



Governors' response to their consultation on changing the Marling School Admissions Arrangements for entry 2019

Overview

On Friday 26th January 2018, the Local Governing Body of Marling School completed a 6 week consultation on their proposed changes to the admissions arrangements for entry in 2019.

As an academy, the Local Governing Body are required to determine admission arrangements annually. Where changes are proposed to admission arrangements, the admission authority must first publicly consult on those arrangements. If no changes are made to admissions arrangements, they only need to be consulted on at least once every 7 years.

This year, the Governors undertook a full consultation to seek the views of stakeholders on their proposal to include eligibility to Pupil Premium funding as an admission criterion, to admit girls to the Sixth Form and, as a consequence, to increase the maximum Year 12 cohort number. The change to increase the school's published admission number is a change that does not require public consultation under the School Admissions Code.

The full consultation extended within and beyond the county, recognising that students at Marling come from a wide geographical area. Consultation included students, parents and staff of Marling School; all primary and secondary schools in Gloucestershire and out of county feeder schools for Marling; Early Years Providers; Stroud District Council; Gloucestershire County, Swindon Borough, Wiltshire County and South Gloucestershire Councils. Posters were also displayed in all public libraries across the county.

Summary of responses received

During the consultation period, 40 written responses were received. All of these were related to the Sixth Form and nearly all were about the rationale for, and mechanics of, discontinuing our collaborative Sixth Form teaching arrangement with Stroud High School rather than the proposed changes to the Admissions Policy.

Of the responses received:

- 33 were from parents
- 2 were from ex-parents
- 1 was from a parent of a Stroud High School student
- 2 were from the Stroud MP's office
- 1 was from a Stroud Resident
- 1 was of unknown connection to the school

In the context of the consultation on whether to admit girls to the Sixth Form in September 2019, all responses could be interpreted as positive, in that they all express preference for a co-educational Sixth Form. However, we do acknowledge that the letters and emails were written as negative responses to the idea that Marling would discontinue its collaborative teaching arrangement with Stroud High School. The most common areas of objection (in no particular order) were as follows:

1. Many contributors were concerned by the future Sixth Form being single gender or near single gender.

Marling School is committed to providing a co-educational experience for its Sixth Form students. When Stroud High School proposed to change our collaboration and teach much of our Sixth Form as single gender, Marling School objected and insisted on maintaining co-education within our Sixth Form. When it became clear that Stroud High School would not continue with current arrangements, the only way for us to maintain co-education was to separate our teaching and admit girls to our Sixth Form.

2. Some contributors referred to a lack of consultation and information about the change

Marling School has carried out the statutory 6 week consultation on changes to its Admissions Policy as required by the School Admissions Code.

The decision to discontinue the collaborative teaching arrangement of the Sixth Forms had already been made by both Governing Bodies in December, after lengthy discussions. This was a strategic decision by the Governing Body that did not require a consultation. However, as a response to some of the feedback, Marling School held a Parent Information Meeting on 20th February 2018 to answer some of the questions raised.

3. A small number of respondents expressed concern about loss of curriculum breadth if the separation of teaching from Stroud High School takes place

The modelling undertaken by Marling School to forward plan these changes has been based on maintaining the same curriculum offer as we have currently. We are intending to also offer Politics and Sociology which are currently taught entirely by Stroud High School staff. Every year the school makes decisions about the curriculum, based on staffing and student numbers and this will continue to be the case. However, our starting point is the current curriculum and we have begun to staff the school accordingly.

4. A number of respondents raised a concern over shared resources, notably the Sixth Form building

The building is owned by both schools and sits on land which is co-owned. The building will remain fully shared until 2020/21 when the current Year 11 complete their Sixth Form education. Any changes to the building for 2020/21 have yet to be decided and the two schools will be discussing this over the coming months and also discussing whether shared communal space can be retained. Marling School has other spaces which are available to Sixth Form students and will be considering options for developing further Sixth Form facilities to augment the Sixth Form building, including the use of East Campus.

5. Some respondents suggested that the change was results driven and/or budget driven

Discussion about changing our Sixth Form collaboration were initiated by Stroud High School who are concerned by girls' A-level outcomes. Marling School is confident in the outcomes for its students which are underpinned by outstanding teaching & learning and excellent pastoral support. Our Sixth Form students achieve consistently positive value added and this year their progress from their starting points placed us as the fourth highest provider in the county.


In discussions about changes with Stroud High School, Marling School saw no need to change the current arrangement on the basis of results. However, Stroud High School were unwilling to maintain current arrangements and the only way for us to maintain co-education was to separate teaching. We are fully aware that a separate co-educational Sixth Form is likely to be more expensive to operate and the decision was not budget driven.

6. A small number of respondents expressed concern about the impact on other 6th Form providers

Marling School has capacity to take further students into the Sixth Form to accommodate the boys coming through the school, the growing interest from students from other schools and any girls who wish to join the Sixth Form. With this in mind we proposed to increase our Sixth Form admission number to include a minimum planned admission number of 50 external candidates. We recognise that the educational landscape is already a competitive one and with Stroud High School also proposing a co-educational Sixth Form, we will be in competition with our neighbours. However, we feel that Marling School has an exceptionally strong Sixth Form and we want to be in a position to allow more students to take advantage of our high quality provision.

Conclusion

The Governing Body of Marling School would like to thank all those who contributed to the consultation. They have now carefully considered all of the responses received and voted unanimously to implement the policy that went to consultation.



Nigel Riglar
Chair of Governors



John Gilbert
Vice Chair of Governors