

Department for Education - Parent/Carer Information Event 28/9/22

Questions Summary:

Attendees: Ben Parnell (CEO), Emma Kerr (Executive Principal), Carla Barnard (Chair of Governors), Darren Crockford (Estates Manager), Gary Chapman (Deputy Estates Manager), Richard Malyon (DFE Project Director), Mark Colin (Kier Construction), LPS staff and Parents.

Richard gave an apology on behalf of the DFE. Richard explained that the contractor had underperformed from the outset and it had been an increasingly challenging contractual process to manage. Initially the DFE had aimed to work with the contractor (Caledonian Modular Limited) to improve its performance as a change of contractor was a) not straightforward owing to the contractual environment and b) a re-procurement would have led to a certain delay. The contract was terminated when CML went into administration in March 2022. Owing to the exceptional circumstances, the DfE made a direct appointment of a replacement contractor to reduce the inevitable delay. Kier has been appointed to undertake early and enabling works and to prepare a proposal for completion of the school.

1. **Timeline:** What is the build timeline?

Kier is undertaking a significant amount of surveys and proposals to guarantee the safety and structure of the building. The surveys will be completed by December 2022. It is intended that the DfE will enter a formal contract by Easter 2023. From this point, it could possibly take 12 months for the school to be built. School to be established approximately Easter 2024.

2. **Start date/Contingency:** Will the pupils be in the main site from Sept 2023? If not - what is the contingency for three year groups? How long?

Pupils will not be in the main site in September 2023, however the contingency plan for having three year groups on one site at the same time, is to convert the boat shed next to the Founders classroom for another learning space, plus an activity space, and an administration/reception area. There will also be space outside the building to accommodate a bigger playground and staff parking. However as the primary does not own the land, it will be the decision of the Athena Learning Trust; due to taking away an area from the college that is regularly used.

The Trust has looked at planning permission for huts to be built at the temporary site, however the boat shed is significantly bigger.

Kier has worked with many different programmes to reduce the time frame as much as they can whilst making sure the building will be fit for purpose.

3. **Contingency:** How long is it sustainable to keep going at the temporary accommodation in terms of adding extra years? Could this be detrimental to our child's development? Is there anything we can do as parents/community to help?

If the school decided not to admit another year group in September 23, the school would lose funding. It is also extremely difficult to manage staffing with gaps in year groups. For this reason the school will continue as normal and take on another year. The school will receive a funding announcement by Christmas.

Keir are in a formal arrangement with the DfE to develop a solution for completion of the school. . DFE will need to approve the proposals. It will take a year from that stage as Keir needs to investigate the building, create a timescale for work, and then price up materials. The construction plan will be agreed by Christmas

From Christmas to Easter costings will take place with work potentially starting at Easter. Kier are currently 50/60% through survey works.

Current build:

The DfE has identified elements of CML's work that is of poor quality and will need to be rectified – the safety of pupils and staff is of paramount importance – the completion of the school will meet all building regulations and health and safety requirements.

The surveys that are underway will determine the extent of works required and how the project will be finalised.

4. **Communication:** Can we receive updates on the new school building from yourselves please via letter/e-mail on a regular basis? How often can we expect updates from the DfE on the build progress from now on?

Richard explained that the DfE and Keir will have monthly progress meetings. They have agreed to give a monthly update letter. This will be shared via the school website and through email to our school families. The first update to be shared after Christmas. Questions can also be sent to info.LPS@education.gov.uk.

The school will send a survey (wish list) to parents asking what families would like to see/hear. The school will then give feedback.

5. **Future intake:** If the purpose built building isn't going to be ready for the foreseeable future, this could potentially deter parents from applying for their child's place at the school, if so what does this mean for the future of the school and the existing pupils?

(Current applications 27/8/22 on SAM are: 1st:11, 2nd:5, 3rd:3 (19 total))

The Trust understands the views of our families, and the unfortunate situation we are in. However this should not deter parents from applying for a space with the primary. Although we are not in the new building, the quality of teaching is excellent, the quality of curriculum, the school experiences such as school trips, and workshop visits the children are having are excellent, and this is all shown in their learning, in our newsletters and social media pages. The children are happy and thriving. The Trust has also agreed for the Primary to use the facilities at Launceston College, such as food tech and science areas.

The Trust will use local contractors to convert the boat shed for the new intake. Whilst Keir will continue with the school build. Kier has financial security, which Caledonian did not.

In the next 6 weeks the Trust will invite families to look at the new building at Launceston College, which Kier has built. This will show families the quality and architecture that the new school building will have.

Positive comments and word of mouth from our school families will also be a big help in securing future interest in the school.

6. **Accountability:** Who is being held accountable for making sure this build happens? How will it be tracked to keep it on schedule?

The DfE will ensure this school build happens, Richard assured families that the building will be sorted as quickly as possible and at the best quality. The delivery team has been changed and is fully focused on delivery of the school in the shortest possible timescale

7. **Funding:** With the previous contractor going into administration how does this impact the funding of the build? Where does the funding come from to ensure the build takes place and is not delayed further than the 2 years it already has been.
The funding comes from public money, which needs to be spent to the best value. The budget will get reset for this build with Kier. The total cost of this free school will be published approximatel a year after completion. The DFE are also funding and delivering the revamp of the temporary site.
8. **Contract Process:** Now that we know Kier Group is the new contractor, have they signed an agreement/contract? Can they still potentially back out? When did they agree to be the new contractors?
DFE and Kier are in agreement with each other, it is the intention that a formal contract will be entered into in early 2023. Mark advised that Kier has the financial stability that the old contractor did not.

Questions & Feedback received via Parent/Carer Survey (Live from 16/9/22 to 27/9/22)

What are the expectations for the build in the next 6 months?

Will the build definitely be completed for the school to start September 2023 if no, what at the reasons to why the school build has not been pushed for completion as it would have been 2 years over due.

Do they have a rough time when the build will be completed?

Will we be in the school by September 2023??

What is happening with the new school build, when will work be commencing, who is undertaking the continuation of the school build, do you plan to have this completed by new intake next September. Is there a timeline set out to ensure the school is built and safe for children to attend.

Estimated time for the building to be finished?

If not completed by the next year will there be space to accommodate another year group, and if not what will happen to the current children in the current setting?

Have new contractors been confirmed to take on the building? If yes, when will work be taking place on the existing site? What work is required on the existing site? What time scale are we looking at the new building being ready? If the school isn't going to be ready for the next academic year then what is the plan; where will our children be situated going into year 2? How long is it sustainable to keep going at the temporary accommodation in terms of adding extra years? could this be detrimental to our child's development? Is there anything we can do as parents/community to help? Can we receive updates on the new school building from yourselves please via letter/e-mail on a regular basis as we feel like we've been left in the dark? We are aware that previous meetings were scheduled for parents to attend but these were arranged at unsuitable times of day when parents have work commitments and younger children to look after. If the purpose built building isn't going to be ready for the foreseeable, this could potentially deter parents from applying for their child's place at the school, if so what does this mean for the future of the school and the existing pupils?

The project manager is no longer in place so who is driving this forward?
Who is being held accountable for making sure this build happens?
What happens if the next deadline is also missed?
when is the build estimated to be completed?
How long before it is due to open to you anticipate the building being ready, and how will it be tracked to keep it on schedule?
With the previous contractor going into administration how does this impact the funding of the build?
Where does the funding come from to ensure the build takes place and is not delayed further than the 2 years it already has been.

Now that we know Kier Group is the new contractor, have they signed an agreement/contract? Can they still potentially back out? When did they agree to be the new contractors?

The project manager is no longer in place so who is driving this forward?
Who is being held accountable for making sure this build happens?
With regards to the finances of the situation, How does the contractor going into administration impact the funding of the build? is there enough funding to ensure this build takes place and is not delayed further than the 2 years it already has been.

Please can you provide us with a clear plan and timescales of the steps that will be taken to ensure the build is not delayed any further than it has been already. Moving forward Will there be more stringent controls and management over this build to mitigate the risk of further delays? you were aware of a problem with the build in May 2021 and provided the contractor with an opportunity to rectify the issues, obviously this failed as the delay was pushed back further and further. what is the plan this time around to reduce the risk of a repeat occurrence (not including a different contractor being used)

When will the work on the school commence.
Is the school that is built so far being knocked down to rebuild? Where is the funding coming from to allow the work to commence, is it in place or still being sourced? What is the expected finish date? Are there plans for parents to be kept any more informed over the next stages of the build? Is there a new project manager in place and are they competent of reaching targets? Parents including us are feeling let down by the whole process so far, what will be in place to improve the communication of updates in the future or are we expected to just put up with this?

Other Comments:

Is the new school having to be demolished and a new design/plan having to be made?

We respect that you have given us opportunity to ask questions about the building but from our perspective we feel that we shouldn't have to ask and instead we should be informed, preferably in writing. We feel that you have been very much in the background in this situation and letting the teachers take the brunt of it, which is extremely unfair on them, they're fantastic teachers and dealing with these enquiries are not part of their job description.

Why do we get no updates? Even a courtesy to explain what's going on or to say, this is currently underway and we will have an update in 'x' amount of time.

I am constantly asked what's going on with the school or being told I've heard its got to be knocked down and all I can say is I have no idea as we haven't been told anything. I think the lack of transparency is quite poor. Surely it is better to actually provide people with an answer rather than them relying on the word of mouth and gossip to inform the parents of what's going on.

I don't believe people would be so upset if there was effective communication being provided throughout the process. Frequent updates to explain the next steps would appease a lot of the parents. The constant uncertainty is not pleasant and has a major impact and really affects our confidence in the provision being provided. Especially since our children are the 'founders' and they have been majorly let down by this.

Part of the reason I chose the school is due to the values and ethos promoted by the staff, they are doing their best to deliver this however do not have the facility they were promised to enable them to deliver. The rumour mill is firmly rolling, with people in the town talking but the people who are actually affected are kept in the dark.

So what is actually wrong with the building? Is it windows? Is it the style of building? Is it damp? Does it need to be knocked down? I am unsure why there is so little communication. We have had no feedback regarding this in the last 6 months What needs to be done to ensure the school is ready for the children in September 2023?

Why do we get no updates? Even a courtesy to explain if progress is being made and if anything is happening behind the scenes. I do understand there is a degree of confidentiality however communication to just say, contractor is doing their due diligence and will be anticipating an update by xx date.

I am constantly asked what's going on with the school, Or being told I've heard it got to be knocked down, the building is damp, the windows are faulty and all I can say is I have no idea as we haven't been told anything. I think the lack of transparency is quite poor. Especially since our children are the 'founders' we were promised a facility that they would be able to grow with. Part of the reason I chose the school is due to the values and ethos promoted by the staff, they are doing a very good job at delivering this however do not have the facility they were promised to enable them to get settled and deliver. There are rumours about the building flying around everywhere. Surely it is better to provide parents with the correct information from a reputable source (yourselves) which then means we are happier knowing this project is progressing at some pace rather than the perception of 'nothing is happening'. all that is currently happening is the rumour mill is rapidly turning and in turn no one knows what is actually going on.

This situation has been so stressful because of a complete lack of communication to parents.