

BRIEFING NOTE

AGENDA ITEM

NO. 6

TO: Children's and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel

DATE: 26th January 2012

RE: An Example of School Cluster arrangements

Purpose

This is to equate members with possible cluster arrangements for Walsall Schools.

To present a brief outline of how a cluster has worked within Walsall in the light of the new educational climate to enable them to work together for the betterment of the community they serve.

Content

Powerpoint presentation showing the recent development of the Darlaston cluster of schools.

Author

Ian Hankinson

Retired Head Teacher and former Chair Person of Darlaston School Cluster



emailaddress@walsall.gov.uk

Presentation to Walsall Council CYP Scrutiny

Info re: Darlaston Cluster

27th January

Walsall Council House



What has happened

- As Headteachers in the locality we have worked together.
- We can share what we have learned.
- We need to support each other to move further.
- We are acutely aware of short timescales.



Darlaston Schools' Cluster

“To work together for the benefit of our pupils and the wider community of Darlaston.”



Darlaston Schools' Cluster

Associated Schools

Rowley View Nursery
Moorcroft Wood
Pinfold Street
Salisbury
Grace Academy

King's Hill
Old Church
Rough Hay
St. Joseph's



Darlaston Schools' Cluster

Historical Context

The cluster has been active for many years.

Over the past 5 years we have worked closely in an environment of trust and support **to help our schools move forward in a variety of areas.**



Darlaston Schools' Cluster

- Extended Schools Provision
- Commissioning Project
- Parent Support Adviser Work
- Curriculum Support
- INSET Provision
- Behaviour Support
- Succession Planning
- Resource sharing / Staff sharing



Background

Why?

- We are entering very different times.
 - Headteachers retiring
 - The Education Act
 - Significant budget efficiencies/cuts at LA level
 - School closures and amalgamations
 - Changes in Education Leadership



Background

Why?

- We are in a strong position as we have:
 - one of the strongest clusters in the LA
 - the most secure funding, at the moment
 - geographically the areas is good

So we want to build upon the successes of the cluster to protect and build upon services and ensure the very best for the children and community of Darlaston



Background

First governors' meeting

- Initial voicing of the Heads concerns
- Discussing Federation



Background

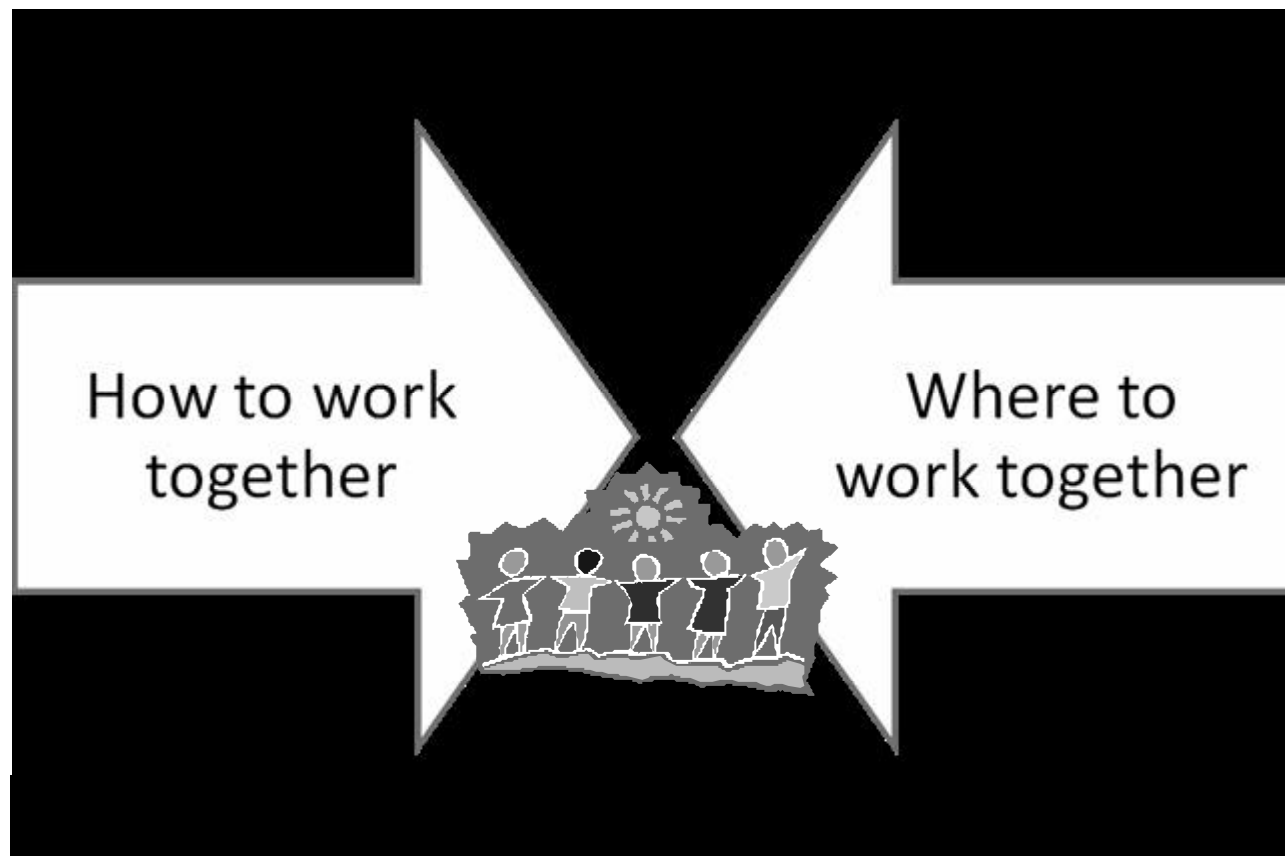
Second governors' meeting

- Kelvin Peel – NCSL
- Collaboration
- Federation
- Cooperative
- Company



Background

- Since the last meeting the Heads have been meeting regularly to look at:



Where to work together?

- Looked at what we have bought in and what we thought of it



Where to work together?

- Human resources / legal
- Finance
- Catering
- Broadband
- Cleaners
- Ralph Bailey House



The process

- Looking at best value.
- Not the cheapest but people who would offer the best service.



The process

- Service Level Agreements from the LA gave baseline service and indicative costs
- Companies who provide services to schools and other LAs were invited to discussions cluster representatives
- Best companies met a wider range of Heads



Advantages so far

- Reduced costs - £15,000
- Better services
- Access national funding = £15,000



Example of cluster commissioned services- Finance Support Services

- Already used by one school in the cluster
- Only supporting 60 schools and will need to employ someone to work with us.
- 1 day per month saves approximately £6000
- It would be possible to save a further £9000



Example of cluster commissioned services - Catering

- Management company
- Ensure training, buying in expertise, health and safety, etc
- Creation of core menus that are then altered to individual needs
- We would take on the staff from the kitchens
- We could spend more per pupil
- Potential loss of £24,000
- As a cluster the management costs workout 10p per meal rather than 30p



Issues

- Extra workload
- Central budgeting
- Working out fair and equitable costs – although initially we would ask you to agree to pay the same as you would to LA
- Requirement to make formal arrangements



How to work together?

- There is a need for formal 'arrangements' for budget and governance reasons
- This 'arrangement' will need to take into account the differences between schools:
 - Church schools
 - Federated schools
 - Non federated schools
 - Academies



How to work together?

- Become a collaboration
 - Meets the 'arrangements' required
 - Simple to set up
 - Ensure that schools can keep their individuality
 - Ensure Governors are fully involved



We asked Governors to consider.

- Supporting the buying in of services we have identified
- Creating a formal agreement between the schools – governance and budget
- Accessing the national funding available



Memorandum of Understanding

- This has to be agreed by all Governing bodies within the cluster
- Needs to be an ongoing working document
- Needs to be trusted by all the schools and their communities
- Needs to allow the schools to maintain their individuality



The way forward

- To review the services currently bought (commissioned) by the cluster
- Review other services that could be of benefit
- To create a system where the governors of the schools are fully informed and are able to have an input
- To see what costs are needed to service the cluster in the future

