make significant and rapid progress. This progress has been supported by the establishment of a partnership with Garibaldi Comprehensive School which has provided additional leadership at all levels. I feel it is appropriate to record the local authority's thanks to the acting head and colleagues from Garibaldi School for the outstanding work they have undertaken in an extremely difficult situation. I would also wish to recognise the hard work and commitment of the school staff in addressing the issues in the Ofsted report and acknowledge the progress made in recent times.
3. Plans were underway with the governing body to make arrangements to appoint a permanent head teacher. The governors, school and local authority were encouraged by the improvement in the attainment results in 2005 at Key Stage 3, although Key Stage 4 results were still too low. Unfortunately, at this time the school discovered a substantial budget deficit. The local authority immediately sent finance officers into school to determine the extent of the deficit and the reasons for it. It became evident that the size of the deficit was in the order of £650,000 which will take some years to balance. It was also apparent that the deficit had been caused by mismanagement of the budget and inappropriate spending priorities. It was clear that the governing body had been given an inaccurate picture of the budget by the then school management and were, therefore, unaware of the extent of the problem.

4. As a result of the budget deficit, the local authority, with the agreement of the governing body, removed the delegated budget last December and has since then been managing the school directly. The school has continued to make progress in the quality of teaching and learning and the HMI monitoring visit, which took place on 9-10 January, recognised this. However, given the lack of permanent leadership and the significant budget deficit HMI judged that the school lacked the capacity to ensure necessary improvements.
5. The steering of the school from special measures and the management of the school budget back into credit is a difficult combination of factors to balance. On the one hand, the school will need sufficient effective staff to improve the quality of teaching, learning and leadership to raise pupil achievements. On the other hand, the number of staff will be reduced significantly as in the region of 90% of school budgets are spent on employing staff.
6. Given the size of the problem, given the fact that Sherwood Hall School is now entering its fourth year of special measures, given that we need to improve the learning experience for pupils in the school, the majority of whom have never known the school not to be in special measures, it is considered that the situation requires a step change for the school and, consequently, a number of options within current Government policy have been considered. These options are:-
 - (i) to apply to create an academy,
 - (ii) close the school and open it on the fresh start programme,
 - (iii) amalgamate with another school to create a new school or federate with another school to maintain two schools with one governing body and one leadership team.

In view of the above, and in particular the need to appoint a head teacher of the calibre required, the Director of Education considers that leaving the school in its current situation is not a feasible option. It is also not possible to close the school with the consequent redistribution of pupils to other schools in the area. There are 998 pupils on roll at Sherwood Hall School and insufficient capacity in the area to receive them. Given new regulations surrounding schools in special measures, if the school does not come out of the category in a year, the DfES is empowered to close it and determine its future.

7. To inform Cabinet's decision these options were set out in a leaflet which formed the basis of consultation with parents of Sherwood Hall School and feeder schools, pupils and staff, governors and the wider community. A

copy of this leaflet is attached as **Appendix 2**. In addition, discussions were held with the heads of all secondary schools in Mansfield and with the heads of the Sherwood Hall family of schools. This was not simply a part of the consultation but to assess the potential for partnership and federation locally.

8. The results of the consultation are set out in **Appendix 3**. 114 responses were received of which 110 expressed a preference. Overall,

76 (69%) supported or strongly supported an academy
34 (31%) opposed or strongly opposed an academy

55 (50%) supported or strongly supported a fresh start
55 (50%) opposed or strongly opposed a fresh start

19 (17%) supported or strongly supported an amalgamation or federation
91 (83%) opposed or strongly opposed an amalgamation or federation
9. It must be pointed out that the creation of an academy is not in the gift of a local authority. It requires a sponsor and DfES approval. It would be open to Cabinet to pursue this route and to enable a decision to be taken, some discussion has been undertaken with officers at the DfES to assess the probability of the success of such an approach. The results of these discussions are set out below. In respect of fresh start, this has had a limited impact for those schools which have been closed and reopened under this process. The main expectations of such an approach is that it would change the leadership and staff of the school and invest resources in the infrastructure, subject to DfES funding. The reality is, however, that the school remains in the same catchment with the same pupils and, frankly, there is unlikely to be a significant change in teaching staff given the known recruitment difficulties. Since the head teacher is a temporary appointment some aspects of leadership will change anyway. It is also doubtful that sufficient funds could be acquired from the DfES to lead to a step change.
10. An amalgamation of the school with another in the locality would be possible but could have its drawbacks. Clearly any operation of the new school in year groups would require that some pupils travel. This is clearly unpopular with parents in the Sherwood Hall family and is likely to be equally unpopular with parents at whichever school amalgamates with Sherwood Hall. A federation would be more practical with the sharing of governance, leadership and teaching resources across two schools. It would require a considerable commitment from the school chosen to federate with Sherwood Hall and, as a local authority, we would need to be satisfied that such an arrangement would not only benefit Sherwood Hall but would not harm progress or attainment at the other school. There could be a loss of identity and notably different management arrangements.

Again, this was not popular with parents at Sherwood Hall and may be unpopular with parents of the chosen school.

11. As mentioned above, the possibility of seeking an academy to replace Sherwood Hall has been explored by officers with the DfES. An academy is a school which is not maintained or run by the local authority. Typically, academies are established in areas of high deprivation and low attainment. They tend to be new build and provide a high quality learning environment. They are run and controlled by sponsors who invest £2 million pounds into the venture with the remainder, usually in excess of £20 million pounds, being met by the Government. The staff are employed by the governors, the academy would usually have the land on which the school stands transferred to them. Sponsors of academies tend to be either commercial or charitable or connected to the education sector (such as colleges of further education).
12. Members will be aware of some of the publicity which has surrounded academies in the national press and in the context of finding out more about what an academy might mean to Nottinghamshire as well as assessing the likelihood of success of such a bid, officers have had some discussions with the DfES on such issues. The outcome of these discussions is:-
 - (i) Sherwood Hall would meet the DfES criteria for such a bid in respect of deprivation and achievement,
 - (ii) a preliminary view of the accommodation and site would lend itself to an academy but a more detailed feasibility study would be necessary,
 - (iii) there are no local sponsors for an academy in Nottinghamshire,
 - (iv) the DfES would be able to promote a national sponsor to us for such a scheme.
13. I know that the County Council would have a number of issues that members would wish to be satisfied about in respect of a sponsor and the wider delivery of education in Nottinghamshire. These concerns relate firstly to admissions and the need for any academy to adopt the standard admissions criteria for county schools and secondly the ability of any academy to work collaboratively with other secondary schools in the area. This is particularly important in Mansfield where the collaboration arrangements between schools are already highly developed and working well.
14. In the discussions with the DfES they have indicated that the sponsor is likely to be the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham. Such sponsorship

would be arranged through the National Society. It would be important to recognise that although this would be an academy with a faith designation and a Christian ethos, admission would be on the basis of current arrangements and not by faith. Admission would be open equally to all members of the community. The Department has also been assured that any such academy would be enthusiastic in working with other local secondary schools as is already the case in academies sponsored by the Church of England.

15. It is also important to point out that an academy would not inherit the current budget deficit of Sherwood Hall School. Indeed, any of the options above require the closure of the school. In the event of the closure of any school, the budget deficit returns to the local authority to meet.