

## **Proposal to amalgamate Cadoxton Nursery and Cadoxton Primary schools**

### **Statement to Cabinet**

Tommy O'Neill - Chair of Governors, Cadoxton Nursery School

16 October 2015

Many thanks for the opportunity to submit this statement to Cabinet. There are a number of inaccuracies in the proposal that I wanted to bring to your attention:

### **Background**

Point 7 of the proposal: In July 2014 the nursery fed 9 other primary schools. Over the last 3 years, pupils have transferred to an average of 7 different primary schools. Transition from Cadoxton Nursery School to all schools including Cadoxton Primary is already very good.

### **Relevant issues and options**

Points 8 and 9 of the proposal:

In point 9 the proposal includes a quote from the 2011 Estyn report for Cadoxton Primary, which quite rightly praises the leadership and management of the school. However, in point 8 the author has been very careful to select possibly the least flattering paragraph from the March 2010 Estyn report for Cadoxton Nursery. Our Estyn report is extremely positive and I am curious why they chose not to include these paragraphs from the Estyn report:

Leadership and management - "The head teacher leads the school with an exceptionally clear view of its future direction. The core mission is not only to educate the child in nursery, but also to reach out to the family as equal partners in the child's early education at home as well as at school. The school's vision of a holistic approach to early education is outstandingly reflected in every aspect of its work. The increased involvement of parents/carers in their child's education is having a very positive impact on the standards they achieve."

And also:

Summary - "Cadoxton Nursery School very successfully achieves its core mission of helping children to 'learn through fun'. All members of staff, under the excellent leadership of the head teacher, work extremely effectively as a knowledgeable, united team with a shared sense of purpose. In a most caring, supportive environment they provide very stimulating learning experiences that enable all children to make good, and often outstanding, progress"

### **Relevant issues and options**

Point 10 of the proposal: "Both Cadoxton Nursery and Primary schools were categorised as 'Yellow'"

The proposal incorrectly states that Cadoxton Nursery School has been categorised a 'Yellow' school. Cadoxton Nursery School has been categorised an 'A' band 'Green' school for the past 3 years and we are on target to achieve that again this year. Categorisation for the Stand Alone Nursery Schools is slightly different to Primary / Secondary Schools. It is judged under the Capacity to Improve and Support required, not under Standards. However standards remain a priority of the school: 'many make outstanding progress exceeding expected levels of achievement relative to their starting point.' Estyn

### **Provision**

Children of Cadoxton Nursery School are part of a 'school family,' 'school values' and 'school 'teaching methods' are in line with the Foundation Phase philosophy. "The nursery has an extremely positive partnership with parents. The school's commitment to parents is outstanding and begins even before the children are admitted to nursery. Parents are valued". Estyn

The proposal states that: "The provision for pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) will be identified at an earlier age." Early identification already exists in the nursery. We have excellent and established links with Flying Start, Health Visitors, local families so intervention is put in place prior to the child starting at nursery. "Provision for children with additional learning needs is outstanding." Estyn

The report also mentions that amalgamation will "enable staff to fully plan for a more pupil-led approach during the foundation phase". The proposal fails to mention that Cadoxton Nursery School is seen as having sector leading practice by Central South Consortium, and was recently selected by the Central South Consortium to be part of the Foundation Phase Alliance Group because of our outstanding Provision and Foundation Phase Practice. Cadoxton Nursery School is the only school in the Vale to have this recognition.

### **Officers consulted**

I was informed that the Vice Chair of Cadoxton Primary school had sight of this proposal in his capacity as local Councillor before it was in the public domain. The proposal mentions the officers consulted but there is no mention that local councillors were also contacted. Clearly the Councillor has an interest in this amalgamation and has been vocal in the past arguing against the independence of Cadoxton Nursery School. I am not suggesting there has been any impropriety in the preparation of this proposal but for the sake of transparency could I suggest that in future all interested parties declare when they have an interest in a proposal.

### **In summary**

The children in the Nursery already receive a consistent and structured path of learning. It is my view that the focus of this proposal is less about improving educational standards and is really about saving money. The paper alludes to "continuing pressures on the schools budget" and this was borne out when we met with the Head of Strategy, Community Learning & Resources to learn of this proposal and she shared that standalone nurseries are not viable in the current financial climate.

Point 27: "majority of any revenue saving are likely to be attached to a decrease in management costs".

A £60k saving is cited in the paper. I must emphasise that the achievements of the nursery have only been possible through the unwavering passion, vision and leadership of the head teacher of the nursery, a role that this paper proposes to remove.

I fully realise we are in a difficult economic climate, but I would ask you to also consider the 'value added' a successful and thriving nursery brings to pupils, parents, the wider community and the Council. I appreciate it is very hard to attach a monetary value to this. I would argue that the nursery does provide considerable 'value added' through exemplary leadership, an exceptionally high standard of teaching, continued community support and vital inter agency working.

When considered in this context the Council is getting extremely good value for money with Cadoxton Nursery operating as a standalone nursery. All the evidence shows that Cadoxton Nursery is very high performing with exceptional leadership. An amalgamation would be detrimental to the pupils, to the overall school provision and quality of education, to all the nursery staff and to the wider community.

I urge Cabinet to reject this proposal.

Yours sincerely,

Tommy O'Neill  
Chair of Governors  
Cadoxton Nursery School