

## **Pupils Consultation Meeting at Ash Field with Tracie Rees and Clare Nagle – 07 12 22**

*Some pupils had prepared speeches. These are not recorded here but will be submitted, where pupils wish them to be, individually. These notes capture additional questions and comments.*

Consultation explained – TR explained that a note would be made of everything said and then the people who make the decision will be able to see what you have said.

Pupil 1 – recorded a video as he is non-verbal. He was using switches to answer a variety of yes/no questions

- Likes staying in Resi
- Learns new things
- Resi important to you and your friends

Pupil 2:

Question: Do you understand the impact this will have?

TR: the council is aware of the concerns raised by staff – they told us about the support it gives – and some of your parents and carers also came in – and now some of the students have shared their views – we’ve heard about what effect it would have on you – we will relay that back

How can you say this is not education?

TR: Recognise that it is rated really highly by Ofsted – we know that students really rate the place and it’s really important to you. The problem that we have is that it comes down to the financial position – we realise that is hard because of the value you put on this. We know what benefit it gives – the council is under massive financial pressure – lots of children need support for their education part let alone residential – we need to make sure they all get an education during the day. 400k would allow us to educate another 30 odd pupils – this would ease the financial pressure we have during the day for pupils

Do you not want children to have as independent a future as possible?

TR: Of course we want all of our children to have a good education and the life skills for adulthood – we know what the provision provides but we just don’t have the money to continue providing it. The decision is not made – we will take this back and that will feed into the report for the decision-makers

Pupil: you said that instead of funding the residential department, 30 more pupils educated – but by taking it away, more than 30 students here are losing their education by removing it – you’re losing a massive part of education for the pupils here

TR: I understand what you’re saying – in an ideal world, we would like to offer it to everyone – but we currently have about 1000 pupils in special schools and 10000 in mainstream with special needs – and we have to support them all – we can see it’s beneficial to the children here but we have to meet the need of all of those children. There is a lot of money being cut – the government are not

giving us enough money – we think we will get about 3 million pounds from what’s been promised – even with this, it still won’t solve it

Pupil: people say resi isn’t education. It 100% is – it’s helped me develop social skills, cooking, washing clothes. It’s unfair on people who will come here in the future and who need the skills we’ve learnt.

TR: I understand that promoting independence is part of what special schools do – pupils can be taught this in the day though. We have to think about the other children who need their education. It’s a financial difficulty.

Pupil: instead of closing us down – why can’t you support us to find another way to stay open?

TR: the proposal is to withdraw the funding from September 2024 – if the decision is made to withdraw the money and Ash Field decide it can’t operate – we would help the academy to look at the funding options.

Pupil: why can’t it happen sooner

TR: because no decision has been made yet – if a decision is made and if the academy want us to work with them to look at other funding streams, we will do so

JE explained the funding streams being offered so far would not keep resi as it is and it would not be a magic wand that would keep it the same – we hope the LA would work with us to find funding streams that might

Pupil: I think I’ve learnt just as much in resi as I have in school – I don’t think I would have been able to sit here and do this without resi – to have my voice heard.

Pupil: Resi keeps us motivated to do things that we haven’t been able to do before – it helps our emotional needs as well as education, our well-being, which then helps us to learn how to cope – it’s like a second family – that’s what makes resi really stand out

Pupil: when you’re in resi, the friends you have in school well you can see them more than you can at home. When you don’t stay there, can’t see your friends or the staff in the morning

Pupil: you say that we can learn those things during the school day but we have other things to learn during the school day – we have futures – you don’t know what it would mean – you don’t know about me – you don’t know what mentally it does to us – you can pick up a pen but you can’t communicate in school in the same way – in resi you see other people – you can socialise with other people of other ages – without resi we wouldn’t live. It really annoys me – without resi without our staff considering us, without all of this - you can’t just take it away from us. You can’t just take our home away from us – I know we’ve got two homes – but you’re taking away our independence and you have no idea how this feels.

Pupil: you can see the emotion X has but most of us have found this hard and emotional at times – it has become more and more unbearable – we hope we’ll get our message across so that you change your mind and we’re trying to keep strong until then

TR: we'll talk to the city mayor to come and talk to you but also to ensure that the decision is made as quickly as possible so that you're not in this limbo

JE asked if any other pupils had anything to add

TR: If other pupils want to talk to staff and feed that back through the consultation, they can

Pupil: don't take it away from us

Pupil: being in resi has provided me with life skills – cooking, making a cup of tea – doing day to day stuff - without it, I wouldn't be as independent – at home, I can now dress myself – without resi I wouldn't have the confidence to do these things

Pupil – likes being with his friends – it makes him happy –

Staff member added that this pupil has achieved a lot with his personal care needs through being in resi

Pupil: it's really fun

Pupil: we've spoken about the education side – if we're not talking about education though – it's a great place – the staff are amazing – they've given me advice and support – I've been through a lot that I won't get into now but resi has really helped – I don't think my mental health would be ok if I didn't have resi – I am staying at school another year because I will have the support of resi. I'm moving home and resi will help me with this – I'll then be able to live on my own – I'll have carers coming in but I will be taking care of myself - I wouldn't be able to do that without resi

Pupil: I'm leaving this year – I've learnt a lot in resi – answered yes to various things he'd learnt when prompted relating to preparing for adulthood

Pupil: when I walk into resi, it's joyful and jolly – when you go in you instantly feel calm, safe, start to feel at home – the staff are all lovely - you get to do activities and you get to chill out and express how you feel – when you walk in, it's a heart-warming place to be – you know you'll be in safe hands and have a good time.